Abstract Currents in Ecuadorian Art

ARACELI
MALDONADO
MOLINARI
RENDON
TABARA
VILLACIS

PREFACE

In 1975, the Center was privileged to present an exhibition entitled *Ecuador: Culture Clay and Creativity*. Included were some six hundred objects representing the diversity and extraordinary dynamism of Ecuador's pre-Columbian societies.

As a sequel to that exhibition—and as current evidence of Ecuador's vigorous artistic tradition—we are pleased, indeed, that it has been possible for us to organize the exhibition *Abstract Currents in Ecuadorian Art*. Although contemporary Ecuadorian art has been included in previous group shows displayed at the Center, *Abstract Currents* represents an initial and belated effort to gather in our Gallery the works of a significant group of artists exclusively from Ecuador.

Doing so would have been almost impossible without the expert critical assistance of our guest curator, Jacqueline Barnitz, who not only wrote the comprehensive essay in this catalogue, but also made two extensive trips to Ecuador in order to organize the material and interview the artists. In connection with one of these trips, Ms. Barnitz also organized the exhibition *Formalism and Informalism in Ecuadorian Art*, a precursor to our exhibition, presented at the Organization of American States in Quito early this year. Both of these exhibitions were made possible through generous financial support from the Phelps Dodge Corporation, and in the case of the Quito exhibition, with assistance from CABLEC, the Phelps Dodge affiliate there. I wish to extend the Center's very warm thanks to Phelps Dodge for its participation.

The Center also would like to express its deep appreciation to Mr. and Mrs. Luis A. Noboa Naranjo, who kindly arranged the ocean transportation for most of the paintings from Ecuador to New York. Our thanks, finally, to Ms. Leticia Guerrero, Deputy Consul General of Ecuador in New York, who assisted us in many ways that went beyond her official duties.

With the aid of these and many other friends, we have been able to display works from two very important periods of art in Ecuador. Thus, it is with great satisfaction that we present this catalogue, and the exhibition *Abstract Currents in Ecuadorian Art*.

JAMES B. WOLFE

JACQUELINE BARNITZ
Guest Curator

Abstract Currents in Ecuadorian Art

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CENTER FOR INTER-AMERICAN RELATIONS

The Center for Inter-American Relations conducts educational programs in visual arts, literature, performing arts, and public affairs in order to enlarge our knowledge and appreciation of the cultural heritage as well as of the politics, economics and social issues of the Western Hemisphere.

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We would like to extend our sincere thanks to Ms. Phyllis Freeman for her valuable editorial assistance.

We also wish to extend our appreciation to Ecuatoriana Airlines for their cooperation.

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JACQUELINE BARNITZ

Abstract Currents in Ecuadorian Art

In the late sixties, Ecuadorian art showed evidence of a tremendous expansion, embracing such polarities as indigenism and conceptual art. The six artists in this exhibition are representative of the abstract currents most prevalent in the country; they are, however, by no means the only ones exploring these and other nonindigenous trends.

Although most of these artists have exhibited abroad, they are not known as a group, and in the context of their country. A consideration of the main developments of Ecuadorian art in the twentieth century is necessary in order to establish the ambience in which these artists grew up and developed, the advantages and disadvantages of their environment, and the ways they resolved these factors.

When Araceli Gilbert and Manuel Rendón first returned to Ecuador from their days of study and apprenticeship in Paris, they had to do without the stimulation of an art community until after the mid-sixties. But conversely, their return, followed by that of Enrique Tábara, Aníbal Villacís, Luis Molinari, and (briefly) Estuardo Maldonado, contributed to the cultural expansion that made it possible for younger artists to work more freely. Furthermore, the current art market there has enabled artists to live from the proceeds of their work. Some of them sell it before the paint is dry (Villacís and Rendón), while others get commissions for monumental work (Molinari and Maldonado). Five of the six—all but Maldonado—now live in Ecuador.

If there is one major feature that sets off the works of these artists from those of other countries, it is the Ecuadorians' persistent delight in brilliant, harmonious color or in a visually appealing elaboration of surface elements. Although they are fully familiar with contemporary art in other parts of the world, some deliberately ignore what is internationally fashionable in favor of what is relevant to them because they feel under no pressure to compete. There has been little interest in photorealism or body and ecological art since these forms of expression have no meaning to them.

Harmony prevails, not tension or hostility. There is a reaffirmation and exaltation, not an indictment, of esthetic enjoyment. But far from being elitists, they believe their art can appeal to everyone who sees it, from any segment of society, because as Araceli said—paraphrasing the Uruguayan symbolist poet (and hero of the surrealists) Lautréamont—they prefer to "sing exclusively of hope, calm, luck, and duty," rather than of "the puerile reverse of things."

From the Precursors to the Present

From the nineteenth century on, the breathtaking beauty of the Ecuadorian Andes and the tropical environment of the coast have furnished the subject matter for native as well as foreign artists. The highlands captivated Frederic Edwin Church in the late 1850s, as the coast seduced the Catalonian-born painter and caricaturist José Roura Oxandaberro when he arrived in 1910. As recently as the mid-fifties, landscapes and local scenes remained the subject of later immigrant artists such as the German Hans Michaelson, the North American Lloyd Wulf, and the Dutchman Jan Schreuder, all of whom arrived at the beginning of World War II. Manuel Rendón, Luis Molinari, Estuardo Maldonado, Enrique Tábara, Aníbal Villacís, and Araceli Gilbert all began their careers with landscape and figure painting, and in some cases, the immigrant artists were their first teachers.

While landscape painting furnished a means to experiment with new impressionist, expressionist, and surrealist approaches, figure painting continued to follow the symbolist tradition that had existed in the nineteenth century during the thirty-five year presidency (1860-95) of the devoutly Catholic Gabriel García Moreno and well into the twentieth century.

The practitioners of this symbolism —which remained linked to late colonial religious painting—were the original teachers in the Quito School of Fine Arts when it was founded in 1904 under the more liberal government of Eloy Alfaro. The symbolists Juan Manosalvas, Joaquín Pinto, and Rafael Salas all taught there, but they were already old, and by 1906, they had died. New blood had to be found to reactivate the school. Other artists, especially Antonio Salguero and a younger symbolist, Víctor Mideros, helped to reorganize the school. By 1912, several additional artists had joined in implementing new programs. The French-born Paul Alfred Bar introduced impressionist painting and drawing classes, sculpture was taught by an Italian, Luigi Casadio, and from 1914 on, Roura Oxandaberro taught landscape and caricature. The latter mode became so popular that in 1918 a magazine entitled *Caricatura* was launched.

During the 1910s, the government took two major steps to encourage national art: it prohibited the export of archaeological objects, and it began to award grants to artists permitting them to study in Europe. In 1917, a philanthropist, Dr. Mariano Aguilera, in a burst of enthusiasm over the annual salon inaugurated in 1914 at the School of Fine Arts, bequeathed his fortune to the school in order to provide a prize for the best artist of each salon. In 1924, the National Center of Fine Arts was founded; in 1932, the Circle of Fine Arts; and in 1935, the Artists' Society. Other artists arrived from abroad, including Guillermo Olgiesser, a Romanian who introduced a Cézannesque approach to landscape, and Olga Anhalzer Fish, a Hungarian who had studied African cultures and subsequently became one of Quito's great promoters of folklore.

Enterprising individuals also began establishing art centers. The Quiteño painter Camilo Egas opened the Egas Art Center in 1927 in an old converted garage off the Alameda. The center became a meeting place for artists and intellectuals, as did the Galería Siglo XX forty years later. Egas, who had studied in Spain and Italy, was the first artist to represent indigenous subjects in a bold, expressionist monochrome style similar to that of Orozco, with whom he formed a friendship in New York. Both artists painted murals there at the New School for Social Research, where Egas studied and then directed the art department for many years.

By the thirties, other indigenist painters began to emerge, notably Diógenes Paredes (a pupil of Egas) and Eduardo Kingman Riofrío (a pupil of Mideros), with whom Egas had painted the murals in the Ecuadorian Pavilion at the New York World's Fair in 1939. In 1940, Kingman founded the Galería Caspicara

in Quito together with his brother Nicolás. Soon they were joined by other artists who shared an interest in indigenist themes and who had studied at the School of Fine Arts. They included Pedro Leon, Leonardo Tejada, Luis Moscoso, Enrique Guerrero, Jaime Valencia, and Oswaldo Guayasamín.

The rise of indigenism in Ecuador coincided with a period of political unrest. Between 1931 and 1940, fourteen presidents had come and gone. The Ecuadorian government did not break diplomatic ties with Nazi Germany—a country with considerable economic interests in Ecuador—until 1942, three years after the outbreak of World War II. As a reaction to the German presence, strong socialist feelings developed among artists and intellectuals, although among the painters proclaiming communist beliefs, only Diógenes Paredes was a member of the party. Indigenist publications also began to appear: Jorge Icaza's famous novel *Huasipungo* about the exploitation of an Indian by his masters, was published in 1934, but a deluge of works on indigenous subjects had begun to appear as early as 1922, with the first of four editions of Pío Jaramillo Alvarado's *El Indio Ecuatoriano*, followed by Fernando Chávez' *Plata y Bronce* (Silver and Bronze) in 1927 and Moisés Sáenz' *Sobre el Indio Ecuatoriano* (Concerning the Ecuadorian Indian) in 1933. The Mexican Communist artist David Alfaro Siqueiros heightened interest in these themes. He had made short trips to Ecuador in 1933 and 1935 before his official passage through that country in 1943 on his way back to Mexico from his Chilean exile. Thus the stage was set for the Ecuadorian wave of *indigenismo* in painting, which flourished in the forties.

Indigenism was formally launched as a movement with the founding in 1939 of the May Salon of the Syndicate of Ecuadorian Writers and Artists by three writers, Jorge Reyes, José Alfredo Llerena, and Alfredo Chávez. Its name was patterned on the Mexican Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters, and Sculptors of 1923 and the LEAR (League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists) of 1934. The opening exhibition included the work of Kingman, Guerrero, Guayasamín, Paredes, Tejada, Moscoso, Carlos Rodríguez, and Guillermo Latorre. Although the May Salon group came to represent "official" art in later years, it initially represented the avant-garde rebelling against the "official" stance of the academy, and its founders issued a manifesto defending the need for freedom of expression and new forms of creativity.

In 1941, Benjamín Carrión founded the Casa de la Cultura in Quito. Within a few years, a literary section, a symphony orchestra, and a library and archive section were added.

The war brought the arrival of several new painters who were to influence the direction of Ecuadorian art. Hans Michaelson came to Guayaquil in 1939. He taught at the city's School of Fine Arts and traveled through the country painting and sketching popular scenes with an immigrant's fervor. As a professor, he won the respect of his star pupils, Araceli, Tábara, and Maldonado.

Jan Schreuder, who had studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in The Hague, arrived in Quito about the same time to do cartography for the Shell Oil Company. He remained for the next twenty-three years. His students included Oswaldo Viteri, Irene de Arteta, and the architects Milton Barragán and Luis Oleas. In an affectionate article about Schreuder subtitled "Ecuatoriano de Corazón" (Ecuadorian at Heart), Araceli described how he referred to the *panecillo*, Quito's well-known landmark hill, possessively as "*mi panecillo*." One of Schreuder's most important contributions to Ecuadorian art was his serious study of pre-Hispanic art; to promote this, he founded the Ecuadorian Art Center. There is little doubt that his studies of pre-Hispanic designs contributed to the prevalence of what the critic Marta Traba referred to as "precolombinismo" in the work of scores of artists from the late fifties on—including Villacís, Tábara, Segundo Espinel, and Maldonado. Traba considered indigenism a patronizing or negative use of the themes, while she viewed *precolombinismo* as a legitimate use of pre-Hispanic sources.

A third painter whose arrival coincided with World War II was Lloyd Wulf. Wulf, who was born in Nebraska and had been working in San Francisco, received a Rosenberg Scholarship in 1941 to paint for a year. He chose to go to Ecuador after having seen a documentary movie on the country. He stayed until 1959. Tábara and Viteri were among his students in Quito, and Villacís visited his studio in the fifties. The painter and art historian Humberto Moré described Wulf's style as a fusion of the fractured forms of Lyonel Feininger with the all-over patterns of Mark Tobey. His subjects included mountain landscapes, views of Quito at night, and indigenous dancers.

