Inspicio
to sugarcoat the laconic quality of his statement. A silence en-
is nothing wrong, nothing to add, he says, and smiles humbly
Lake Nicaragua). “I know I am done with a painting when there
ago of Solentiname in Nicaragua’s great Lake Cocibolca (aka
lentiname, which in time were used as illustrations in Cardenal’s
gospels. Those became the first “Primitivist” paintings of So-
idea that these new painters could illustrate the stories of the
painting to those who wanted to learn. Father Cardenal had the
lano could do, he decided to volunteer to teach the basics of
similar if he gave me the materials. Roger appeared to take me
I observed him painting, and I told him I could do something
he wanted to work in isolation, in the serenity of Solentiname.
name of Roger Pérez de la Rocha arrived. He came because
loves to tell the story. “One day, at the beginning of the com-
pect reputation in the eyes of the dictatorship. Don Rodolfo
not an easy task, considering its remote location and its sus-
Writers and artists also started coming to the islands. It was
recalls.
We rowed into Mancarrón from all the neighboring islands, and
would gather for a communal meal to which we all contributed.
community with the peasants of the islands, allowing them to
a magnet for those seeking alternatives to the Somoza regime
Catholic priest and poet Ernesto Cardenal. It quickly became
chimera. In 1966, a contemplative community was formed by
oppression, and of the promise of a better world. This is no
be a numinous place. Over the course of the past six decades
The archipelago of Solentiname itself is considered by many to
mystical in the room, which is why nobody talks.
reveal the painter’s vision of the world, there is a sense of the
blues, greens and purples are spellbinding. At that moment,
ame, for those are a big part of Don Rodolfo’s inspiration. The
not more so — as the flora and fauna of the islands of Solentin-
walls. The drab room comes alive with colors as vibrant — if
sues, and almost on cue a young woman appears and begins
wooden rancho on the island of La Venada, part of the archipel-
chair directly across from me. We are in his studio, a modest
participate in the enjoyment of beauty.
works!”
“You see, he says with a slightly animated tone, “the intuition
what I have seen all around Solentiname. “
“Don Rodolfo, I say to him, “what I see in your paintings is
the future, you could call it. “
“Nion with the earth, he answers me. “A kind of nostalgia for
“Better world, a thirst for cooperative spirit and for commu-
“What is it that your paintings intuit?” I have to ask.
“They call our painting style ‘primitive,’ he says, as if able to
ple. There really is nothing “primitive” about this art.
shades of blue of Lake Solentiname, the faces of birds and peo-
meticulously detailed — the leaves of the trees, the different
paintings that seem to prophesize a future. Each picture is
ing my gaze from his eyes that sparkle with the past, to the
Throughout Don Rodolfo’s fascinating narration, I keep switch-
materials were available again!
visions of solidarity and hatred for the enemy. After the Sandi-
movement, as well as to sustaining their government subse-
cally, just spreading terror as a defeat tactic. “It didn’t work, “
approached by boat. They were not looking for anyone specifi-
Mancarrón, locals would keep a lookout for the soldiers who
like sheltering runaways. They were constantly in hiding. After
1980s.
quent to victory in 1979, and later during the Contra War of the
which was vital to the expansion of the Sandinista revolutionary
come Minister of Culture, led to the creation of a lasting legacy,
the revolution. The guidance of Cardenal, who was later to be-
bers joined the guerrilla movement, some became martyrs of
destruction by land and air raids. Most of the surviving mem-
The community prevailed for 11 years, until Somoza ordered its
into account, they refused to change sides, they were not
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