



# Pursuing an origami career from a developing country

Cekouat León

**5TH CONVENTION - APRIL 04-06 -2025 - HANOI - VIETNAM**

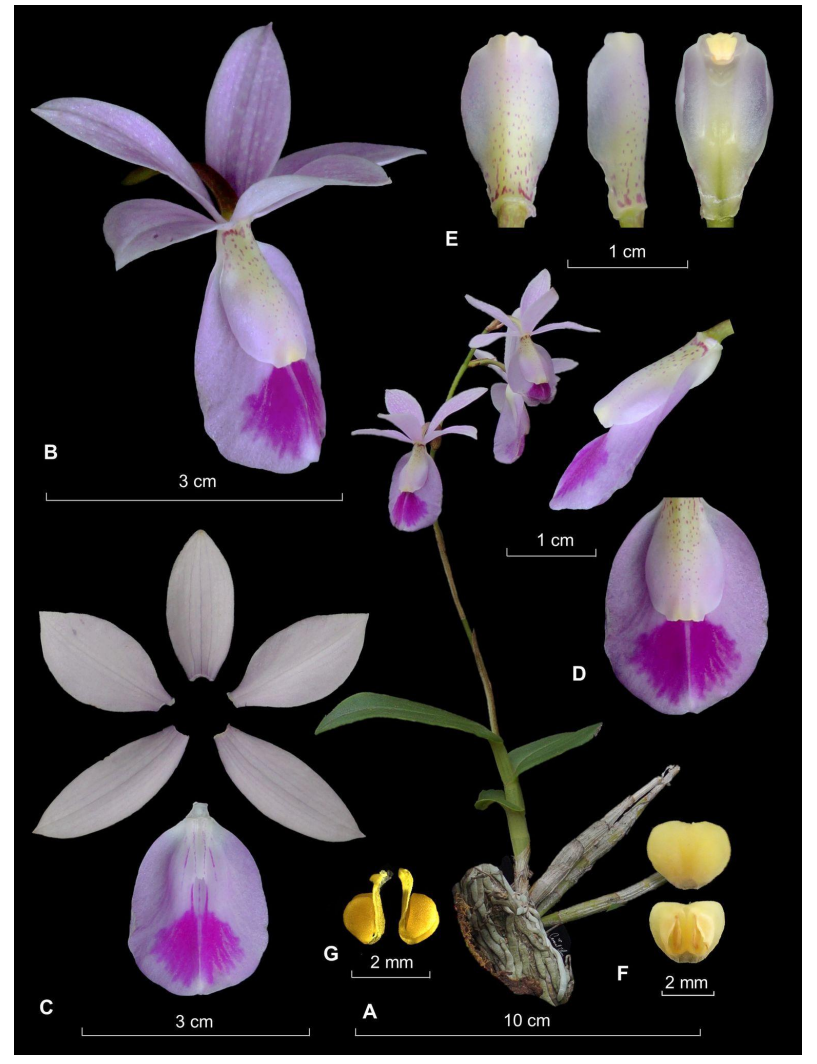
# Biology as a profession



<https://doi.org/10.11646/phytotaxa.674.3.3>

*Barkeria wixarika* (Laeliinae, Epidendroideae, Orchidaceae), a new species from Nayarit, Mexico

CEKOUAT E. LEÓN-PERALTA<sup>1,2,3,5</sup>, JASON JONES<sup>4,6</sup>, SERGIO REYNAUD<sup>2,7</sup> & EDUARDO A. PÉREZ-GARCÍA<sup>2,8\*</sup>



## Origami as a hobby



But what if...