Two distinct schools of painting developed in Guayaquil and Quito. Artists who grew up or studied in Guayaquil almost invariably began by painting fantastic tropical landscapes, as did Theo Constante, Tábara, Molinari, and in a more sedate manner, Maldonado. In the highlands, a more expressionist figural style developed that is evident in the early work of Villacís. The two cities established rival annual exhibitions, the Núcleo de Pichincha in Quito, named after the volcano that was the site of the last battle for Ecuadorian independence in 1822, and the Núcleo de Guayas, in Guayaquil, named for the city's river.

Although several artists in Ecuador were moving toward abstract forms, a complete break with figurative art did not occur until 1955 when Araceli returned from Paris and had the first exhibition of formalist abstract painting in Quito at the Museum of Colonial Art. Rendón had experimented with abstraction in some gouaches during the forties, but he did not have his first abstract exhibition in Ecuador until 1959. What made Araceli's art distinctive and controversial was its unrelenting nonobjectivity and sharp definitions, which made it impossible to read anything recognizable in it. The exhibition was sharply criticized; the only critic to defend her at the time was Alfredo Pareja-Diezcanseco. While Rendón's abstractions of 1959 did not represent any recognizable forms either, they were sufficiently informal and flowing to permit anthropomorphic interpretations.

After Araceli's and Rendón's first abstract exhibitions, several other artists—including Schreuder and Wulf—began to do abstract work, but most of them preferred the Spanish informalist style of the 1950s—a movement parallel to the abstract expressionism of the United States—and Villacís, Tábara, Viteri, Constante, and other younger artists went to Spain. Subsequently, the style spread in Ecuador and was adopted by others—Segundo Espinel, Jaime Villa, Leon Ricaurte, Hugo Cifuentes, Gilberto Almeida, and for a time, Maldonado. It was through informalism that many found their final direction. The formalist tendency introduced by Araceli was not to reappear in the work of other artists until 1967, when Molinari and Maldonado embarked on constructivist lines.

The fact that indigenism was being displaced because of the steadily increasing number of artists practicing abstraction created tension in art circles. Like Rivera in Mexico, Guayasamín was synonymous with "official" art to younger Ecuadorian artists. Furthermore, indigenist painters continued to occupy official posts in Ecuador, as Rivera's clan had in Mexico. Guayasamín was president of the Casa de la Cultura in Quito, and Paredes was an officer.

In many parts of the Western world, 1968 was a year of polemics, and Quito was no exception. Within a few days occurred the First Quito Biennial, the Antibiennial of the Grupo VAN, and a "happening." When the First Quito Biennial was being planned by the Casa de la Cultura for April of 1968, seven dissident artists formed a group calling themselves the VAN, for "vanguard." They also chose VAN because it is a verb form meaning "they are going," in the sense of going forward. The members were Hugo Cifuentes, Luis Molinari, Oswaldo Moreno Heredia, Leon Ricaurte, Enrique Tábara, Aníbal Villacís, Gilberto Almeida, and Guillermo Muriel. They held their meetings and exhibited regularly at the new Galería Siglo XX, which was under the direction of Wilson Hallo. The group issued a manifesto calling for a new "vision that bypasses established forms" and for "a

national variant" in creativity leading to a "universal projection." The "established forms" referred to the official stance of the Casa de la Cultura. Although it seemed to be a clear case of "anti-Guayasamínism," an attack on what one of them called "institutionalized indigenism," each artist had his own version of what was wrong with the First Quito Biennial, ranging from political to esthetic objections. Artists from eight other South American countries were invited to exhibit. The selection showed a fairly wide range of styles, going as far as op art by the Argentinian Ary Brissi. All the members of the Grupo VAN had been invited to participate, but they refused and instead organized two simultaneous dissident exhibitions whose inauguration coincided with the opening of the biennial. When a member of the biennial jury saw the VAN exhibition, he exulted over a large silvery gray and white painting by Villacís and announced that had Villacís participated in the biennial, he would have won the grand prize.

In order to air the issues that divided the VAN and the biennial members, the VAN organized a series of panel discussions held at the Galería Siglo XX and the Salon Municipal. Almost no biennial representatives attended, but the press gave generous coverage to the meetings. Among the objections from the VAN were: complaints of misuse of public funds for a "luxury" the country could ill afford, when the money would have been better used for the promotion of popular culture; the inadequate criteria by which governments selected "official" art that was not representative of South America; the "marketplace" character of biennials in general, constituting a "gigantic spectacle rather than an esthetic group."

One journalist, in *El Tiempo*, defended the VAN as a "great front of intellectuals" that was making possible "a battle for national dignity and culture."

Oswaldo Viteri had been invited to join the VAN, but refused because he did not like groups unless they involved a new art form such as cubism or neoplasticism. He was, however, awarded a prize in the biennial. He was also repeatedly invited to the panel discussions but did not want to subject himself to what he felt would end in personal insults. Consequently, he attended only the last one, at which he staged a "happening." On the appointed evening, the Municipal Salon was filled to capacity; the unwary panelists were seated at the end of the room beneath a large portrait of Simón Bolívar. When Viteri arrived, he did not join the panelists but sat in the audience in front of two VAN members, the writers Ulises Estrella and Juan Andrade, who were with their wives. The spokesmen for the VAN, Ricaurte and Estrella, accused the biennial participants of aligning themselves with the "oficialistas" as well as imperialist and military governments, and denounced the shameful foreign influences in art.

Then Viteri asked to speak, first defending his participation in the biennial, then accusing the VAN members of being misled by the word "biennial." Although he fully sided with their political views, he defended the right of artists to "accept all the good wherever it comes from." While the debate continued, Viteri moved to the row of seats behind Estrella and Andrade. He quoted Giacometti's comment that "if there were to be a fire in the Louvre and there had been a cat inside, he wouldn't hesitate between saving the cat or the art, he would save the cat." Then announcing to the expectant audience that he had brought along "a few gifts for the animators of the show of the Grupo VAN," he proceeded to pull a live black cat out of a bag and pushed it in Estrella's face, followed by a live white mouse, which he presented to Andrade. According to Viteri, Estrella fainted and Andrade's wife had so be hospitalized with fright. The next day Viteri left on a camping trip.

What had optimistically been called the First Quito Biennial was also the last. But in 1972 the Casa de la Cultura organized the Salón de la Independencia exhibition on the one hundred-fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Pichincha. The exhibition in which eleven Central and South American countries participated, had all the earmarks of a biennial under a different name. Carlos Villasís Endara wrote in the catalog that for reasons "that did not need to be enumerated," the 1968 biennial could not be repeated. Although events took an unusual turn in 1968, they all contributed to a more open attitude toward different art forms and to an environment in which the concrete and constructivist art of Araceli, Molinari and Maldonado could flourish. Since then, a remarkable diversity of art forms has emerged, including conceptual art, whose main exponent, Mauricio Bueno, works with photography, sculpture with magnets, and projects for water curtains that deal with the laws of gravity.

Introduction of Abstraction

When Araceli Gilbert exhibited her nonobjective art in Quito in 1955, Pareja-Diezcanseco wrote: "We must . . . prepare the heart and head . . . to receive the offering of this fine art, vigorous and smiling, that Araceli has brought us. An art of instinct and intelligence . . . without any attempt to represent anything. . . . This is the first time that someone sufficiently endowed and sufficiently courageous has done abstract art in our country." Other critics were not so receptive. The indigenist painter Jaime Valencia dismissed abstraction as "decorative . . . an enclosure with no exit." Araceli answered his admonitions in an eloquent statement published in *El Comercio* in the late fifties in which she pointed out that figurative art could also be decorative since both abstraction and figuration "were subject to similar laws." If abstraction were not valid, she pointed out, a jury of twenty-two members of the International Association of Art Critics would not have given Miró the Guggenheim International Award in 1958 for his abstract ceramic mural. Furthermore, she denounced Valencia's criticism as especially inhibiting to younger artists.

Conversely, the works Manuel Rendón exhibited in 1954 in Guayaquil and in Quito the same year were not completely abstract. His cursive, coloristic style revealed a continuing attachment to the human figure, although all the basic elements of abstraction were present. When his first completely abstract exhibitions took place in 1959 in Guayaquil, where he was awarded a gold medal for his participation in the First Salón Fundación, and in Quito at the North American Ecuadorian Center, the public was more prepared. These were his first abstract exhibitions in Ecuador, but he had exhibited abstract work at the Pan American Union in Washington in 1955 and at the Galerie de Berri in Paris the same year. In Paris, the review *Arts* referred to his "evolution [as having] inexorably taken him toward a vigorous abstraction which does not exclude the complexity or the richness of a graphism endowed with a great evocative power." What seemed like a radical departure in Rendón's work was simply the elimination of unnecessary details. The same sweeping curves were still there, but without faces or limbs. Rendón referred to his work as "figurative abstraction," and even now his sensuous forms reveal a continuing reference to the female figure.

Both Rendón and Araceli were Paris trained. Both artists share a taste for brilliant color quite different from the blood, clay, and putty colors later artists inherited from the Spanish informalist school. Both believe, as Matisse and Renoir did, that art should be pleasing to the senses.

Rendón and Araceli have known each other for thirty years, and sometimes their professional paths have coincided. In 1955 and 1956, they both participated in the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles in Paris, and in 1957, in the Fourth São Paulo Biennial. In the late sixties, both returned to live in Ecuador and built their present homes there. Rendón and his wife, the French poet Paulette Everard, live in the remote fishing village of San Pablo, some two hours' drive from Guayaquil, where they enjoy life of unhurried tranquillity. Araceli and her Swedish-born husband, Rolf Blomberg, a journalist and documentary film maker, live in a handsome geometric wood, stucco, brick, and glass house perched on a hill overlooking Quito. There Araceli can work peacefully and also participate in the city's artistic social life.

Rendón's isolation in no way deters collectors of his work and other admirers from jostling along a dusty road to a lonely beach, where after winding their way over the sand and passing through three log gates, they find Rendón's reed fishing cabin perched up on stilts in the style of the Guayas coast. There Manuel and Paulette live with their books of philosophy and poetry. There is no electricity and no telephone. Messages are brought by friends from Guayaquil, and the Rendóns in turn make regular pilgrimages to Guayaquil to pick up mail and see their friends. Rendón's work is so much in demand that he has a waiting list of potential customers who go to San Pablo to buy it as soon as it is ready. For this reason, there is little to be seen in his studio except for some drawings, gouaches and the oil painting in progress. In spite of his commercial success, he seems not to be concerned about reaping financial benefits. It is the collectors and not Rendón who place a price on his work. He paints at a measured pace and rhythm that are not in the least affected by pressure from his eager patrons.

The Rendóns' material needs are few. This is not the first time they have lived in such primitive simplicity. In France, they had lived on an old barge that they navigated along the Seine. In Ecuador in the forties they lived in an old farmhouse which they restored with their own hands, and on various occasions in the Galápagos Islands, where, under the best circumstances, material comforts are minimal. Through the years Rendón has been consistent in his desire to eliminate trivia ("l'inutile," as he prefers to call it in French) from his life. At the age of eighty-three, he is serene, enthusiastic, lucid, charming, and remarkably in touch with the present—although he says he does not like to grant interviews or show in museums, and claims to know little of contemporary art since he does not receive any art magazines in San Pablo.

Rendón was born in Paris in 1894. His father, Victor Manuel Rendón, was a poet, judge, and diplomat. Rendón's maternal grandmother, Delfina Pérez, also a painter, had exhibited at the Paris Universal Exposition of 1900. Rendón was thirteen when cubism was born. Post-impressionism and fauvism were soon joined by German expressionism and Delaunay's orphism. (In fact, Humberto Moré has described the colors of Rendón's recent paintings as "orphic.") Rendón was one of many Americans from both continents in Paris between 1900 and 1920: Diego Rivera, the Chileans Jafio and Manuel Ortiz de Zarate, the synchromists Stanton MacDonald-Wright and Morgan Russell, as well as artists from various European countries. Rendón formed a particularly close friendship with Soutine and Modigliani.

