

# CAAC

## The Cosmic Dance to the Rhythm of the Depths of the Soul

DELICY MORELOS

*Profundis*

May 28, 2024– March 9, 2025

"In ancestral Andean traditions,  
the human being is living earth: I am a body, I am earth.  
In the exhibition space, the earth expresses itself; it is the center  
and the mirror of what we are."

DELICY MORELOS

The sustaining power of the whole, life, weaves its threads into an intricate web of connections of different natures, manifesting in countless forms. From the smallest germ, the seed of beings in nature; the valleys of vast meadows, the rivers that wind through them and hide in the forests, or the stars that twinkle in the vastness of the firmament, each element of the universe contributes to the dance of existence.

This network of inevitable interrelations sustains the creativity of Colombian artist **Delcy Morelos** (Tierralta, Colombia, 1967), who, from large-format watercolors to grand installations made with soil that transform the space they inhabit, explores universal mythological worldviews, particularly pre-Columbian ones, to emphasize the interdependence between humans, animals, plants, and spirits, all born from the same seed: Pachamama of the Inca cultures, Bachué of the Chibchas from her homeland, and "Mother Earth," a term adopted by the United Nations to refer to our planet (2009).

**Delcy Morelos** studied at the School of Fine Arts in Cartagena and began her career as a painter working on traditional surfaces with a preference for reds—"I felt that red was not just a color, I perceived it as a substance in itself that emanated from my fingers"—but since she started working with soil, her exploration of color took different paths: "Earth can be many colors: blue, greenish-gray, light brown, dark brown, yellow, ochre, orange, black,

or red. [...] In my early works with soil, the earth is red. What makes the earth red is the high amount of iron it contains, the same element that makes the blood running through our veins red. There is a deep relationship between us humans and the earth, and we have lost that awareness." Paths that began with *Earthly Paradise* (2022), an installation created for the main exhibition of the 59th Venice Biennale, continued with *El lugar del alma* (2022) in the basement of the Museum of Modern Art in Buenos Aires; *El abrazo* at the Dia Art Foundation, Chelsea, New York (2023); *Interwoven* at the Pulitzer Arts Foundation, St. Louis (2024), and finally arrive at the Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo with *Profundis*.

Thus, from the perspective of nature as sacred, mythical, and at the same time, a living being with which we are intimately connected, Morelos proposes respecting the spirit of all elements of nature and caring for the balance of ecosystems. Soil, sand, and clay are the materials Morelos uses to design, through geometric minimalism, enveloping, immersive, and multisensory forms in the shape of caves, mastabas, ziggurats, pyramids, or thresholds, where the spectator is sensually surrounded by the fertility of the earth and its generative power, leading to a broader understanding of reality that includes spiritual, energetic, and cosmic dimensions beyond the visible: "Being in contact with the earth and delving into it is to connect with what constitutes and nurtures us; the foundations where life develops while inhabited by the soul. Art allows for the real and mythical possibility of creating sacred moments and spaces. [...] To reconnect with nature, I awaken within myself the archetype of the ancestral woman, the magician, the healer, and the witch of the cauldron [...]. I want to understand the power of the earth, of matter, of the spirit, plants, color, fire, wind, water, and thunder; to find omens in the clouds, in coffee, in chocolate, in watercolor stains, and in bird songs; I cultivate plants to learn from them; I listen to and respect the cycles of the moon, which govern the waters, tides, emotions, and female cycles."

<sup>1</sup> The artist's direct opinions come from her interview with Julián Sánchez González for the research project by the Cisneros Institute at MoMA, "Linking the Sacred: Spiritual Currents in 20th Century Latin American and Caribbean Art, 1920-1970," [www.moma.org](http://www.moma.org), 2023.