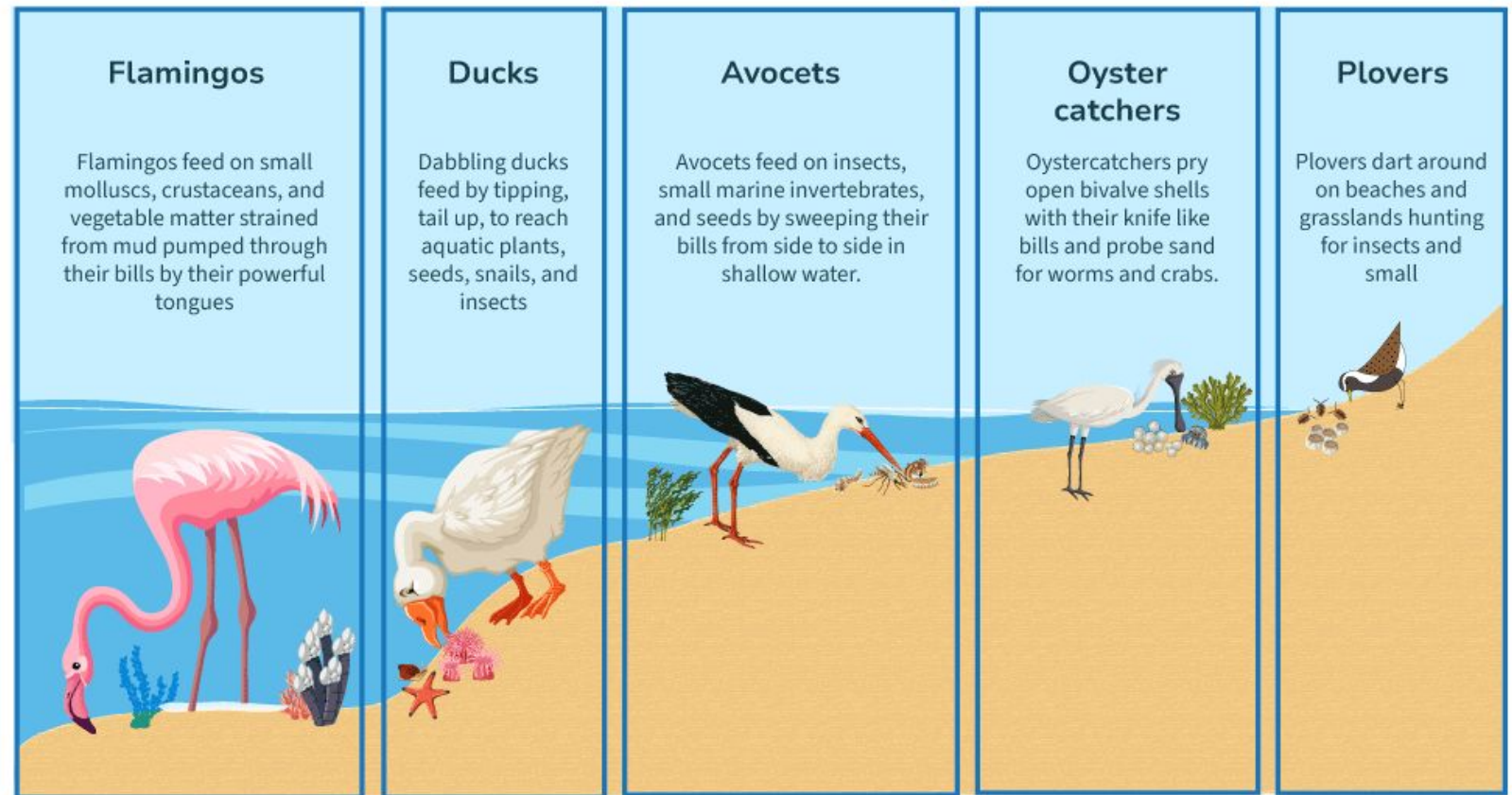


I'll answer that...but first, there's a whole bunch of caveats and fine print that needs to get laid out. The first one is: I can't tell you how to become me—or Joseph, Michael, Paul, or Sipho. There's already one of each of those. Each of today's professional origami artists is unique: we have our own artistic approaches, our own skill sets, and our own areas of specialization. There's certainly overlap in what we do (i.e., origami figures into it all), but we all have our niches. And if you become a professional artist, you'll have to find your niche.

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# Ecological niche

“In simple words, while habitat is the place where an organism lives, niche on the other hand is how an organism fits into and interacts with its habitat.”



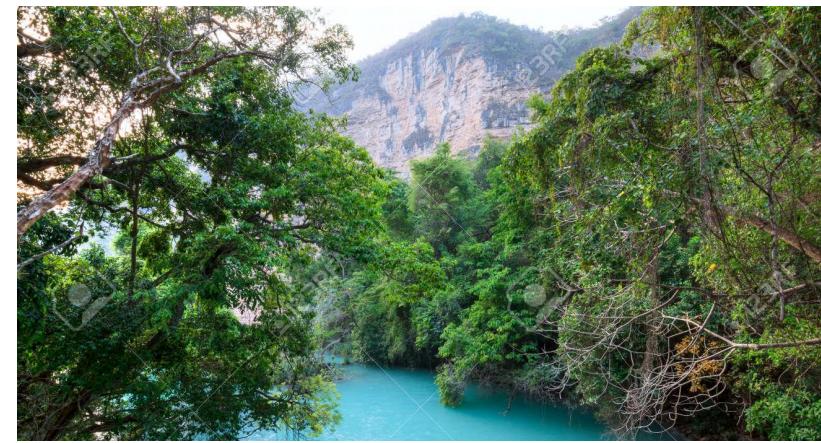
Mexico as “my habitat”



# Mexican Stereotypes: STARTER PACK



# Mexico as a diverse country



# Mexico as a complex country

GÜEROS



(2014)



(2019)



(2021)



Convención de Origami: 40ª Convención BOS 2007 (Cambridge)

143 k vistas • hace 17 años

happyfolding.com - enjoy origami online



Origami  
resources.  
Are they  
accessible?



Creators Directory



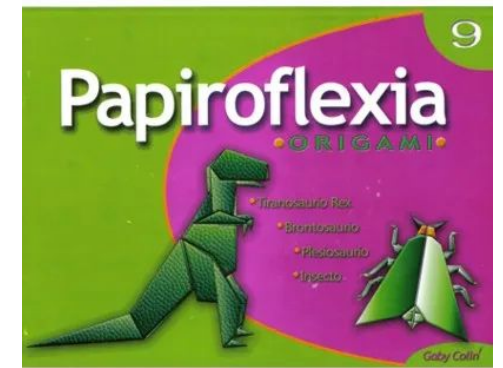
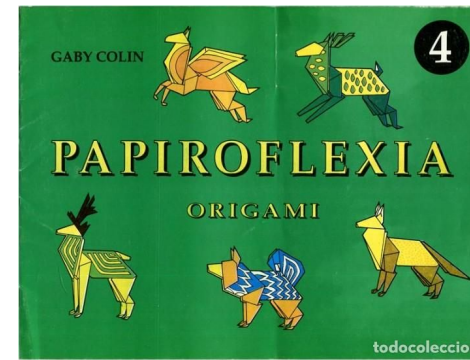
Convención de Origami: 40ª Convención BOS 2007 (Cambridge)