In this intense environment, Rendón first turned to sculpture but soon switched to painting. He attended classes at the Grande Chaumière, working mostly without teachers, doing figure studies from nude models, and exhibiting in the Paris salons. He decided to abandon the comforts of home and moved to a studio in Montparnasse right next to the Grande Chaumière, where he "shared in poverty the marvelous camaraderie of bohemian life in Montparnasse before it disappeared." In 1918, the Galerie Vildrac began to show his work, and from 1917 on, he was a regular exhibitor at the Salon des Surindépendants, the Salon d'Automne, the Salon National, the Tuileries, and the Groupe de la Horde. His work was shown in the Café de la Rotonde in Montparnasse, a favorite meeting place for artists—Matisse, Braque, and Modigliani were among its patrons.

Rendón saw Ecuador's coastal landscape with its tropical exuberance for the first time in 1920. On this visit and a second in 1924, he did numerous pencil and watercolor studies of landscapes and *campesinos*. After his return to Paris, in 1925, the dealer Leopold Zborowsky "discovered" him and gave him his first individual exhibition a year later. Rendón recalls that Soutine went to his studio to help him carry his paintings to the gallery in a taxi. Zborowsky died shortly after, following an automobile accident,

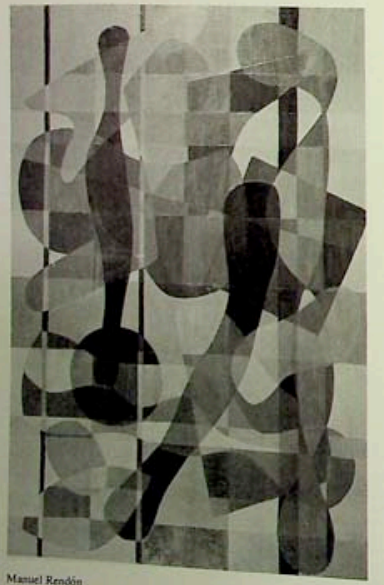


and in 1927, Rendón signed a contract giving Léonce Rosenberg exclusive rights to his work. As a member of Rosenberg's Galerie de l'Effort Moderne, Rendón, who is also a good poet, contributed some of his poems to the gallery's review. His Paris life was interrupted in 1937, when his father became ill and he was called back to Ecuador. He did not exhibit in Paris again until after the war, in 1946.

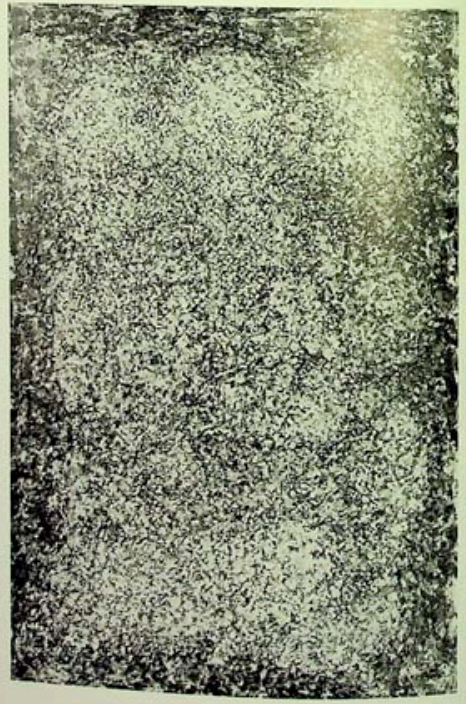
In the intervening years, the Rendóns traveled to the Galápagos where he made a series of crayon drawings of the wild beauty of the islands' flora, entitled "Floreana." Rendón had his first individual exhibition in Quito in 1943. Although in Paris in the early thirties, his work had already veered toward abstraction—as Michel Seuphor notes in the entry on Rendón in his *Dictionary of Abstract Painting*—the work he did in Ecuador was more realistic. During the forties, he painted some indigenist subjects, as in *Mère Indienne* (Indian Mother, 1947) but without adopting the indigenist style. For several years, his work had been characterized by powerful and original linearity. Although he never was a surrealist, his use of a cursive line was derived from automatic drawing. As early as 1927, in *Jeune Negresse* (Young Negro Woman), a fairly realistic painting, his outline is continuous, leading from the girl's dress to her arm and hand, from the contour of her face to the features. In the thirties and forties, he also painted some oneiric subjects such as *Jeune Fille Rêvant* (Young Girl Dreaming, 1941), *Les Esprits* (The Spirits, 1948), and *Songes* (Dreams, 1949). During this period, he began simplifying his forms with outlines describing great interlocking curves.

Rendón's work has been described as religious. The color, luminosity, and composition of his later works suggest cathedral windows. But in the fifties, he also painted biblical themes, as Rouault, Matisse, Bonnard, and Braque had done. His paintings *Renonciation* (Renunciation, 1950), *La Veillée des Anges* (The Wake of the Angels, 1950), *La Prêtresse* (The Priestess, 1950), *Naissance* (Birth, 1951), *L'Accueil* (The Welcome, 1951), *Présentation du Mort* (Presentation of the Deceased, 1951) are clear allusions to biblical and Byzantine painting, which, in Rendón's words, "express in their circles and curves different transcendental symbols." The French art historian Robert Vrinat found in Rendón's work of the early fifties "an expansion of the consciousness and the soul . . . [and] access to a transcendental plane where the objects and forms . . . are no longer of the real world."

Vrinat also praised Rendón for not succumbing to all the incitements offered by his years in Paris with its multiple artistic developments. He attributes some of Rendón's originality of style to this particular linearity. But it is undoubtedly also due to his use of color in combination with line. In *L'Accueil*, a group of figures is interlocked into an arrangement of curves and overlapping transparent shapes representing a central Christ figure wearing a halo and surrounded by other sacred figures. *Présentation du Mort* suggests a pietà in a tightly compressed composition of transparent synthetic cubist figures against an undulating landscape background. In all these paintings, the composition is completely unified by the line. The faces are barely suggested and have the meditative calm of Byzantine Virgins; they are solemn but not tragic. The transparency of Rendón's forms in glowing color overlays resembles some of the paintings by the Guatemalan Carlos Mérida in the



Manuel Rendón
Blossoming, 1955
Oil on canvas,
99 x 72 cm



Manuel Rendón
Composition, 1968
Oil on canvas,
110 x 71 cm



Manuel Rendón
Composition, 1977
Oil on pressed board,
92 x 73 cm

same decade, except that Mérida used geometric shapes based on the triangle and Rendón inscribed flowing curves based on organic shapes. While Rendón's subjects are important, they are constructed on a solid abstract basis, usually in an almost flat, frontal arrangement. The graded colors, without sharp or sudden breaks, and the continuous movement of his compositions create an unusual sense of harmony. But it is through the strong vertical and horizontal balance that Rendón projects the religious character of a solemn occasion. One senses that *Naissance* is a birth out of the ordinary.

Rendón also conveyed great warmth and sensuality in his work simply by making the composition less formal, allowing the figures to become intertwined and his color to blush through the outlines. He painted the theme of lovers several times over the years, usually in compositions of overlapping figure eights.

Throughout the war years, Rendón had little contact with his Paris friends. He had sent some abstract watercolors to Rosenberg in 1944, but when Rendón communicated with him after the war, he learned that the Germans had closed his gallery during their occupation of France, and in 1949, Rosenberg died. In 1951, Rendón returned to Paris, but by 1960 the Paris climate no longer agreed with him, and he went to live on the drier Portuguese coast, where he remained until 1967, except for intermittent trips to other countries. During the sixties, Rendón experimented with diverse approaches to abstraction. He produced several paintings with all-over patterns, some with broad brush strokes of brilliant reds, black, blues, and yellows. The color areas in some paintings suggested a loose grid, in others strong vertical thrusts. In 1963 and 1964, he painted a series in which the delicacy of his line reemerges in flowing curved patterns, some of which suggest the female reproductive organs but in the most poetic terms. Others in loose vertical and horizontal compositions suggest diffused undulating forms in a light-filled atmosphere. The colors of this period include delicate harmonies of lavenders, grays, and white. He also began working in a pointillist technique but without any of Seurat's neoimpressionist mechanical rigors. Sometimes he employs a system of tiny overlapping dabs of color instead of points. This manner of applying paint allowed Rendón to control the color orchestrations and harmonies and achieve chromatic intensities that flat color could not produce. The results are especially successful in paintings where roundness and volume are desired. In this manner, Rendón builds volume by means of pure color.

His painting is never based on a preconceived plan; he relies rather on intuition. He begins with what he describes as "a chaos of colored elements . . . then lines appear, certain fields are formed. The color areas begin to organize themselves, and order establishes itself little by little in a composition of curves among verticals, horizontals, and diagonals, through which light emerges. . . . My role consists of seeing emerge, and consequently in organizing, the possibilities that offer themselves to me." Although his present colors and forms have their sources in postimpressionism and synthetic cubism, he also works within the abstract expressionist framework of the fifties and sixties by using a diffused space rather than the finite space of synthetic cubism.

In the last few years, Rendón has amplified his chromatic repertoire to include golden yellows, ochers, silvery white, as well as his favorite reds, blues, and black. All his paintings are entitled "composition," leaving the viewer to formulate his own references. Although they have no figurative content, the soft, rounded interlocking forms compressed within the picture format are sensuous, sometimes even erotic, often suggesting figures embracing and in a state of levitation above the earthly plane.

ARACELI GILBERT

Araceli was the mother of formalist abstract painting as Rendón was the father of its informalist abstract painting in Ecuador. After her first exhibition of abstract painting in 1955, she felt that it would be difficult for her to work in Quito where the environment was still dominated by indigenism and hostile to abstraction. Not until 1961 did she win full recognition in Ecuador for her talent, obtaining the Mariano Aguilera prize and in 1975, the Municipal Museum of Guayaquil gave her a retrospective spanning thirty years of her art.

Until 1967, she lived abroad, in Paris, Brazil, and Sweden. Today, in her wood-paneled studio in Quito, she is producing some of her most dynamic works in progressively more complex arrangements. Her paintings of the last two decades and those of her friends, especially Rendón and Maldonado, brighten the walls of her attractive modern home.

Araceli was born in Guayaquil in 1914, to a family of well-known physicians and surgeons. As a girl, she was exposed to art, music, poetry, theater, dance, and painting by her father, Dr. Abel Gilbert, himself a great lover of the arts. She broke with family tradition, however, when she turned down a medical career in favor of art. In the thirties, there were few outlets for art and no adequate art schools in Guayaquil. Consequently, after an initial period of work in sculpture, Araceli went to study at the School of Fine Arts in Santiago, Chile, where Roberto Matta was her fellow student. After Hans Michaelson began to teach at the School of Fine Arts in Guayaquil, she returned, and studied with him in 1942 and 1943. She formed a warm friendship with Michaelson, who painted a double portrait of her with her sister. During this time, she won several prizes for her work, which included coastal landscapes and local types such as *La Cholita* (The Mestizo Girl, 1943), in clear, well-organized compositions with bold brushwork.

When she visited New York in 1944, she experienced "an emotional shock" when she saw the Kandinskys in the Museum of Non-Objective Painting (now the Guggenheim Museum). The French purist Amedée Ozenfant was in New York then, and Araceli decided to remain and attend his classes. In the course of her work with Ozenfant, from 1944 to 1946, the shapes of her paintings began to flatten out in a synthetic cubist organization of color planes. She had familiarized herself with the tenets of the purist manifesto *After Cubism*, which Ozenfant had formulated with Le Corbusier in Paris in 1918. It emphasized that "logic alone controls and regulates the often fantastic progress of intuition."

In 1947, her work began to change rapidly from a painterly style with vestiges of modeling, as in *Paisaje* (Landscape), to the flatter forms of *Composición con Máscaras* (Composition with Masks), both painted that year. In *Paisaje*, undulating shaded masses clearly represent mountains with texture rendered by brushwork, whereas in *Composición con Máscaras*, shapes have been reduced to a set of inorganic symbols of disembodied faces, hands, and feet arranged in an abstract elliptical course. Ozenfant's own painting, although in a flat purist style, was never completely nonobjective. He continued



to paint still lifes. But for Araceli, the shift from *Máscaras* to pure abstraction seemed inevitable.

