

Being Fire

We have been using fire for our benefit for a million years. It's a dual element: it can be destructive, but it can also regenerate. Without fire, there would be no life and all the diverse ecosystems we see on Earth.

Fire transforms. Ceramics and painting are possible thanks to fire, which hardened the clay figurines and gave light to the caves where the first paintings were made. Fire is multisensory. We don't just see it, we can hear it, we can feel it, and it even shapes the odors and taste of that which it consumes.

Fire protects us from the cold, but get too close and it will burn you. It makes life easier, but in excess it destroys. It has been essential in discovering what is in the dark, and thanks to it we have built communities, telling stories around bonfires. That is why Summerians, Greeks, Wixárikas, Mazatecs, Nahuatl, Polynesians, and many other cultures across the world have created myths around the discovery and use of fire.

Prometheus' myth is probably the most famous among them. He who stole fire from the gods and gave it to humanity. But there are similar myths where demigods or animals such as opossums, coyotes, squirrels, and spiders stole fire in order to give it to humanity, enraging the gods and suffering their punishment.

Even people dedicated to science have been called promethean, mainly when their work is believed to go against the design of the gods. Mary Shelley's Doctor Frankenstein, also known as the *Modern Prometheus*; Marie Curie, nicknamed Sister Promethea; or Robert Oppenheimer, father of the atom bomb and called the *American Prometheus*, are among them.

There are also many stories dedicated to grandpa Fire, an entity that offers knowledge and learning. Words, just like fire, build or destroy depending on whether we name something or not. Let us then name other knowledge, other wisdoms, other fires. Let us recognize other ways of understanding and building worlds.

Being fire is not just confronting the design of the gods, but also confronting those who would ignore our existence. No one is born with disabilities, it's our surroundings that disable us. We are many fires for we are many genders, identities, ages, bodies, sensorialities, and experiences. Building a single way of living the world limits the possibility of other fires and other knowledge.

Being fire is acknowledging that there are no absolute perspectives. It is questioning who writes history and from which perspective. Being fire is confronting and burning ourselves in order to be transformed. To generate and share knowledge, even when the risk of being devoured by it exists.