143 k vistas • hace 17 años

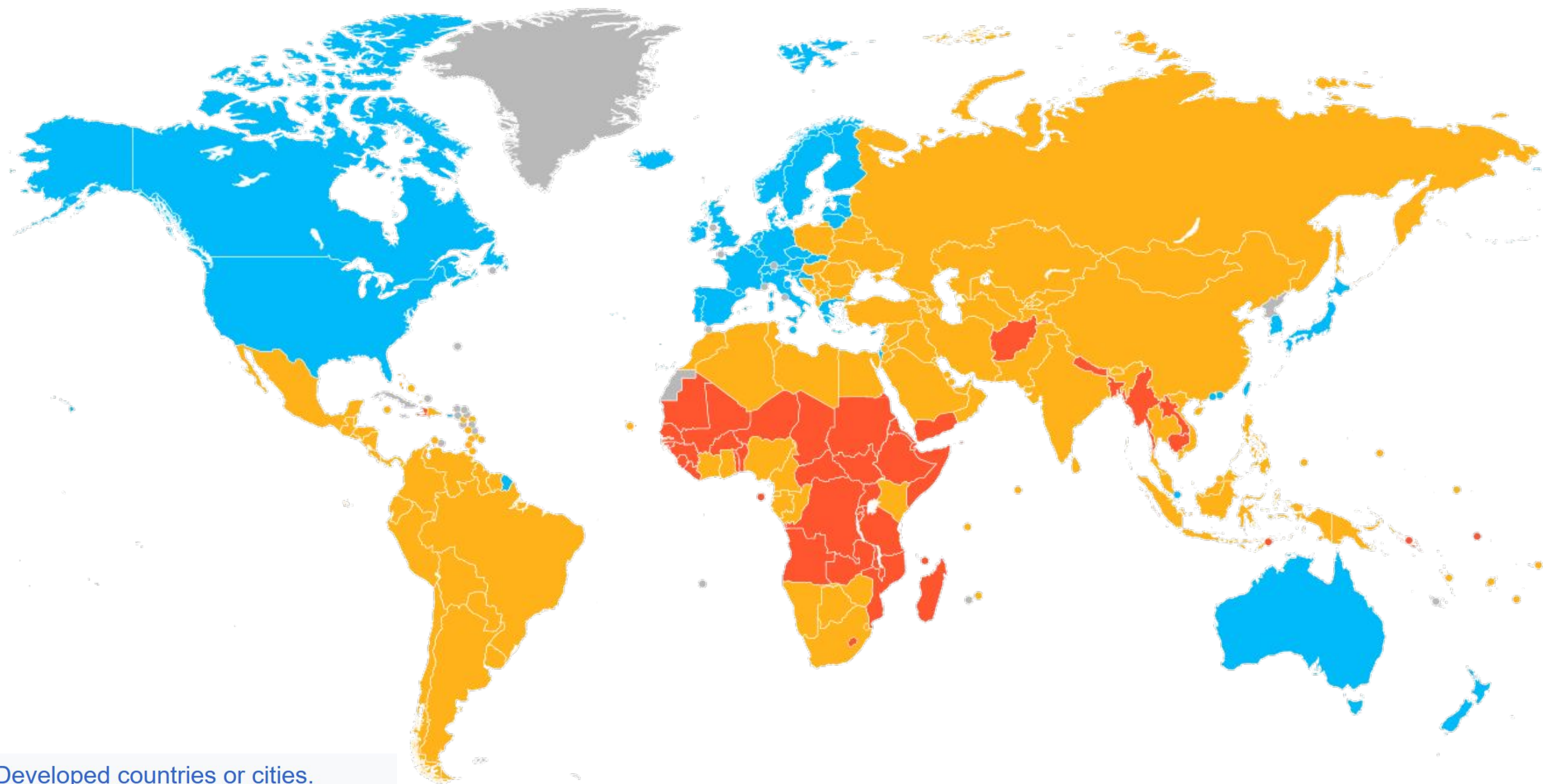
happyfolding.com - enjoy origami online



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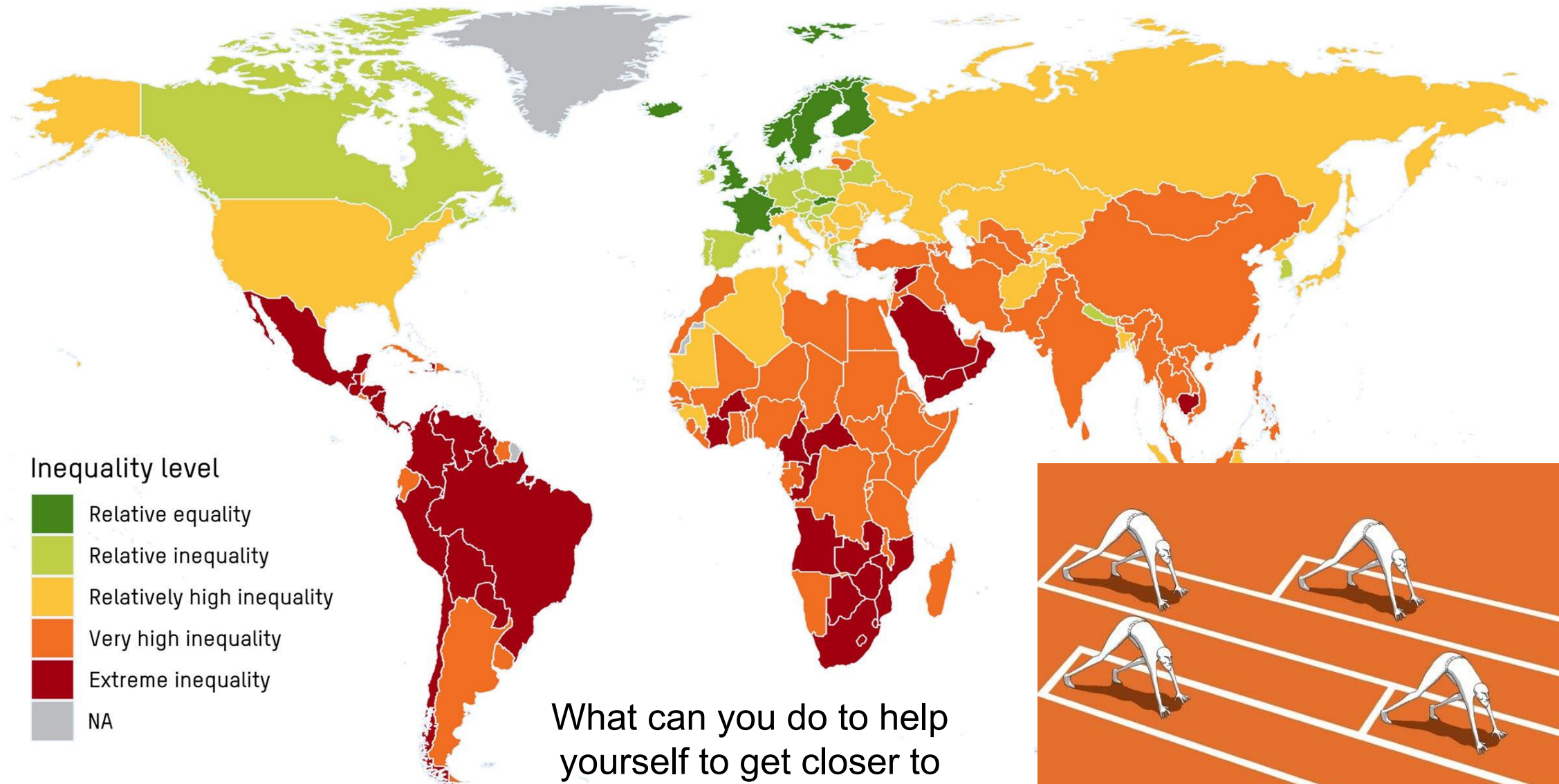