In 1951, she went to Paris, where she met Jean Dewasne and Edgar Pillet, the codirectors of the Academy of Abstract Art from 1950 to 1952. Araceli joined their classes and soon became an assistant in their studio.

She also formed a close friendship with the purist Auguste Herbin, whose encouragement was invaluable to her. Herbin, together with Vantongerloo, had organized the Abstraction-Création group in 1931 and was the author of *L'Art non-figuratif et non-objectif* (1949). His own work influenced Araceli's future paintings. She also came to know the Venezuelans Alejandro Otero and Jesús Soto and the Argentine Julio Le Parc. And she came to know the Belgian Pol Bury, whose mobile metal sculptures have some echo in her flat, painted forms of the fifties. Bury, along with Vasarely, Duchamp, Agam, Calder, Tinguely, and the Danish sculptor Robert Jacobsen, participated in the "Mouvement" exhibition of 1955 at the Galerie Denise René. Araceli especially admired Jacobsen and the geometric painter Richard Mortensen, who had both been instrumental in introducing abstract art to Denmark in the thirties.

The year of her arrival in Paris, Araceli participated along with Picasso and Siqueiros in the Hispano-American Contrabiennial organized by Picasso at the Galerie Henri Tronche in Paris as a protest against the Barcelona biennial, which had been organized by the members of Franco's Falange Party. When she had her first individual exhibition of abstract paintings in 1953, at the Galerie Arnaud, in Paris, Léon Degand wrote in *Art d'Aujourd hui*, "I love the serious enjoyment of invention in Araceli's canvases." Other reviews of her work were equally enthusiastic. The Paris *Arts* reviewer described her "violent colors spread over large surfaces . . . [and] canvases of real distinction in the balance of her rational abstraction." The following year, she exhibited an album of color lithographs at the same gallery; Degand wrote in the preface to the catalog: "Araceli's art is truly audacious. It is frank, pure, without vacillation in form or in spirit."

After this initial success, she participated in numerous exhibitions. In 1954, she was included in "Divergences" at the Galerie Arnaud along with Hartung, Soulages, Schneider, and Tinguely, and in Vienna at the Artists' Association with Jean Arp, Sonia Delaunay, Alberto Magnelli, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Edgar Pillet, and others.

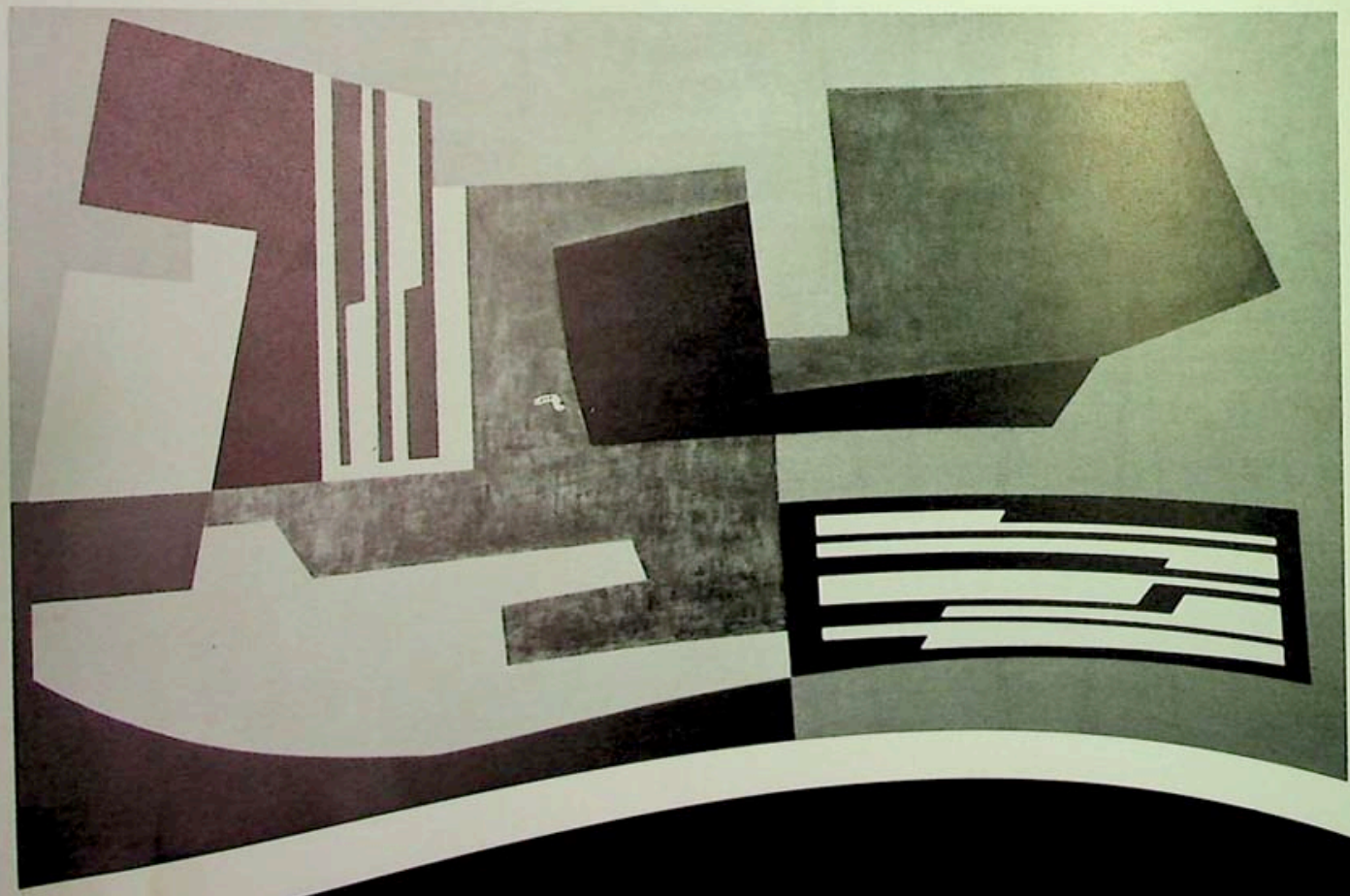
Although her development was affected by the optical experiments in art taking place at the time, her own work bypasses optical solutions as an end, to arrive at more solid ground. Her colors are neither dematerialized in their appearance nor do they necessarily create afterimages. Rather, she coordinates shapes and colors in order to produce specific rhythms and movements; her colors unerringly direct the observer's vision in specific directions.

She was an admirer of Mondrian and the Stijl group and the concrete artist Max Bill. But she found the rigors of neoplasticism too limiting, as she did the pure formalism of architecture. Nevertheless, from 1955 on, she adopted Mondrian's grid as a point of departure and basis from which she could develop compositions of considerably greater complexity within a strict system. She later formulated her own personal system of diagonals, which she combined with the grid as a skeleton for the broad, seemingly free forms of her paintings. Furthermore, as a colorist whose glowing chromatic harmonies were described as an "exaltation of color" by Pareja-Diezcanseco, Araceli found Mondrian's restrictions of color to the primaries equally unsatisfactory. Although her own paintings were usually limited to a small number of colors, she developed an enormous range over the years, with no restrictions as to what the colors would be. She used many shades of green, red, blue, orange, purple, rust, white, gray, and black in turn and in ever-increasing variations in what were described as "Ritmos de Color," the name of her first exhibition in Quito.



Araceli Gilbert
Diagonal #2, 1976
Acrylic on canvas,
120 x 120 cm

Although she had high regard for Max Bill's rigorous forms, and the freedom of his colors, she found it necessary to deviate from the rigid geometry of both Bill and Mondrian. Her models were the activated forms of Dewasne. His great range of colors and forms offered her more scope on which to build her own repertoire. Dewasne also obtained great coloristic intensity, but his forms, sometimes evocative of the letters of the alphabet, seem to push violently beyond the edges of the painting, thus breaking the boundaries of the canvas contour conceptually. Conversely, Araceli's

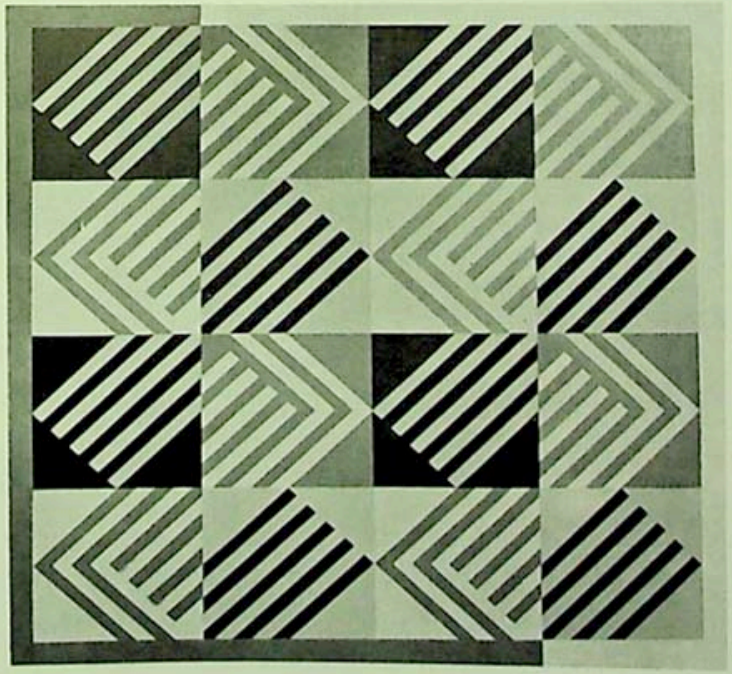


Araceli Gilbert
Variations in Red
Oil on canvas,
160 x 113 cm

paintings are completely contained within the canvas space. She feels that pure abstraction can be achieved only on a two-dimensional base, contained within that format. Sculpture for her cannot ever be completely abstract because it occupies "real" space, thus creating perspective. Similarly, painting that attempts to create illusions of volume or whose shapes seem to extend beyond the surface format potentially occupies real space. Consequently, no such elements are present in her work. For her, the boundaries of the painting must be an integral part of the composition and must fully contain it. That is why the movement in her paintings is gentle and carefully circumscribed. For example, the movement in *Variaciones en Rojo No. 2* (Variations in Red No. 2, 1955) leads the eye in a vertical-horizontal contrapuntal movement but never escapes out of the canvas. Her works of this period often bear titles alluding to colors or moods, such as *Formas Submergidas* (Submerged Forms), *Calma* (Calm), *Reposo* (Repose), all of 1958. In the "variaciones," one is reminded of musical movements, but Araceli's variations are exclusively pictorial variations.

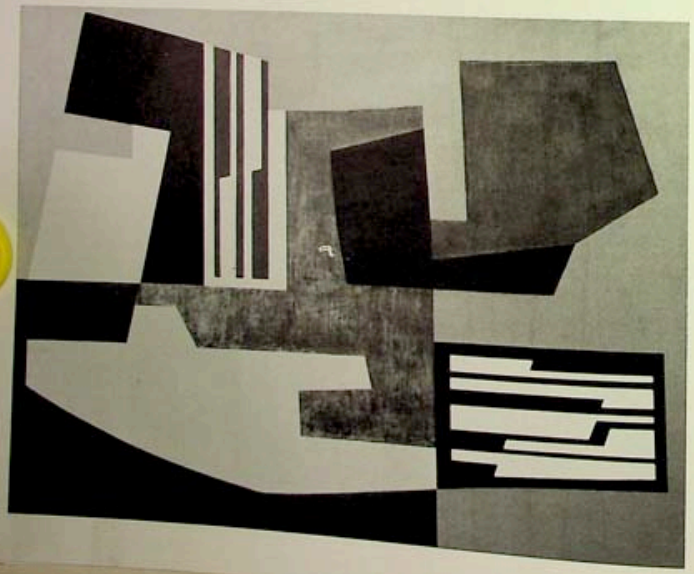
By the early sixties, she worked with a more complex geometry of smaller or narrower shapes, sometimes balanced by vast, unbroken expanses of color. In *Requiem por Sidney Bechet* (1963), a horizontal painting comprising a large expanse of black on the right, then a series of vertical forms in blues, white, and black rippling off horizontally to the left, the eye is pulled back to the center by a thin red line dividing the inactive from the active zone. It is a masterpiece of controlled movement. Araceli entitled the work after she had begun it. She had heard the New Orleans jazz musician play in Brussels and was working on the canvas when she learned of his death, which had occurred some time before. As in *Variaciones en Rojo*, the reference to a musical theme is intended not so much as a metaphor as to identify the character of the pictorial movements, since Araceli's paintings do not *re*-create anything.

