

Pepoglyphs by Pepo Toledo

Umberto Eco defines culture as a communication phenomenon. This is based on significance systems we use to give meaning to the universe that surrounds us. Semiology or semiotics studies communication processes in society, what a group of words, gesture, or image means.

We are visual beings. "You don't think without images" said Aristotle. Signs are specific, and they represent visual form and abstract concepts, words, figures, and also sounds. They can be understood by animals. Symbols are more ample. They become necessary in daily activities such as traffic. The Greek word *glyfō* means engrave and it applies to a sign carved or incised, for example Mayan glyphs. It also applies to written or painted signs. The ones used on ancient Egypt are called hieroglyphs, the ones engraved on rock petroglyphs, and the ones I made for you *Pepoglyphs*.

Symbols are the vehicle to express concepts, they allow to inform and be informed. They make the ephemeral of the words and gestures perpetrate. They establish a connection with what they are representing, for example, the dove as a peace symbol. We encounter symbols that mean the same in different cultures, like the dragon associated to evil. And in other cases they mean the opposite, like the Nazi swastika symbol of evil, and in the ancient Sanskrit language means wellbeing. The one who observes an artwork can see a different meaning than the one meant by the artist. What will happen when you see the *Pepoglyphs*?

Symbols are images which meaning goes beyond the obvious. We find them influencing our every move. We are surrounded by symbolism, and sometimes we have to rely on science to comprehend them. Many people take the easy road, going through informative chaos to clumsy simplifications, leaving history secrets hidden. Every individual is forced to become a cryptologist since childhood.

Communication is vital for society to function. It doesn't get easier when there are barriers between people for social, geographic, cultural, language or even historical context reasons. These determine the point of view of each person, what we want to say, what we say, what the other heard or thinks he heard, etcetera. Additionally there are judgments, perceptions, distractions, expectations, emotions, labels, negativism, lies, defensiveness, inappropriate moments, bad jokes, and disposition to hear but not to listen; we can conclude that effective communication is a miracle. The necessity to build bridges, interpret, clarify terms and concepts, and illustrate ideas is born. The development of language and technology only enhances barriers or communication bridges. What matters is attitude.

Symbolic systems have different meaning for each culture. Almost 200 years ago, Champollion decoded Egyptian hieroglyphs. I dare you to decode the *Pepoglyphs*. Focus on the differences, find the order in the mutations. Each person has its own vision of reality, but what is real and what is unreal? Is our own perception of reality disturbed? The only truth is that what each person understands will be a reflection of his heart.