Creators Directory

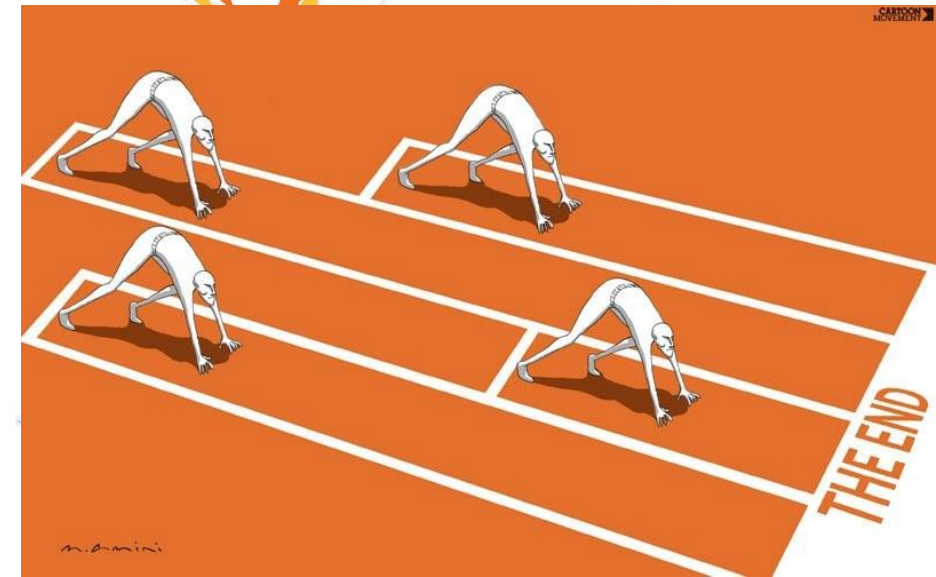


**Human Development Index map**  
(including poverty, literacy, education, and life expectancy)

# WHICH COUNTRIES ARE MOST UNEQUAL?



What can you do to help yourself to get closer to your goal?



# Path to an origami career (in my opinion)



Make the best  
work you can



Develop an identity



Be profesional



Collaborate



Have fun!

- 1. Make the best work you can



Don't strive to be famous, strive to be talented | Maisie Williams | TEDxManchester

4.9 M de vistas • hace 6 años



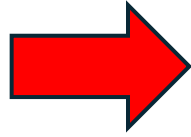
How craving attention makes you less creative | Joseph Gordon-Levitt

4 M de vistas • hace 5 años



- Put your creative needs first before likes and followers but stay open to criticism.
- Develop enough confidence to think your work is good, but not too much to think it's the BEST.
- "See your peers as collaborators not competition".

- 1. Make the best work you can



- 2. Develop an identity
  - Combine origami with any extra things you do.

 **ENTRADA LIBRE**

 **\$36 PÚBLICO EN GENERAL**

 **\$17 MENORES DE 12 AÑOS, MAESTROS Y ESTUDIANTES**

 **\$14 VISITAS GUIADAS PREVIA RESERVAIÓN**

 **ABIERTO MARTES A DOMINGO 10 A 17 HORAS**

 **ANTICIPE SU VISITA CIERRE DE TAQUILLA 16:30 HORAS**

 **SEGUNDA SECCIÓN DEL BOSQUE DE CHAPULTEPEC**



Conoce esta maravillosa colección de piezas de papel plegado, como un homenaje a distintos protagonistas de la biodiversidad global, principalmente la mexicana.

exposición  
**TEMPORAL**

Martes a domingo  
10 a 17 h  
Conjunto de Cuatro Bóvedas



 55 5515 8304  
55 5515 0758  
EXT 1120/1130

 **INCLUYE ACCESO AL MUSEO Y AL CÁRAMELO EL MISMO DÍA DE SU VISITA**

 **TOHAS PROFESIONALES SOLO CON PERMISO ESPECIAL**

 **SOLO PAGO EN EFECTIVO PAGA CON CAMBIO**

 **NO CONTAMOS CON TERMINAL BANCARIA**

 **PROGRAMACIÓN SUJETA A CAMBIOS SIN PREVIO AVISO**

 **ACTIVIDADES INCLUIDAS EN EL BOLETO DE ENTRADA**

LA BIBLIOTECA CENTRAL DE LA UNAM  
CELEBRA EL DÍA DE LAS INFANCIAS CON LA EXPOSICIÓN

# Eco-Origami



con obras de  
**Cekouat León**  
del 25 de abril al 12 de mayo de 2024  
Biblioteca Central de la UNAM - Sala de Consulta

Taller de origami impartido por el Mtro. Cekouat  
el 26 de abril de 11:00 a 12:00 hrs (cupos limitados).



cekouatorigami.com

Este evento cultural es público, ajeno a cualquier partido político. Queda prohibido el uso para fines distintos a los establecidos en el programa.  
Circuito escolar S/N, Ciudad Universitaria, Coyoacán, 04510 Ciudad de México.