In Ozenfant's studio, she had learned to paint flat surfaces by dragging her brush horizontally across the canvas, carefully stopping at the outline in order to minimize the intervention of the "hand of the artist." In Paris, she had developed a paste made of a careful blend of oil, water, and pigment, which dried into a hard, resistant surface with less sheen and texture than pure oil paint. By the seventies, she had adopted acrylics, which suited her needs better. Luis Molinari taught her the use of masking tape to facilitate precision in painting hard-edge shapes, and Araceli in turn showed him the use of the grid. In *Cuadrado Acrílico No. 7* (Acrylic Square No. 7, 1975), one is visually drawn through a maze of rectilinear elements, squares, and triangles, into a paradoxically curved figure-eight pattern. Besides the clever distribution of the forms themselves, it is the color that provides the visual guidelines. Contrary to Jaime Valencia's assertion that abstraction is limited, Araceli has proved that the possible variations are infinite. Her strength lies in the fact that she is inventive and goes beyond the mechanics of her work to produce warm, immensely sensual paintings. Her paintings are, in Pareja-Diezcanseco's words, "easy to look at and difficult to do."



Araceli Gilbert
Diagonales #3, 1977
Acrylic on canvas,
120 x 120 cm

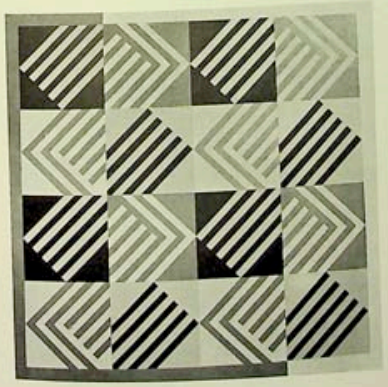
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Araceli Gilbert
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Acrylic on canvas,
120 x 120 cm

Informalism

Since the early sixties, Enrique Tábara and Aníbal Villacís have been the leading exponents of informalism in Ecuador. Both have lived in Spain, Villacís from 1954 to 1956, and Tábara from 1955 to 1964. During the fifties, new trends arose in Spanish art that enriched rather than altered the course of the two artists. They found original ways in which to adapt Spanish informalism to their own forms of expression. Marta Traba has praised them for seeking their themes in their own heritage. But more important is the fact that they accomplished this synthesis without concessions to the limitations of regionalism. Although artists in Ecuador were familiar with French and Spanish contemporary art through publications, the influence of the work of Tábara and Villacís on their fellow artists has been enormous.

Until the fifties, Paris had been the mecca for many Latin American artists. But interest shifted to Spain with the establishment there of the Hispano-American Biennial in 1951. Furthermore, the adoption of an official Spanish policy of assisting the new art, coupled with a more liberal economic stance to aid Franco's international image, contributed to opening Spain up once again to the world.

The year Villacís arrived in Spain, the Basque sculptor Jorge de Oteiza (who influenced the Colombians Edgar Negret and Eduardo Ramírez) was inspiring artists to explore industrial materials and processes in art. As a countermeasure to Oteiza's constructivist formalism, a new informalist movement arose out of surrealism with Antonio Tàpies, Modesto Cuixart, Manolo Millares, and Antonio Saura among its practitioners. By 1955, Tàpies had abandoned surrealism completely and was working with opaque thick materials and somber colors—ochers, ivories, browns, dull reds, and dull, powdery purples and blues. Then he began using cuts, depressions, marks, and dots and, through this elaboration of surfaces, eliminated all reference to pictorial space. Although Villacís settled in Madrid, he saw the work of the informalists, whom Tábara met and joined in Barcelona.

ENRIQUE TABARA

Tábara's current work shows a balanced combination of organic and constructivist elements, sometimes incorporating the former into real or implied compartments vaguely recalling Joaquín Torres-García's universal constructivist paintings. The connection is not accidental. Tábara had read through Torres-García's monumental volume *Constructivismo Universal*, and was particularly drawn to the Uruguayan's fusion of highly structured form with pictographs. Tábara worked in Spain at a time when interest in a Jungian primordial past, ancestral totemic themes, images, and idols was at a peak. But he remained sufficiently aloof to be able to use these themes not as ends but within a process of search and development. Marta Traba describes the components of his work as fitted (like the stone walls of Cuzco) "in a poetic manner, without resorting to either geometry or violence." The critics Hernán Rodríguez Castelo and Manuel Mejía praised him, the first for remaining free of the tyranny of commercial and advertising demands, the second, for his ability for honest creativity while remaining in touch with the times.

Tábara, a warm and gentle person, conceals immense independence beneath an easygoing manner. He lives and works in an airy apartment in Guayaquil. He has lived in Quito as well as in Spain and Switzerland. But in order to work well, he declares, "I need the climate, the nerves of Guayaquil." He likes the light, the sun, the heat, the mosquitoes, the noise. Since his return there in 1964, he has interrupted his routine only with a period in Quito in 1967, when he joined the VAN artists, and a five-month stay in Barcelona in 1975 to satisfy an occasional need for change.

Tábara was born in Guayaquil in 1930 to a family of lumber merchants. Because of a poor inheritance settlement, the family was forced to sell all its remaining stock in order to survive; by the time Tábara was ten years old, the family was no longer solvent. Nonetheless, Tábara's mother took him on trips to the country, where, he recalls, he "used to go exploring and sometimes dug up pre-Hispanic pottery." He saved the pottery shards, which he keeps in his studio; they are cream, brick, and black with incised designs. He remembers watching an older sister paint, with all the different colors spread out on her worktable. Tábara began drawing with crayons at six. In school, his teachers were so exasperated with him for drawing instead of learning his lessons that in despair they gave him his certificate and dismissed him before he was through.



But Tábara is endowed with a contemplative intelligence and is extremely well read. He is especially fond of modern literature and has read Mallarmé, Rimbaud, the surrealists, the dadaists, César Vallejo, Pablo Neruda, Walt Whitman. He also enjoys music and is drawn to esoteric cults including Zen, yoga, magic, and flying saucers. In an interview in *El Tiempo*, Hernán Rodríguez Castelo recounts that Tábara showed him photographs of cave drawings that resembled astronauts, and a coastal pre-Hispanic ceramic piece with designs that "with no effort of the imagination reminded one of flying saucers."

After a short period of study in the lithographic workshop of the Philanthropic Society in Guayaquil, Tábara, finding it too commercial, left and attended Hans Michaelson's classes at the School of Fine Arts. His first subjects were prostitutes, Indians, Negroes, poor farm children, and tropical landscapes with anthropomorphized trees and roots. Before his trip to Spain, he had begun to paint ancestral images, which he alternated with figurative representations. Often he injected humor into his paintings: *La Solterona* (The Old Maid, 1952) depicts an impossibly ugly woman of uncertain years looking at herself in a mirror with the satisfied expression of self-delusion. The following year, he painted a playful composite of brightly colored organic shapes resembling legs and feet through a free process of automatic drawing derived from surrealism.

By 1953, Michaelson had begun using sand and thick impastos in his painting, and Tábara had seen some of Rendón's abstract paintings of the forties. As a result, Tábara began experimenting with impastos and abstraction. Even before his departure for Spain, he had attempted to synthesize brilliantly colored Miró- and Klee-like forms with structure. By 1954, preoccupation with composition

began to override concern for content. He then started to find solutions in the constructivist theories of Torres-García rather than in formalist geometry, with which he felt no kinship.

With a grant from the Ecuadorian government, he lived in Barcelona from 1955 to 1964. His arrival coincided with the Third Hispano-American Biennial, in which he participated. For a while, he abandoned structural elements to return to looser, more instinctive compositions, focusing on collages of canvas pieces and other materials, until 1958, when he returned to an informal geometry within which he began incorporating pre-Hispanic symbols somewhat in the manner of Cuixart's and Tàpies's surface buildup into which they scratched various symbols. He also painted a number of works using the human figure as a basis, but he disassembled it into fragments and recomposed it into fantastic mythic forms like the anthropomorphic beings of ancient Andean and Peruvian coastal regions.

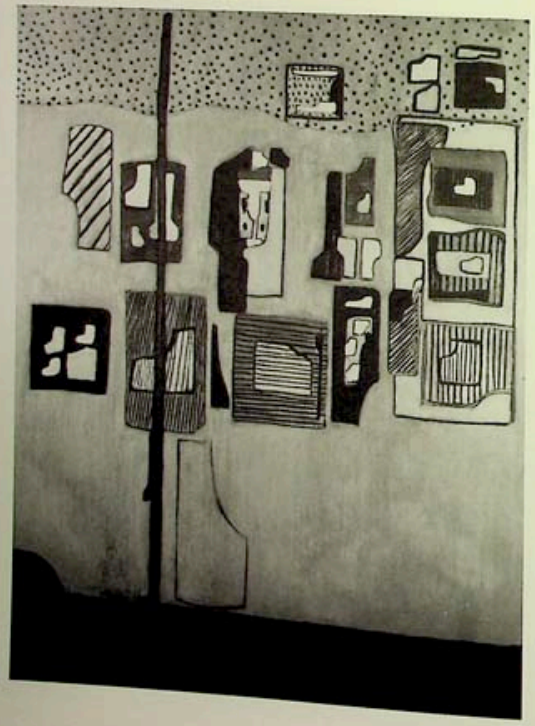
By 1958 and 1959, Tábara had developed a colloidal mixture of water and oil in his pigments that recalled the textures of pre-Hispanic ceramics. On this surface, he scratched designs. When he exhibited at the Sala Nebli in Madrid in 1959, Juan-Eduardo Cirlot praised his "schematization of aboriginal American art in an abstract modality [in which] he obtained surprisingly original results." The paintings reminded Cirlot of "ancient mandalic images, which Oriental and primitive people used for their magic rites, based on the harmonic confrontation of the circle and the square [treated] in a warm manner filled with magic emanations . . . achieved by means of ensembles of rose, greens, violet hues, browns, orange tones . . . [possessed with] the allusive power which takes us to worlds forgotten, if not unknown." He compared the shapes in Tábara's paintings to temple plans, stylized flowers, ornamental designs that "solicit one's attention because of the sensuality of the 'material-color.' " The works had titles such as *Occult Sun, Toward the Center, Green Circle, Circle and Squares.*

By the early sixties, his work was entirely abstract, with organic references reduced to a set of unidentifiable symbols, although ancient civilizations, myths, and magic worlds continued to preoccupy him. During these years, he traveled and exhibited in several countries, including Italy, Germany, and Switzerland, where he lived for two years. In 1960, in Lausanne, he was awarded first prize for abstract painting.

In 1964, on the occasion of his exhibition at the Pan American Union in Washington, D.C., he visited the United States on his way back to Ecuador. During his stay in the United States, he realized that he had grown tired of abstraction and yearned for anthropomorphic forms as a source of inspiration. After considering and drawing various parts of the human body, he decided on feet. They offered a pleasing and adaptable alternative to geometry without symbolic meaning. They could be used in a variety of designs and arrangements that were purely pictorial. Furthermore, they could be represented as schematized forms, organic, kicking, or regimented within compartments. The poet Carlos Eduardo Jaramillo in a poem entitled "Bouquet en la Cabeza de Tábara" (Bouquet on Tábara's Head) described



Enrique Tábara
Formas entre Horizontales, 1977
Oil and collage with canvas on canvas,
195 x 140 cm



Enrique Tábara
Negro en Ocre y Gris, 1977
Oil and collage on canvas,
146 x 114 cm

the paintings of this phase in poetic metaphors: "feet like chess horses . . . like stalactites . . . like hanging lamps;" feet that are "agile," "slow," "erotic," "distant," "repetitive," "the green feet of the tree," of the walker, the dancer, the jumper, "like a garden in the eyes of all men." The poem also captures some of the playfulness that has characterized Tábara's painting since the beginning.

