

A Japanese Rite to Preserve the City's Native Trees

A group of artists gathered beneath the shade of a Jacaranda to contemplate and sketch it

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Appreciating and making certain elements of the urban landscape visible is not easy when frenzy beats contemplation. Nonetheless, that is the challenge posed by Project Samohú, carried out by a group of artists who defend the preservation of floral native trees such as Tabebuia, cockspur coral tree, Jacaranda, Tipa and silk floss tree through the contemplation and sketching -in watercolors- of its flowers.

One of the activities carried out by this group is the native Hanami, a millenary Japanese ceremony that involves sitting beneath the cherry trees in bloom, over a white tablecloth that tinges with the falling flowers, while enjoying a cup of tea.

"We promote hanami with the varied native trees of Buenos Aires in order to make their beauty visible, which many people ignore, as well as they ignore the fact that the trees are in danger," said to La Nación Cristina Coroleu, the watercolorist that led the group of artists that yesterday, at 6 PM, met in the corner of Sarmiento and del Libertador Avenue, beneath the shade of the Jacarandas, which display their appealing lilac flowers this time of the year.

"The colors and fragrances of these trees in bloom are part of the palette of the city's different seasons. It is a legacy left to us by those who knew how to make things with the future in mind," said Coroleu, alluding to Charles Thays (1849-1934), the distinguished French landscapist who brought several native species to Buenos Aires and whose work was carried on by his disciples.

The first hanami performed in the city took place last month, under the famous Tabebuia in the corner of Figueroa Alcorta and Ramón Castilla, in Palermo Chico.

"The pink flower from the Tabebuia inaugurates the flowering calendar of trees, and the last one to bloom is the silk floss tree, in February, with a flower that remains until July. It could be argued that the city is in bloom all year long. It would be a pity if this ever changed," said Coroleu, who will repeat the ceremony when the Tipa is in bloom next month.

According to the artist, the effect of climate change is reflected in the flowering of trees: "They are almost a month ahead; that is why, apart from the care needed by each species that still stands today, it is necessary to reflect upon what the cities of the future will be like and what we should do about it."

Since 2005, Coloreu has been organizing seminars in the country inland. Two years ago in the province of Salta, she has formed a group that invites painters from the region to paint the native flora as a way of raising awareness about it and protecting it.

"My dream is that one day we will be many more, a succession of people having picnics under the blooming trees," said the artist. For more information, visit www.samohu.blogspot.com.

(Pie de foto) Artists contemplated the falling lilac petals of the Jaracanda over white tablecloths