- What can you incorporate from your own culture?
  - Use local materials
  - Inspire on native subjects
  - Work with national artists



Papel Oaxaca, Luis  
Torres, 2022



- Experiment with papers (or other materials) that have been very little experimented.



- All works folded using Mexican amate de mora



## Amate in the Twenty-First Century: Between Mountains and Dollars

CEKOUAT E. LEÓN-PERALTA

A vibrant mural on San Pablito's main street in Puebla, featuring a striking origami plane folded from a dollar bill at its center. *Below:* An amatero working in her family workshop. Each container holds strips of fiber, meticulously organized by color. All photos courtesy of the author.

Born into a family devoted to pre-Hispanic arts in Puebla, Mexico, I had been familiar with amate—Mexican bark paper—since an early age; however, my knowledge about its history was limited. It wasn't until I became involved in paper research as a biologist that I learned amate had persisted through the centuries in the complex, remote terrain of the Eastern Sierra Madre, where Indigenous Nahuatl and Otomí peoples of the region found refuge from political conflicts before and after colonization. To my surprise and concern, today I have witnessed amate resisting extinction in its only homeplace, the Otomí village of San Pablito, Puebla. Here, it faces signature problems of the twenty-first century, including migration and loss of biodiversity. With only a few dozen families still engaged in amate production, one can only wonder about the current state of this ancient craft and what the future holds for it.

# Unfolding Amate: History and Innovations of an Ancient Paper



*As origami enthusiasts, we are usually seeking papers that fit best the subjects of our preference. For example, you might pick a sheet of elephant hide to make a tessellation, regular kami to fold a simple model,*

By Cekouat León\*

Amate paper—hereafter only amate—has been made in Mexico from the inner bark of certain trees since pre-Hispanic times. It is not clear when it was invented, but the oldest records of it date from two thousand years ago. In the past, amate was commonly used to make other products such as cloths, decorations for religious

mountains in the Eastern Sierra Madre. One century ago, there were still a few villages where amate was manufactured at small scale by shamans (brujos), who made cut out figures (nzhaki) in secrecy for different kinds of rituals. However, nowadays amate is made only by around 50 families in the Otomí or Hñahñu village of San Pablito, in northern Puebla (Fig. 2). The amate made in San Pablito has two main purposes: to make nzhaki



Scan to learn more



# BARK RHYTHMS

Contemporary Innovations & Ancestral Traditions



Atlanta • May 6–August 23    Denver • October 4–26

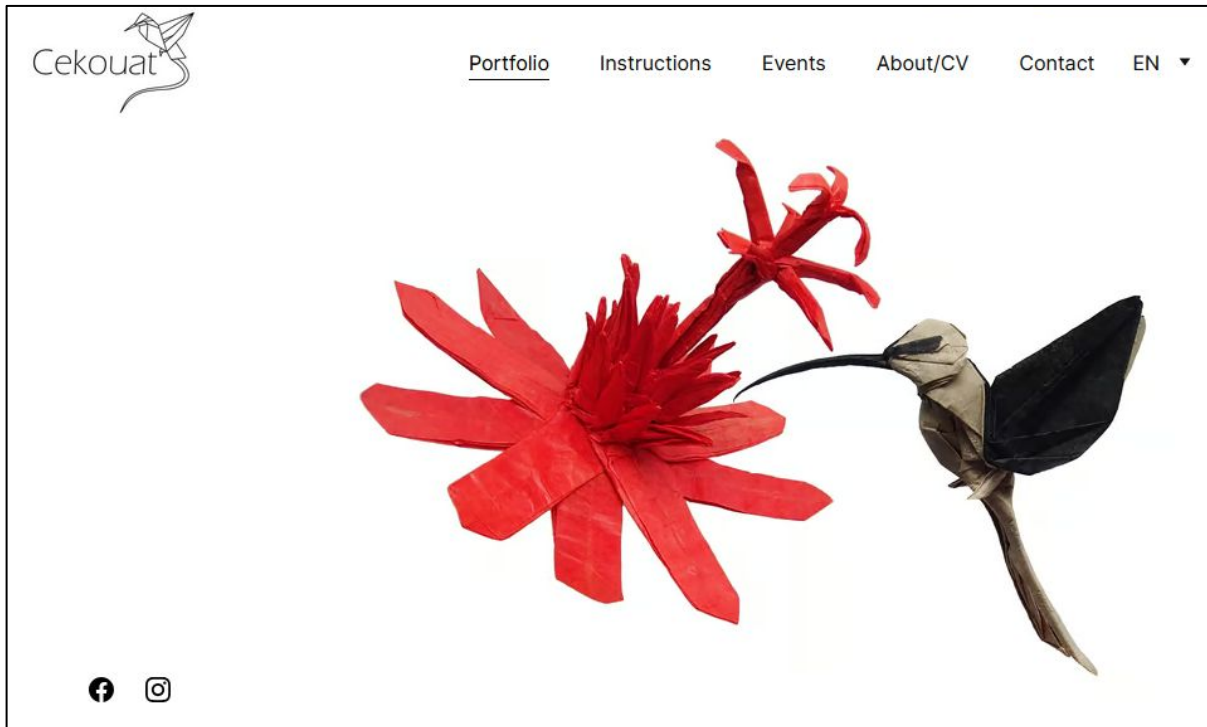


Robert C. Williams  
Museum of Papermaking

**NAHP**  
NORTH AMERICAN  
HAND PAPERMAKERS



- 3. If you want to be perceived as a professional, act as such
  - Promotion: website vs social media
  - Price realistically
    - Certificates of authenticity
    - Use the best materials (offer a pallet to the client)
    - But stay humble! Be accessible to your local community