In 1969, he began the "Patas-Patas" series. The word "patas," which means "paws" in Spanish, coincidentally means "feet" in Quechua, the language of the Ecuadorian Indians. His first "Patas" paintings consisted of free-floating arrangements of shapes derived from a human foot in profile. Besides composing his themes in a variety of playful and dynamic actions, he also alternated between completely flat, schematized paintings and "landscape" paintings in which the elements suggested volume and space. But in 1974, he returned to geometry as a basis for the composition of the "Patas" theme, either as a constructivist compartmentalized container or as an underlying grid. In *Construcción en Azul y Gris* (Construction in Blue and Gray, 1977), the forms spill over the edges of the "container," extending from one compartment to the next and defying the existence of the dividing line as a reminder that it is a painting and not a real object.

When Tábara had a major exhibition of his "Patas-Patas" paintings (appropriately entitled "Persistencia de una Imagen"—Persistence of an Image) at the Museum of the Central Bank in Quito in 1977, the surrealist Catalonian poet Joan Brossa, an old friend of Tábara's, referred to the group of paintings he had seen in the artist's studio in Barcelona as "a homogeneous whole, of which the paintings were nothing but transitory forms. [Tábara] still doubted it, a bit hallucinated at the peak of informalism. . . . Some twenty years after his first stay in Europe, the painter manages to fuse the spirit and the immediate proximity (or to make of it a counterpoint). Beyond simple effects, he exalts nature in a world of technique and demonstrates the buried energy of an immemorial past."

Tábara's most recent work is even closer to universal constructivism than before. More often than not, the "Patas" are organized into ordered formations within a real or an implied grid. Tábara still uses oil as his medium and applies it after building up the surface with a collage of canvas cutouts. The most radical change that has taken place in his recent work is not so much the form and the arrangement of parts but the nature of the color. Luminous shades of blue, ocher, pale yellow, off-white, pink, and gray with white have replaced the heavier, more somber colors of his Spanish period. Although he has abandoned *precolombinismo*, his use of feet still ties him to an ancient tradition of anthropomorphic schematizations.



Enrique Tábara
Alegoría legetal, 1976
Oil and collage on canvas,
100 x 81 cm

lthough Villacis shared the Spanish ex-
rience with Tábara, his development
d a different origin and it now has a
fferent objective. Villacís' painting
flects the duality of his nature. For
any years, he divided his interests be-
een the abstract informalism of his
Precolombinos" and his paintings of
ildren, the "Rostros de Niños." Today,
illacís, along with Rendón, is one of
e most sought after painters in Ecua-
. And like Rendón, he has only a
ndful of works in his home; the major-
are either in exhibitions or in collec-
ons. Villacís' love of the "materia," or
edium, predated his trip to Spain and
s introduction to the informalists. His
e of pre-Hispanic and baroque themes
pictorial references to a familiar envi-
nment is due to his reverence for the
aterials out of which they are made
much as to their semiotic content.
reja-Diezcanseco's description of
illacís as "an everlasting painter . . .
ed with infinite tenderness" is an apt
aracterization.

His house is located on the Calle del
er (Pleasure Street) on a hill over-
king Quito, where the last Inca em-
or, Atahualpa, once enjoyed his
baths. Now a reservoir is located nearby. The view from Villacis' terrace offers, in his words, "un regalo a la vista" ("a gift to the eye"). His living room is filled with his collection of colonial saints, fragments of gilded columns and moldings, colonial furniture with iron fixtures, and a prize collection of pre-Hispanic ceramic figures and pottery. A visit to Villacís invariably begins with a viewing of his latest ceramic acquisitions, a recently discovered Inca cache in an excellent state of preservation, or another marvelous find—cream, dark red, black, incised, painted—some with very sophisticated geometric or anthropomorphic designs, some burnished, others mat. Villacís' appreciation is complete, visual, and tactile.

He was born in 1927 in the highland town of Ambato. His family were painters: his father, Villacís Villacres, had painted the portraits of several dignomats. In Villacís' words, "He was a good painter, a bit impressionist in style." By the age of six, however, Villacís was an orphan. In spite of the sad times, he recalls the lovely landscape of Ambato, its mild climate, flowers, fruits, and a river where he went swimming. He began drawing on paper and cardboard wrested from his older brothers. But he soon found this method a bit limiting; he needed more space.

One evening, as he was walking about the town by himself, he noticed several freshly whitewashed walls. He realized then what his vocation was, that he had been spiritually ordained to decorate those beautiful spaces.

Evening after evening thereafter, he went out in search of the largest and whitest wall. Armed with charcoal and pictures to copy from, he surreptitiously went about his mission decorating whole walls, forgetting fatigue, assiduously working until he had finished his task. Some of the walls were textured so that the paintings had an informalist quality. But soon this "vandalism" was brought to the attention of the mayor of Ambato, who sent the police out in search of this "scourge of clean walls." Ignorant of the measures that were being taken against him and impassioned by the brilliance and beauty of the walls, Villacís continued on his nightly pilgrimages.

One night at about eleven o'clock, when he was almost through with one of his masterpieces, he became aware that someone was standing behind him. When he turned around, he saw a grave, pensive, uniformed man wearing heavy boots. It was a policeman waiting to kick Villacís and take him into custody. But the policeman could not bring himself to do it. He had become absorbed in the progress of the work and could not decide whether to scold or congratulate the artist. He decided on the latter. "The boy is doing well," he said, and Villacís was released on the spot. But for the rest of his boyhood, he had to make do with a more restricted form of expression. There were no art schools in Ambato at the time.

When he was a teen-ager, he found an outlet for his chosen field as a secondary-school teacher specializing in manual activities, including ceramics, modeling in plastelene, drawing, and painting. There was a shortage of teachers, and Villacís was required to teach three hours a day in different schools. He was grateful for this chance to perfect his own skill. He also grew fond of his young students, three of whom "could have been wonderful artists," but circumstances prevented them: "one became a mechanic, another a chauffeur . . ."



Villacís began painting the faces of his pupils in a free style alternating between impressionism and pointillism, with shallow space. They were the children of the street; some were sad, some happy, some hungry, often alone, he recalls. Long after he began painting other subjects, he continued to paint children's faces, until 1970.

During Villacís' Ambato period, he also painted some subjects with social significance, such as *La Loca* (The Madwoman) and *Vendedora de Tapices* (Carpet Seller). Facial expressions were usually understated, sometimes meditative and poetic. But Villacís also painted more flamboyant subjects. Among his favorites were bullfighters, whom he rendered in a robust expressionist style. His sources were Spanish posters announcing forthcoming bullfights. In *Manolete* (1950), Villacís painted the matador with a solid, sure hand, employing high-keyed colors and broad brushwork. The figure emerges like a vision out of undefined impastoed space. He became so involved with the subject that he even went to the tryouts and confronted the bulls in the ring.

His reputation began to spread, and from 1950 on he exhibited with various groups. In 1951, he had an individual exhibition at the Ateneo de Caracas, and in 1952, his work was exhibited in the recently formed Casa de la Cultura in Ambato. The local government acquired some of his works for the town hall, and in 1953, the minister of education awarded him a study grant to go to Europe. He was sent to Paris, where he visited museums and studios. He especially liked the work of the informalist Jean Fautrier, who "painted with table knives instead of a palette knife." But Villacís felt somewhat alien in Paris and asked in 1954 to be transferred to Spain, where he was more at ease with the language. Even before his arrival, he had exhibited in Madrid, in 1953, at the Institute of Hispanic Culture.

In Madrid, he attended classes at the Academy of San Fernando "just to get a certificate." Actually, he learned more through personal contact with artists and visits to studios, museums, and galleries. He saw the work of Luis Feito, Rafael Canogar, Tápies, and Cuixart when they were just beginning to develop their new informalist work. Villacís also admired Rendón's work especially for its curved figural patterns. Villacís' own painting remained figurative and expressionist throughout his stay in

Spain. Sometimes he broke up the heavily impastoed surface with line as a counterpoint for the color zones. He had already developed an interest in his own country's baroque and pre-Hispanic art, and he made the most of his opportunity to see primitive and Iberian art in Barcelona and to visit baroque churches, enjoying the splendid, exuberantly carved altars glittering with gold.

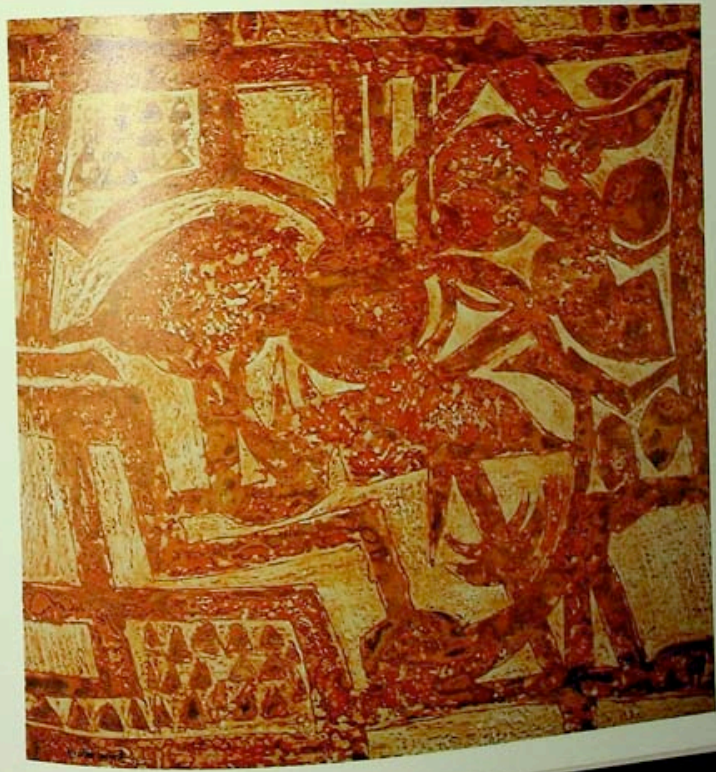
While Villacís was still in Spain, Cuixart began building up his canvases with diverse materials, as Tàpies had done, and using radiant arabesques and high-baroque impastos with sumptuous silvers and golds, which he obtained with metal powders. Tábara arrived a year before Villacís' return to Ecuador, and the Spanish painter Manuel Viola, who later joined the El Paso group, was in Madrid painting in a bold expressionist style. Villacís formed a friendship with him. Viola painted very quickly, and Villacís recalls having a race with him to see which one could do a self-portrait faster. Villacís won.

In contrast to Spain, with its dynamic artistic ambience and its "quixotism" Ambato and Quito seemed still to lack opportunities for artists when he returned in 1956. He found a chaotic, unformed cultural ambience (although he did exhibit the following year at the Museum of Colonial Art in Quito, as well as in Bogotá, Colombia), and to maintain contact with contemporary art, he constantly visited studios in Quito. At the time, such artists as Solona Silva, Pedro León (a fellow Ambateño), Lloyd Wulf, and Jan Schreuder were working in Quito. Villacís particularly liked the last two. In the late fifties, his expressionist style shifted to quasi-abstract compositions of fractured surfaces a little like Wulf's own.

In 1958 and 1959, Villacís traveled to Colombia, Brazil, and Venezuela, where he settled for a few months. He saw and admired the paintings of Fernando de Szyszlo, Roberto Matta, and Alejandro Obregón. During those years, he exhibited in Rio and participated in the Dallas Museum exhibition "South American Art Today." In 1960, when he had an exhibition at the Pan American Union in Washington, D.C., he took the opportunity to travel through the East Coast states "from Miami to Niagara." In The Museum of Modern Art in New York, he "saw the best painting in the world." He identified with Wifredo Lam, to whom he attributes the creation of an original American art, and admired the gestural paintings of the expressionists, especially the all-over patterns of Jackson Pollock. (He may even have seen the paintings of Richard Pousette-Dart, whose all-over patterns were more tightly knit than Pollock's.)

