



THE CHAMBERS PROJECT

Wixáritari Peyote Paintings and Photos Will Preserve the Desert

**The Psychedelic Arts and Culture Trust
The Chambers Project
627 E. Main St., Grass Valley, CA 95945
Saturday 4th – 25th May, 2024**

The Psychedelic Arts and Culture Trust is hosting a benefit exhibit for the Wirikuta Preservation Project, an organization of the Wixáritari tribe of North Western Mexico, California, New Mexico, Arizona and Texas. The Wixáritari are also known as Huichol, a colonial name derived from mispronunciation.

In all ancient cultures, rich and complex rituals balance the need to survive with reverence for the natural world that sustains humanity. Most of these cultures have been lost to time, but the Wixárika people of Northern Mexico have resisted destruction. Witnessing the violence and oppression of the colonialist Spanish, the Wixáritari retreated to the difficult terrain of the Sierra Madre mountains, where they remained safe from the conquistadors and nurtured their ancient traditions, preserving them for the present and passing them on to future generations. Like many indigenous peoples, the Wixáritari have a profound reverence for the delicate natural ecosystems that sustain life, acknowledged especially by their sacred annual pilgrimage to the valley of Wirikuta, where their ancestors first prayed with the help of Hikuri (the peyote cactus).

At the beginning of time the water that made life in the desert possible sprang from the forehead of a deer. Hikuri grew in the tracks of that first deer, and in turn became the first ear of corn, and then the drinking bowl of Grandfather Fire, the greatest and oldest of the Wixarika gods, named Tatewari. Fiery Tatewari led the Wixáritari to Wirikuta, the center of the world, and introduced them to Hikuri, and unless this profound memory is honored by the living, Tatewari will stop the rain, there will be no corn, and the deer will die of thirst. Thus, each year the Wixáritari leave their mountain home to travel through a sacred geography two hundred miles to the northeast. Guided by shamans called Marakames, masked pilgrims take on the identity of the ancestral gods. By completing the peyote hunt and eating the bitter flesh of Elder Brother Deer, they find their way to the land of the creation and become whole.

Now, the traditional ways of the Wixáritari are in danger as commercial farming and mining interests encroach and destroy their sacred lands. The Wixáritari urgently need to preserve their ancient methods of restoring balance and harmony with nature, before the desert and their culture are annihilated. The Wirikuta Preservation Project fights to protect and sustain the ancient Hikuri gardens.

In 2022, the Project raised over \$200,000, and purchased two hundred and forty-three hectares of land in the Wirikuta, but there is still much work to be done to save the vast valley from exploitation and destruction. More land must be purchased and protected. The Wixáritari maintain the balance of the threatened earth.

Wixárika nierikas are the centerpiece of the exhibit at The Chambers Project. Nierikas are beautiful works of art created from visions that come to the artists during religious ceremonies. These brightly colorful petitions to the gods are made from threaded beads glued to wood panels in intricate figurative and abstract compositions of a rich iconography including images of deer, cacti, and fire. Using this vision-inspired artwork to save the land where peyote grows is a mystical example of this mysterious and metaphysical cactus acting to save itself. As well as the extraordinary beaded art, the exhibit also shares unique photographs of the Wixárika people taken during the last five years, walking side by side with the pilgrims, and at the ceremonial center of Tunuwame. Every sale of art and photographs supports the artists and their families, and helps fund the Wirikuta Preservation Project. Purchases are an act of preservation of sacred lands, ecological biodiversity, and endangered culture.

The exhibit is the first at the Psychedelic Arts and Culture Trust (PACT), a newly formed 501C3 company dedicated to the preservation of the extraordinary legacy and treasure of American psychedelia, a unique phenomenon in the rich history of Western art. The Psychedelic Arts and Culture Trust includes a museum exhibiting historic art, and a multi-use space for workshops and rotating events. PACT is focused on how psychedelics affected art and culture in the past, how they relate to the present day, and how they shape the art and culture of the future.

For more information contact The Chambers Project Gallery Director Jon Ohia at 15307770330

Follow The Wirikuta Preservation Project on Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/wirikutapreservationproject/>

Link to download show assets:

<https://gofile.me/7bOdc/a6TGikKKP>