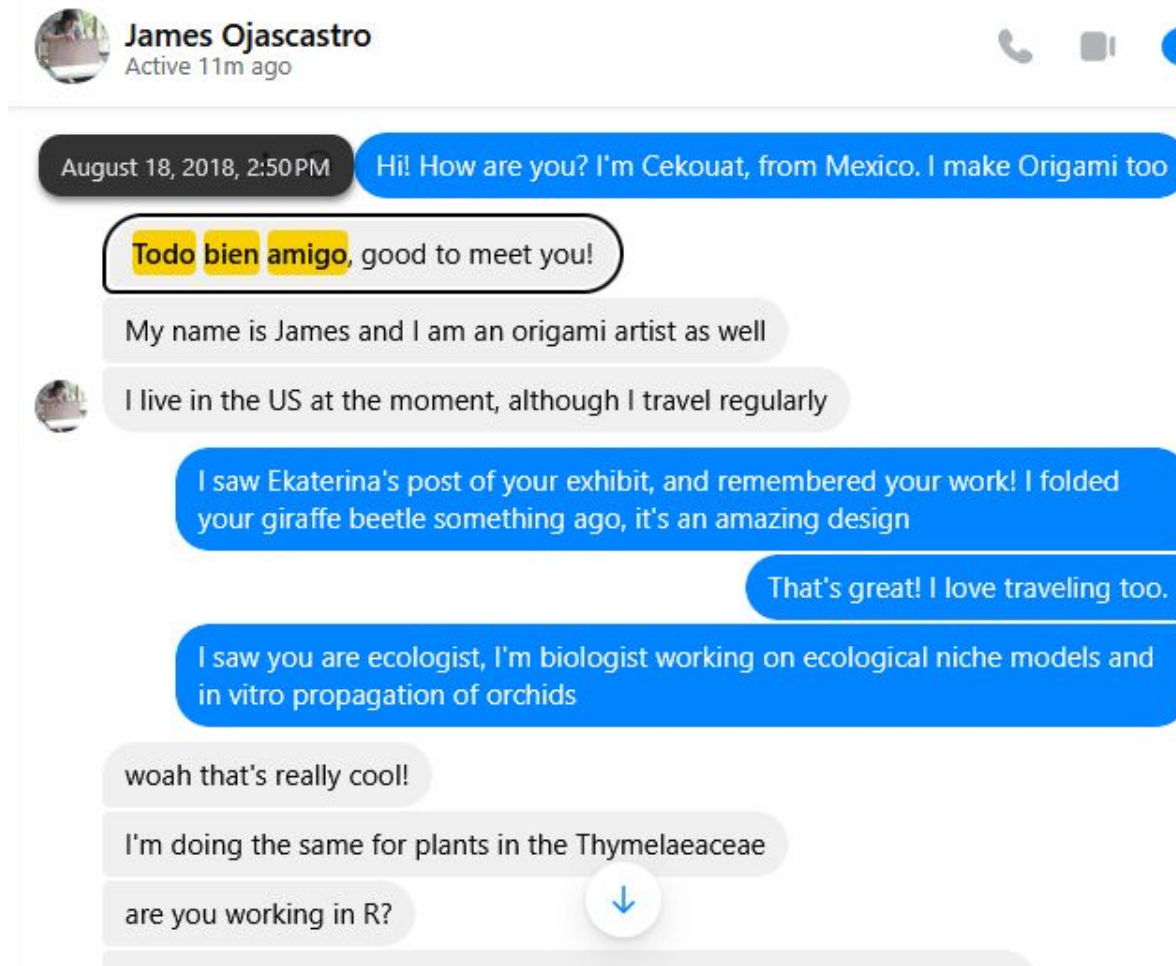


- 3. If you want to be perceived as a professional, act as such

Some of what you can offer:

- Products
  - Commissioned folded works
    - Artworks (for museums\private, unique)
    - Simple designs (for gifts, a few)
    - Traditional designs (decorations, hundreds)
- Services
  - Workshops (1 hour to 1 week)
  - Complete courses (1 to several weeks)
  - Talks (specialized subjects)
  - Articles (specialized subjects)

- 4. Collaborate!!
  - Send messages
  - Spread what you do

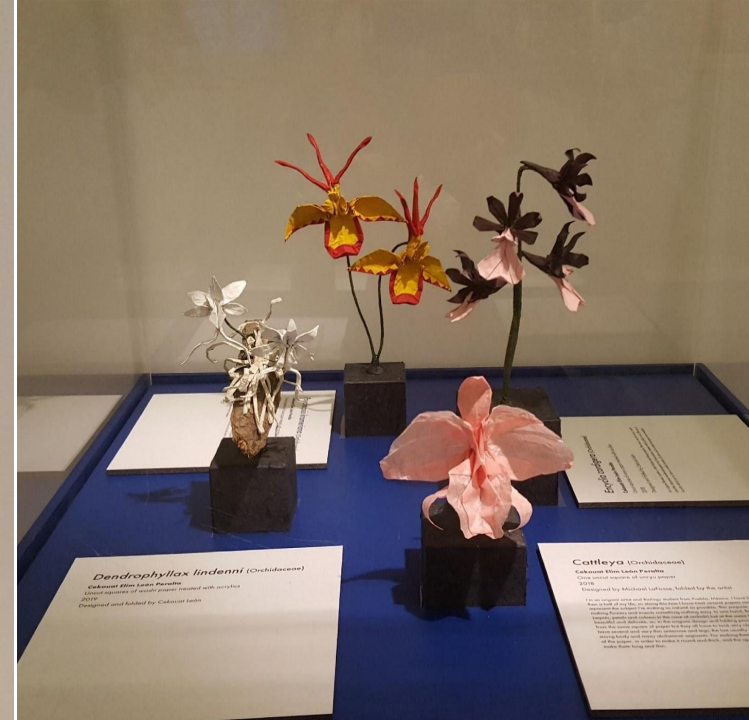


but given your botanical bent maybe you'd be interested in this collaboration I'm setting up?