By using organic materials, **Morelos** explores concepts related to fertility, creativity, and transformation as catalysts for societal change: "Earth remains the contested element in armed struggles, the obsession that triggers inequality, and the prize of all wars. [...] I started to wonder how we could approach the earth from different concerns and how to approach this pure and vital matter with reverence and awe." Her work, like that of **Joseph Beuys**, invites reflection on the role of art and the individual in transforming the world. In *Arena* (1970-1972), **Beuys** used this material in an installation where it was scattered on the floor as a reflection on the deep holistic connection between humanity and nature. He considered humans an integral part of the ecosystem and advocated for a more respectful and careful approach to the earth and its resources. **Morelos** reflects this vision in *Profundis*, which encourages greater awareness of our interdependence with the natural world and the need to preserve its integrity, aligning with the concept of "deep ecology" coined by **Arne Naess** in 1973, where the Norwegian activist philosopher advocates for an environmental conservation approach that transcends superficial concern and delves into a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of all living beings. Moreover, through the sensory experience generated by her installations, **Morelos** underscores the idea that nature has intrinsic value independent of its utility to humans, proposing a profound cultural shift toward a more intense connection with the natural world through artistic creation that helps us achieve a greater understanding of ourselves—a process of self-exploration—and our place in the world.

**Morelos'** silent activism and reverence for the earth are explicit in her exploration of themes such as identity and collective memory through geometric abstraction. By inviting us to delve into her pieces, she envelops us in the majesty of the earth, the scent of plants and spices. As we feel embraced by them, she immerses us in introspection whose "desire or intention is for the viewer, upon crossing that threshold, to enter the dimension of the sacred, of gestation and fragility. The smell precedes and announces the experience, and the earth is the matter from which everything emerges and to which everything returns to regenerate in the cycle of life and transformation." A transformation that, as we have pointed out, entails social change for her.

*Profundis* is a journey toward reconnecting with historical memory through the aroma of earth as an ancestral element, where species and plants introduced to Europe from the Americas return, invading the exhibition space of the Monumental Zone of the Cartuja Monastery with their perfumes and textures. These textures come from the ancestral way of Andean cultures building with their unique adobe; these perfumes are offerings to the goddess Pachamama as nourishment for the earth. The monastery was a key place in the 15th century, close to Christopher Columbus and later in the 16th century, a central hub of the city of Seville and its relations with the American continent. Since May 1525, King Manuel I of Portugal ordered that an arroba of pepper, ginger, cinnamon, and clove, five pounds of benzoin, and four arrobas of sugar be donated to the Cartuja—a gesture extraordinary not only for the high price of the spices but also for the regulated austerity of the monks. It seems, then, that the monastery was predestined to receive Morelos' work to recover a lost sensory memory—a round trip from Seville to the Americas—that returns thanks to the CAAC, which now occupies the former convent.

Morelos' installation occupies several spaces of the Church of Santa María de las Cuevas: the Columbus Chapel, where the navigator was buried after his death in Valladolid; the Chapel of *Profundis*; the Sacristy; the Chapel of the Magdalena; and the Refectory.

The central nave of the Church of Santa María de las Cuevas houses a monumental geometric structure through which Morelos has recreated a space of fertility, understanding, unity, and connection with the whole. Divided into two parts, immersive and enveloping, it challenges us to enter it, to delve into the unknown corridor of aromas and earth. The installation occupies the center of the space, as if it were a choir where the earth prays, or a threshold, and it rises majestically, with an imposing presence that emanates fertility and life. At the back, on the altar, a golden mantle dominates the nave of the church. The immense fabric, woven and painted with *albero*, governs the space. "In the universe, everything is woven like a basket, opposites intertwine in increasingly closer knots until they can hold water," says the Uitoto indigenous philosopher Isaías Román, a master of Amazonian philosophy for **Morelos**. As the artist herself expresses, "Opposing poles intertwine in a weave where there is no separation, and all of us, along with everything that exists, are threads of that weave which receives, contains, and constantly interlaces." This very act of

weaving with the earth, with the albero so characteristic of the city of Seville, is the piece that dominates the altar of the church, illuminating the entire central nave.

