



NAHUAL

After a spiritual journey, this photographer collaborated with an ancient Yucatán community to make his first book

Perspective by Kenneth Dickerman
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When he was 18, Santiago Sierra Soler traveled from his native Mexico to Melbourne, Australia, to study art direction. Once his studies were complete, he moved to New York City, where he set up a studio and soon began working as a fashion photographer.



Santiago found success, working for blockbuster brands like Chanel, Swarovski, Dior, Nike, Vogue and HBO. His work also brought him into proximity with big-name celebrities like Beyoncé, Emma Stone, Dua Lipa and Novak Djokovic. Despite all his success, he found that something was missing from his life.

After a spiritual awakening, Santiago traveled through Asia, South America and Africa in search of something more elemental, something deeper than what he had experienced working as a commercial photographer.



His first book, "Nahual," emerged from that spiritual quest. A release about the book describes its title's origin: "In Mesoamerican indigenous tradition, Nahual refers to human beings who have the power to shapeshift and transform into animals, elements of nature or perform supernatural acts. It is also a form of introspection that allows those who practice it to have close contact with the natural world and the spiritual world."



Santiago's work came together after collaborating with a community in Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula, centered on the Yucatec-Maya archaeological site of Ek' Balam. His book is an exploration of the practice of nahual, and he hopes to create awareness of the practice and its people.

"Nahual" was made possible not only by that collaboration but also the skills of costume designer and stylist Chino Castilla.



Here's a look at what all of that collaboration ended up producing.

Fotos From the book "Nabual." (Santiago Sierra Soler)