I work with the Missouri Botanical Garden. We put up summer exhibitions and activities. A few colleagues and me (one papermaker, one ethnobotanist, and myself) are working on a summer exhibit on Plants and Papermaking there for 2019

since you have flower-themed origami perhaps you would be interested in participating? I think since you're nearby we could ensure insurance for your work

# Leafing Through History



- Exhibition at MoBoT (2019)

James Lucas  
Beth Johnson  
Cekouat Léon  
Isabella Myers  
Jon Tucker  
Nguyễn Quyết Tiến  
Rob Snyder  
Robert Lang  
Shoko Nakamura  
Shuki Kato  
Catherine Liu



- Field work in Mexico researching amate paper (2022)

- Paper and amate workshops in Atlanta (2023)

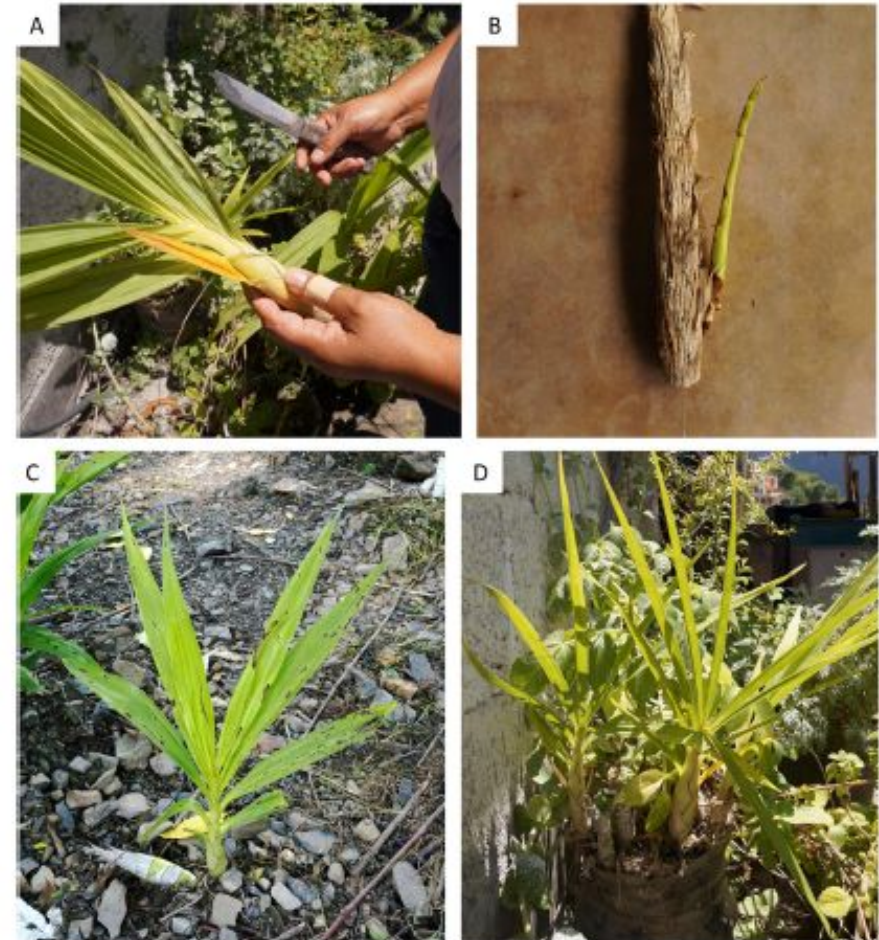


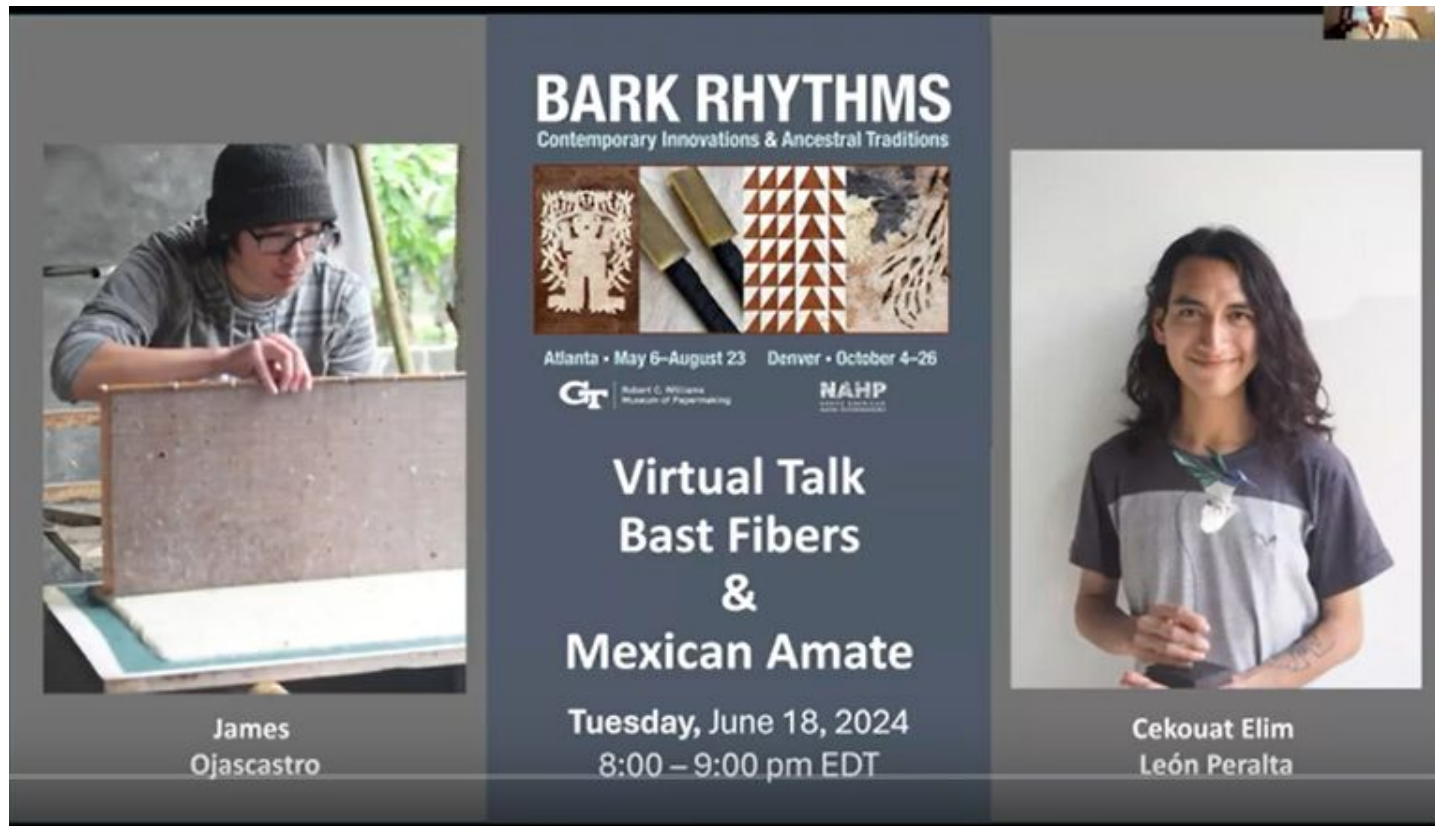
- Academic publications (2024)