As soon as he returned to Ecuador, in 1960, he turned to abstraction, beginning with zones of broken colors and shapes like Wulf's, then gradually incorporating calligraphic and gestural elements. In the following months, he started to use symbols resembling Maya numerals and pre-Hispanic signs, on surfaces that were heavily built up with a gesso-like ground into which he scratched the designs, revealing the white base between the colors. After spending a year in Quito in the early sixties, he returned to Madrid for a short visit and participated in the "Art of America and Spain" exhibition in 1963. When Rendón visited Madrid the following year, the two artists spent many hours together talking about their work.

Back in Ecuador, he did his first all-over picture in 1964—*Pintura* (Painting)—for which he was awarded a prize when it was exhibited in the Salón de Julio in Guayaquil. It consists of a maze of dabs, dashes, and dots of reddish and yellowish tones with a tight-knit profusion of lines describing what looks like squirming bacteria. The expressionist



Aníbal Villacís
Pre-Colombino: Rojo de Arcilla, 1976
Acrylic and mixed media,
120 x 120 cm

and gestural approach was related to his former style, but with no subject reference. It also did away completely with all allusions to space as they had existed in most of his previous work, shallow as that space was, and prepared the ground for his series entitled "Precolombinos." The painting also marked a point of transition between Villacís' emotional expressionism and his homage to the materials of the Hispanic traditions of the past.

In 1965, he made his final move to Quito, where he was awarded the Mariano Aguilera prize the same year. By now, Quito was turning into a vital art center: Tábara had already returned, and Molinari and Maldonado did so in 1967.

Villacís' trip to Spain had taught him to see beauty in construction materials —wood, stucco, ceramic, metal powders. He now began working with mixed media, building up surfaces with a base of either gold leaf or silver and marble powder. These materials were subsequently used by other artists, including Ricaurte and Almeida.

Villacís' first "Precolombinos" resembled negative ceramic painting, where the design is created by painting the background. He scratched arabesques into a raised "background." He later reversed the process, and by a complex and laborious technique, created diversity and contrast between rough and smoothly polished surfaces.

Marta Traba compared some of his earlier "Precolombinos" to ceremonial robes of choir vestments because of their superficial resemblance to colonial techniques of applying color in representing religious garments. In fact, these first "Precolombinos" were an attempt to fuse pre-Hispanic with baroque elements: he used the materials of colonial religious art (polychrome and gilded wood, and stucco), which he blended with pre-Hispanic motifs and materials (ceramic, stone, and sometimes textile designs). Using an undercoat of silver or gold over wood, Villacís scratched the design into it, then worked color overlays in diverse ways like counterpoints to the designs in the raised surfaces.



Aníbal Villacís
Pre-Colombino: Blanco Gris, 1976
Mixed media,
120 x 120 cm

In the seventies, he decided to abandon silver and gold because he found them "too decorative." He now builds up the design solely with marble powder.

Like Araceli's, his paintings are easy to look at and difficult to do. After deciding what his underlying pattern will be, he methodically prepares the marble powder surface in layers as one would prepare a wall for fresco; when the base is almost dry, he scrapes in the design. There are no limits to the variations on geometric patterns, arabesques, bars and dots, crosses, floral motifs, and fossils, which are set off in relief against the surrounding area. Then he begins a painstaking process of applying color overlays to arrive at a surface that looks weathered with age. The layers are thin, and the process must be repeated with different colors until he has obtained the desired tonality; by rubbing and blending, he obtains various degrees of polish. Some of his paintings are almost monochromatic: clay, black, coffee, green, gray, or white. Sometimes, however, he uses a great number of colors or shades that blend into a general color through overlays. After each application of color, he allows the layer to dry in order to maintain the color in its purest and most luminous form. Because of these time-consuming delays, Villacís works on several paintings at once.

His all-white or all-black paintings are particularly splendid. *Nocturno* (1976) is a luminous black resembling the burnished surface of Chimú blackware pottery. The intensity of the black is modulated through multiple overlays. White paintings may veer either toward silvery or toward golden, depending on the overlay colors. The layers are either oil or acrylic; sometimes acrylic offers a more practical solution because it dries quickly. When Villacís uses titles such as *Arcaico* (Archaic), and *Calendario Pre-Colombino* (Pre-Columbian Calendar) of 1976, he is paying homage not only to the symbolism of ancient cultures but also to their materials and craftsmanship. Nonetheless, he accomplishes this within the framework of the informalism of the last two decades.



Aníbal Villacís
Pre-Colombino, 1976
Mixed media,
120 x 120 cm

Formalism

Molinari and Maldonado belong to the generation of the sixties. Although they both began exhibiting in the early fifties and are about the same age as Tábara and Villacís, they did not formulate their geometric constructivism until 1967. Both began with informalist styles and developed their current art through laborious processes of change. They have arrived at an integration of pictorial and sculptural elements: Molinari with the shaped canvas, Maldonado with designs on stainless steel. Both are concerned with architectonic issues. Molinari originally studied architecture, and Maldonado developed an interest in it through his work. After an initial period of formation in Guayaquil, they worked abroad for long periods: Molinari in Buenos Aires, Paris, and New York; Maldonado in Rome. They both returned to Quito in 1967, the year the VAN was formed. That year they also both discovered the direction their art was to take.

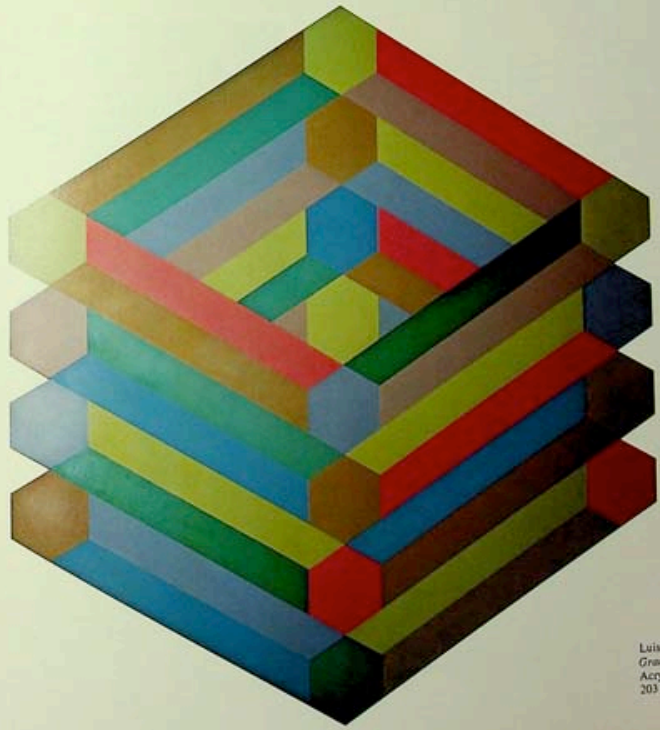
Although other artists had begun to explore informal variations of constructivism—for example, Humberto Moré in his assemblage—Molinari and Maldonado were the first to introduce constructivism in its precise, rigorous geometric form. Both soon left Ecuador, Molinari to live in New York until 1975, Maldonado to live in Rome, where he has remained. The first needed contact with other artists whose interests paralleled his own, the second needed to live where he could obtain and process the materials he works with—color on steel. Although in the work of both artists there are elements of optical illusion, in neither case it is the end objective. Aside from the visual paradoxes in the work of both artists, their paths are basically dissimilar. While Molinari's works are completely nonreferential, Maldonado uses an ancient mystical symbol expressed in terms of modern technology.

LUIS MOLINARI

Hernán Rodríguez Castelo referred to Molinari as a "loner," and Humberto Moré to the fact that he never succumbed completely to any of the trends he was exposed to in Paris or New York, except to adopt a "rational" art utilizing the technical knowledge and "functional possibilities" offered by a technological society in which he reconciled creativity with craftsmanship. For this reason, the different phases of Molinari's art seem elusive, unclassifiable, and sometimes misunderstood. Unlike many other artists whose homes are filled with Ecuadorian art of all periods, his apartment in Quito is sparse but comfortable, functional but not severe.

Molinari was born in Guayaquil in 1929 to a family of businessmen. With no formal training, he began drawing and painting the semisurreal organic forms suggested by the mangle (mangrove), a large tropical tree with twisted visible roots that grows in the Pacific inlets along the coast. "It was not the orthodox surrealism of Breton," Molinari explains, but representations of the fantastic tangled jungle world, the same one that furnished Constante, Tábara, and many others with their earliest subjects. In 1951, he went to live in Buenos Aires, where he remained until 1960. He





Luis Molinari
Gran Hexágono, 1973
Acrylic on canvas,
203 x 195 cm

studied architecture at the National University there from 1952 to 1958.

In the early fifties, the cultural ambience in Buenos Aires was particularly stimulating. The informalist Artistas Modernos group (which also included former concrete artists) had recently emerged. The abstract painters Antonio Fernández-Muro, Sara Grilo, Clorindo Testa, and Mario Pucciarelli were among those working in Buenos Aires. In 1958, Vasarely's paintings were first exhibited there. The Asociación Arte Nuevo group was formed in 1955, and until 1959, Molinari participated in its exhibitions. That same year, he had his first individual exhibition at the Rose-Mary Gallery in Buenos Aires.

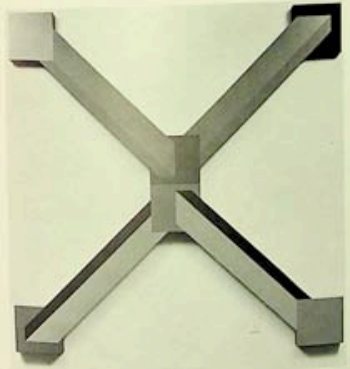
In 1960, on the invitation of the French government, he went to Paris where he studied engraving at the School of Fine Arts until 1963. When he first arrived in Paris, the Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel (GRAV) was formed by the Argentines Julio Le Parc and Hugo Demarco, along with Yvaral (Vasarely's son) and others. "L'art des objets," the French counterpart of North American pop, was also emerging. While in Paris, Molinari enjoyed and absorbed its cultural life—its exhibitions, both its classical theater and the theater of the absurd, and its literature. He also became associated with the large community of Latin Americans in the city at the time. Several of them were experimenting with optical and geometrical effects: the Venezuelans Alejandro Otero and Jesús Soto and the Argentine Luis Tomasello.

During those years, Molinari traveled to other European countries and exhibited several times. In 1963 he participated in the Third Paris Biennial, in which three fellow Ecuadorians, Tábara, Constante, and Moré, were also included. When the Latin American expatriates in Paris formed themselves into a group—the Association of Latin American Artists in Paris—Molinari was chosen as its head. He went to Helsinki to organize an exhibition of the work of five Latin Americans and showed his own work there. In 1965, he organized the exhibition of "Latin American Artists in Paris" at the Museum of Modern Art there. These exhibitions were paralleled by a corresponding wave of Latin American exhibitions in the United States within the same years.

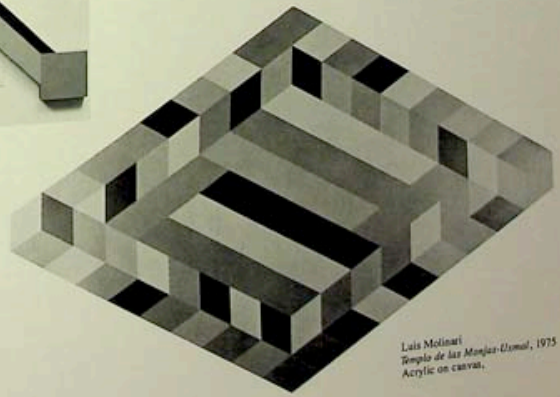
While in Paris, Molinari painted *Forma y Trópico* (Form and Tropic, 1962), *Berceau du Mangle* (The Cradle of the Mangle, 1963), *Moi le Serpent et sa Métamorphose* (I the Serpent and Its Metamorphosis, 1964) and *Genèse* (Genesis, 1965), recalling his semisurrealist period in Guayaquil and Buenos Aires. In the following year, his organic forms began to flatten into formalized patterns and gradually became abstract. But it was evident that a conflict existed between his nostalgia for modeled organic forms and an emergent formalizing tendency. In 1966, shortly after he came to New York, he had made the transition when he painted *Untitled* and *Intermezzo*. Both are composed of sharply defined flat shapes with only a few reminiscences of the organic. *Untitled* still evokes a human face, and *Intermezzo* is an eclectic composition of geometric elements sometimes recalling the flat, schematized anthropomorphism of pre-Hispanic textiles in what appears to be a reconciliation between the world of his origins and his present world. The compositions in both paintings are full of agitated, closed, clashing shapes.

