



## **Demons, Yemaya 'Goddess of the Living Ocean,' p94 from Indigenous Woman**

Gutierrez, Martine

---

**Not on display**

**Title/Description:** Demons, Yemaya 'Goddess of the Living Ocean,' p94 from *Indigenous Woman*

**Artist/Maker:** Gutierrez, Martine

**Born:** 2018

**Object Type:** Photograph (colour)

**Materials:** Ink, Paint, Photographic paper

**Measurements:** h. 1054 x w. 749 mm

**Accession Number:** 50935

**Production Place:** United States

**Copyright:** © Martine Gutierrez

**Credit Line:** Martine Gutierrez, Demons, Yemaya 'Goddess of the Living Ocean,' p94 from *Indigenous Woman*, 2018. © Martine Gutierrez; Courtesy of the artist and RYAN LEE Gallery, New York.

---

*Yemaya 'Goddess of the Living Ocean'* is one of five works from Gutierrez's *Demons* series, made for her celebrated publication *Indigenous Woman* (2018). *Indigenous Woman* used the language of fashion and advertising to subvert received ideas about ethnic and sexual identity.

*Indigenous Woman* adopts the format of Andy Warhol's *Interview* magazine, but in Gutierrez's version, its 124 pages are given over to the 'celebration of Mayan Indian heritage, the navigation of contemporary indigeneity, and the ever-evolving self-image', as she explains in her editor's note [1]. *Indigenous Woman* was described by *The New Yorker* as a 'critique of colonialism that's ready to party' [2].

The *Demons* series is subtitled, 'Diabolized feminine devotion: Aztec, Mayan and Yorùbá deities of the ancient world Resurrected in Hair'. Gutierrez recreates the divine beings that do not subscribe to binary notions of gender. She sought out iconography outside of the binary, because, as she said, 'we tend to see ourselves in god's image, whatever god that may be' [3]. Gutierrez presents herself as these goddesses with elaborate headpieces, beading, flowers and jewellery.

Yemaya is a Yorùbá water spirit and the mother of all Orishas (spirits). She is said to be the source

of all rivers, and is particularly associated with the Ogun River in Nigeria and the oceans in Cuban and Brazilian orisa religions. She is the mother of all and the protector of women. Yemaya is associated with moonlight, as suggested in the silver tones on the skin in Gutierrez's image. She wears cowrie shells around her neck, wrists and forehead and has orb-like hair referencing traditional African hairstyles.

The photograph is presented in a hand-painted frame, as a nod to historical decorative frames, which serve to raise the status of the image within, but here Gutierrez is also reframing and reaffirming her own identity. As she explains, 'Affirming my life is an ongoing project; it's all about identity at large' [4]. As a transgender, first generation artist of Indigenous descent, Gutierrez often gets defined by her identity, but by acting as photographer, lighting director, stylist, makeup artist, editor, set designer and model, Gutierrez claimed her own agency and identity in the creation of *Indigenous Woman*.

[1] Martine Gutierrez, *Indigenous Woman*, 2018.

[2] Andrea K Scott, 'A Trans Latinx Artist's High-Fashion Critique of Colonialism' in *The New Yorker* <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/a-trans-latinx-artists-high-fashion-critique-of-colonialism> [accessed 14 January 2025]

[3] Martine Gutierrez in Barbara Calderón, 'Demons and Deities: Martine Gutierrez's Indigenous Inspired Iconography' in *art21* <https://art21.org/read/demons-deities-martine-gutierrez/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CI%20was%20looking%20for%20iconography,may%20be%2C%E2%80%9D%20Gutierrez%20explained.> [accessed 14 January 2025]

[4] Martine Gutierrez in Nadiah Rivera Fella, 'Martine Gutierrez: Indigenous Woman' in *Aperture Archive* <https://archive.aperture.org/article/2020/3/3/martine-gutierrez-indigenous-woman> [accessed 14 January 2025]

Tania Moore

January 2025

---

## Exhibitions

Liquid Gender, Sainsbury Centre, 17.02.2024-04.08.2024

London Art Fair, Business Design Centre, London - 22/01/25 - 26/01/25

---

---

---