## **The Sticky Relationship Between Orchids and Mexican Amate Paper: Present and Possible Past**

CEKOUAT E. LEÓN-PERALTA<sup>1</sup>, AND JAMES OJASCASTRO<sup>2,3</sup> 

*Economic Botany*, 78(3), 2024, pp. 221–241  
© 2024, The New York Botanical Garden





The video player features a central title card for 'BARK RHYTHMS: Contemporary Innovations & Ancestral Traditions'. The card includes a collage of images: a person working with bark, a knife, a geometric pattern, and a piece of bark. It lists two exhibition dates: 'Atlanta • May 6–August 23' and 'Denver • October 4–26'. Logos for 'GT Robert C. Williams Museum of Papermaking' and 'NAHP' are present. The main title of the talk is 'Virtual Talk Bast Fibers & Mexican Amate', scheduled for 'Tuesday, June 18, 2024' from '8:00 – 9:00 pm EDT'. On the left, a video thumbnail shows 'James Ojascastro' working with bark. On the right, a video thumbnail shows 'Cekouat Elim León Peralta'.

**BARK RHYTHMS**  
Contemporary Innovations & Ancestral Traditions

Atlanta • May 6–August 23    Denver • October 4–26

GT Robert C. Williams Museum of Papermaking    NAHP

**Virtual Talk  
Bast Fibers  
&  
Mexican Amate**

Tuesday, June 18, 2024  
8:00 – 9:00 pm EDT

James Ojascastro

Cekouat Elim León Peralta



Scan to learn more

### Virtual Artist Talk, Bark Rhythms: Bast Fibers & Mexican Amate



Robert C. Williams Museum of ...  
421 suscriptores

Suscribirse



1



- Send that message, you don't know where it will take you!

# Orquídeas y colibríes

Cekouat  
León



-EMOZ-

Escuela  
Museo  
Origami  
Zaragoza

2ª Planta

del 24 de junio  
al 17 de septiembre  
de 2023

- Submit proposals to institutions...



## ENTRE PÉTALOS Y PLIEGUES

### EXHIBICIÓN

Orquídeas  
confeccionadas  
en origami por  
el diseñador  
mexicano  
CEKOUAT LEÓN



18 DE ABRIL AL 14 DE MAYO 2025  
JARDÍN BOTÁNICO LANKESTER

\*Costo incluido en el tiquete de ingreso al JBL



## ZOORIGAMI *del zoológico al papel*

03 - 22 de septiembre de 2024



Tenoch Acosta • José Balderas • Miguel Correa • Javier Hernández • Guillermo Inclán  
Cekouat León • Gabriel Martínez • Guadalupe Martínez • Sandra Rodríguez



**ANIVERSARIO**  
ZOOLOGICO DE CHAPULTEPEC  
ALFONSO L. HERRERA 1923-2024

- ...and when possible, take others with you!

- 5. Have fun!
  - Origami is about sharing
  - Use your voice to spread joy!



# Some extras

- Getting an academic education may be helpful
- Learning another language opens doors
- Get involved in your community
- Apply to grants

## CFC LATAM

Miguel Ganan - Manager

Maria A Costa - Director

Cekouat Elim León Peralta - Director

## Octava Reunión Mensual de CFC Latam

Conversación con  
«Nicolás Gajardo Henríquez»

28 de Enero

6 pm → Argentina/São Paulo  
4 pm → Colombia/Perú  
3 pm → Cdi/Mx



## Richard Evans Schultes Research Award

The Schultes Award was created in 2001 to honor the late Dr. Richard Evans Schultes. One or more awards of up to \$2500 are presented annually to students and recent graduates who are members of the Society for Ethnobotany, to help defray the costs of field work on a topic related to ethnobotany.



**Richard E. Schultes (12 January 1915-10 April 2001): A Tribute** by Sir Ghilleen T. Prance  
(includes Schultes bibliography)

## Grants



For the first time, and thanks to Mitya Miller's generosity we can support artists who struggle to find the funds to get to the event. If you wish to get this grant, please fill out this [form](#). Accepted requests would not pay the convention fee as well, but have to pay for the extra activities.



**CFC Origami**  
Community for Creators of Origami

Thank you!  
Questions?