In the Columbus Chapel, another impressive geometric structure dominates the space, enveloped by a blend of soil, herbs, and spices—tobacco, corn, cacao, tomato, cinnamon, clove, or pepper—native to the Americas and introduced to Europe in the 15th century by the navigator, specifically cultivated for this project through a laborious organic farming process supervised by the artist and carried out by the **CAAC**.

The apse of the church leads us to the Chapel of Profundis—the place the monks used in the monastery to pray for the deceased before each meal—and the Sacristy, where **Morelos** recreates a cave and invites us to enter it, facing us as spectators with a metaphysical vision of the world that connects with Plato's myth of the cave. Entering it is to walk in a shadowless world that requires delving into the wisdom of the uncertain, into a universe without interpretation or subjectivity: "Life is but a walking shadow," as Shakespeare says in *Macbeth*. But **Morelos'** intention is for us to emerge; through the transformative power of art, we reconnect with the earth through aroma and form, and glimpse the light: the truth hidden in the depths; the understanding beyond superficial appearances.

In the Chapel of the Magdalena, a similar installation to the one in the Sacristy acts as a door, a separation between two worlds that intrinsically depend on each other, like light and shadow. "From the depths emerge hope, light, and love," said Oscar Wilde in *De Profundis* (1897), a moving meditation on the soul, human duality, suffering and redemption of the human condition, and the transformative power of forgiveness and understanding through the search for light.

*Profundis* invades the corners of the Monumental Zone of the monastery, leading us to the Refectory, where the monks, in complete silence, took their meals. In this room dominated by a 16th-century Mudéjar coffered ceiling, **Morelos** establishes a direct dialogue with the historical memory of the space through earth and its sacred power of reconciliation. The earth in the two pieces of the refectory serves as a means to excavate and reconstruct

historical memory, bringing to the surface, under a mysterious wrapping and in the form of reconciliation, a deeper and more honest understanding of the past. Morelos excavates and brings to the surface buried memories, as a symbolic act towards a deeper exploration of collective historical memory.

The premise that the earth itself is a breathing body is an essential part of the mythology of certain indigenous groups originating from the Andes and the Colombian Amazon, where **Morelos** comes from. *Profundis* can also be interpreted from the concept of the Mother Goddess or Great Goddess, the principal female deity associated with fertility, nature, and life in pre-Indo-European Neolithic cultures, coined by James George Frazer in *The Golden Bough* (1890) and developed by his followers such as Robert Graves (*The White Goddess*, 1948) or Marija Gimbutas (*Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe, 7000-3500 BC*, 1974). For Morelos, "the feminine [...] refers to a structure and a way of relating to the world from certain specific interests: listening, nurturing, care, the unconscious, harmony, connectivity, emotion, knowledge acquired from instinct and bodily experience. This feminine approach can be cultivated from any gender, as I believe it to be a human inclination, and even beyond, vital."

The round trip of *Profundis* to the cosmological fabric of ancestral cultures reminds us of the diversity and complexity of human beings, as well as their capacity to find meaning and connection with the world around them, regardless of their geographical or cultural origin. The universality of **Morelos'** language lies in drawing attention through her work to the "basket" in which the universe is woven, highlighting the interconnectedness of ecosystems, pointing out the symbolic space and opening the window to the senses so that we can capture the rhythm of the cosmic dance, the harmony of the spheres, and recognize our place in this eternal dance of existence:

"As a woman and as an artist, I always stop to listen to those ancestral words and wisdom that come from the Amazon jungle or the clay and stone huts in the peaks of the Andes. It is a wisdom that flows like a river for hundreds of years, through grandfathers, grandmothers, shamans, and healers, heirs of knowledge contained in oral stories, ceremonies, and rituals. What this wisdom conveys is how to communicate with the earth, with plants, with the river, with the mountain, with the wind, fire, sun, and moon; how we integrate this planetary and cosmic flow into our human cycles."