His first New York visit came at one of the most complex moments in the art of the Western world, when pop, op, kinetic, funk, minimal, and a variety of geometric trends converged. Artists were challenging the gallery space with outsized sculpture and painting. This made it difficult for unformed artists to decide what path to take. Unlike the forties and fifties, the sixties offered infinite options and infinite confusions. But within a year, Molinari had found his direction. He came to know the work of Frank Stella, Sven Lukin, Charles Hinman, and Richard Smith—all of whom had, in Sam Hunter's words, redefined "the point of contact between pictorial and sculptural media."

When Molinari returned to Ecuador in 1967, he was filled with new ideas. He



Luis Molinari
Untitled, 1973
Acrylic on canvas.



Luis Molinari
Templo de las Monjas-Uxmal, 1975
Acrylic on canvas.

lectured in various universities and shuttled back and forth between Quito and Guayaquil, where he spend many evenings at the Café 78 discussing his ideas with other artists. He made his first three-dimensional work that year, and learned to construct and assemble his own supports and stretch the canvas over these often intricate, complex shapes.

His shift from the two-dimensional surface to the three-dimensional shaped canvas arose not so much from work he had seen, but from his conclusion that the "orthogonal support has no limits." The canvas did not have to be restricted to a flat rectangular or square shape. Although he also made some sculpture in lucite, he needed the canvas as a base since his constructions depended on color. Consequently, he never made a total transition from painting to sculpture. His earliest three-dimensional works suggested landscapes or architectural forms. *Andino* (Andean, 1967), an undulating composition with three unequal truncated cones, suggests mountains, and *Vuelo Libre* (Free Flight, 1967), a composite of rectilinear and curved forms, suggests molding or a part of a column.

By the time Molinari went back to New York in 1968 (he remained for the following seven years), his forms had freed themselves of their subjective references. *Construction No. 23*, which was included in the 1970 "10 Downtown" group exhibition in New York lofts, comprised nine brightly colored convex arched bands lined up against a ncave red base visible between the or bands. The colors were primary and secondary, with no intermediate tonalities. Although Molinari said that the green and yellow bands reminded him of the jungle, his concerns were purely technical in this work.

When he saw the interplay of the blue, yellow, and green bands against the solid red background, he observed that their shadows, color reflections, and relationships to the background altered the appearance and intensity of the red. He then conceived the possibility of achieving a similar effect on a flat surface. For the next few years, he worked on both volumetric and flat canvas structures, experimenting with numerous variants by altering the contour according to the demands of the internal design. He found the means to create illusions of volume through color. He then made a series, including *Projection of Prisms* (1975), in which seven vertical elements in different colors appear to advance toward the viewer. Although the work is entirely flat, the effect of projection is accentuated by the contour, which outlines the projecting shapes in a way that creates the illusion of perspective.

The *Cubos Virtuales* (Virtual Cubes), done in the seventies, are based on a similar *trompe l'oeil* principle through a composite of geometric shapes and bands of color. The shapes are implied within a hexagonal canvas which compensates for the way the cubes would look as volumes in perspective. The illusion is supported by the color definitions and intensities within the painting.

Since the early seventies, Molinari has embarked on a series of diamond shapes, rhomboids, irregular hexagons, and large cruciform structures with which he produces the illusion of volumes and visual paradoxes through a precisely controlled use of color.

Molinari's work has been compared to Vasarely's visually ambiguous, irregularly shaped paintings. However, although Molinari's use of color to produce effects of volume shares superficial similarities with Vasarely's, his work is more closely related to Carl Andre's floor pieces composed of "carpets" of assembled squares. There is no physical resemblance but there are common conceptual points. Vasarely's pieces make a psychological impact on the viewer by presenting a colorfully painted illusion of volume—a cube, a convex surface, etc.—whereas Andre's floor pieces force the viewer to complete the work conceptually, forming a volume not with optical devices but by appealing to our visual preconceptions. Molinari's work combines elements of both artists.

The conceptual aspect was notable in his experiments in sculpture, in transformable modules that the viewer could rearrange in different ways. Once again he succeeded in finding a two-dimensional solution whereby the viewer could intervene conceptually, completing the missing parts. This led Molinari a step further: he conceived of the "vector," which the dictionary defines in its mathematical sense as "a quantity, such as a force or velocity, having direction and magnitude, or a line representing such a quantity drawn from its point of origin to its final position, a radius vector." He made his first *Vectorial Proposition* in 1972. The vectorial *Untitled* of 1973 is shaped like a St. Andrew's cross. Two of its arms appear to project out into the viewer's space, and the other two extend toward the wall against which the work is placed. But in addition, the movement created by these apparently projecting limbs does not end with the work but seems to continue forcefully into the surrounding space reinforced by the color directives. In this particular work, instead of conceptually completing a volume, one completes a movement, a thrust into space. The combination of shape and color induces the visual prolongation or extension of the existing elements. The direction of the movement is filled in by the viewer as Carl Andre's squares are into a volume. But unlike Andre's work, the direction of movement in the vectors is potentially infinite. That is why Molinari added small square shapes at the extremities of the arms, in order to brake the movement, thereby creating visual tension.

He had conceived the idea for *Untitled* after painting *Multiple Vectorial Proposition* (1972), in which four similar but more compact shapes are arranged in square formation on a white background.

In a kind of reversal of the process for the prismatic projections where he turned an object into a painting, with the vector he turned a painting into an object. He concluded that the function of the white background in *Multiple Vectorial Proposition* could just as well be served by the surrounding wall. He was also able to expand on the idea by building the vectors in any size the wall could accommodate.

The vector is elaborated with different results in *Díptico, Formas Abiertas, Formas Cerradas* (Diptych, Open Forms, Closed Forms, 1975), a complex of two equal-sized square canvases joined and placed at different levels so that the bottom of one aligns with the vertical midpoint of the other. As the title implies, in one canvas, the elements form a closed structure in square formation, and in the other, an open one shaped like the other vectors. The corner formed by the two sides of the closed form meets the end of one of the arms of the other. Together they produce a visual collision.

Although his current works are completely nonreferential, some of them bear titles that are considerably less technical than *Cubos Virtuales* and *Vectorial Proposition*. *Duke's Indigo Mood* (1974) is an arrangement of painted ascending and descending curved bands of color on a rectangular base. Molinari is a lover of both classical music and jazz, and the painting is a tribute to Duke Ellington's music. But the painting is not intended as an analogy to music any more that Aracelli's *Requiem por Sidney Bechet*. Molinari frequently gives a work its title after it is begun or even when it has been finished. In this painting, the reference is to visual rhythms.

The allusions to architecture in his titles have more relevance, although not always for their technical correspondences, as, for instance, in *Au Revoir Le Corbu* (1967). But in *Templo de las Monjas—Uxmal* (The Nunnery—Uxmal, 1975), he pays homage to the sophistication, technical precision, and ingenuity of pre-Hispanic architects, the creators of the splendid Maya complex in the Yucatán Peninsula. The diamond-shaped canvas is filled with geometric and color ambiguities suggesting the Uxmal quadrangle as it would be seen in perspective.

As it has always been, Molinari's work is still difficult to classify. He is not a "modular" sculptor or painter, because although he has used modules, they do not form a consistent part of his work. Nor is he a "systems" painter, because each work is subject to different laws and not to an identifiable constant. Nor is his work minimal. It is complex and not particularly large. The closest one can come to defining his work is to classify it as conceptual. Molinari does not deal with the national themes of his country; rather, he has developed a form that is relevant to a growing urban environment.

ESTUARDO MALDONADO

In spite of its sleek industrial appearance, Maldonado's constructivist work is based on an ancient sign, and it often derives from a mystical concept, as Mondrian's did from theosophical notions. Maldonado has, in fact, paid tribute to Mondrian in one of his works. However, his work stands on its own as a monument to industry and a world of the future. Maldonado is also an inventor. Although doubt has been expressed as to whether artists can compete with science except to "imitate" it, as once they "imitated" nature, Maldonado's contribution to industry is real: he helped to develop new processes for coloring stainless steel chemically.

Maldonado was born in 1930 in the highland town of Pintag, which he describes as a "pueblito" ("village") of some five thousand inhabitants. He remembers digging up ancient ceramics in the little plot of land he and the other children were allotted to cultivate in school. He was first exposed to painting through a teacher whose work he liked, and also through a favorite uncle, a civil engineer who "made bridges and paintings."

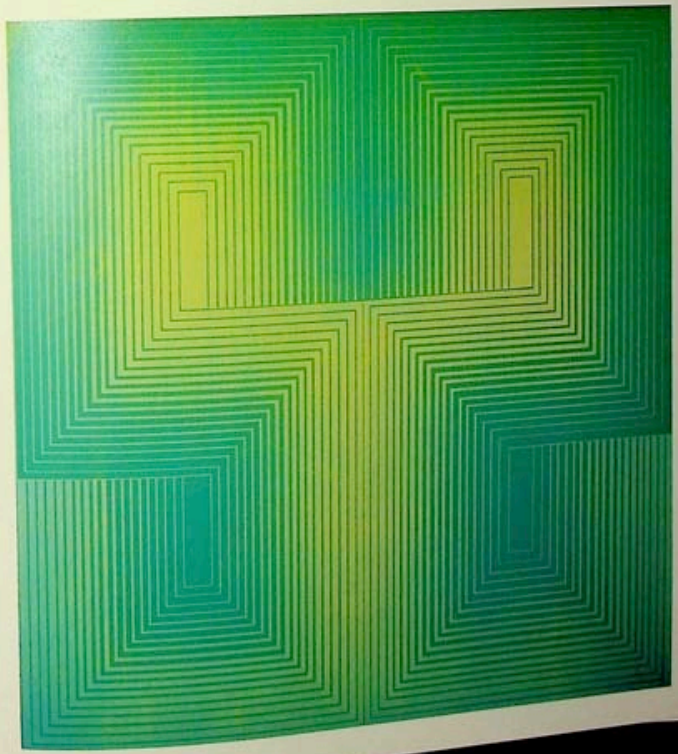
As a teen-ager, Maldonado found his environment stifling. All his friends had gone to larger cities to study, so at the age of fifteen he fled from home and went to Guayaquil, where he enrolled at the School of Fine Arts, studying with Hans Michaelson and winning several awards. He met Humberto Moré, Luis Miranda, Angel Bravo, and Tábara, whose work he particularly admired. In his early years, he did both painting and sculpture and supported himself by selling his ceramic and guayacan-wood sculpture. His first paintings were of social themes inspired by Rivera and Orozco. Later, his taste shifted to Tamayo and Gauguin.

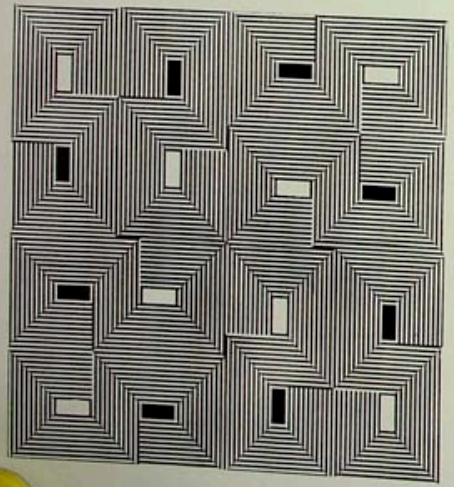
On a trip to the northern coastal provinces of Esmeraldas and Manabí, he painted landscapes and genre. In 1951, he began to exhibit. Following a "wasted year" of military service, he resumed his art with a "feverish desire to work." In the eight months after his discharge, he executed forty works in terra-cotta and plaster, which the critic Benjamín Carrión arranged to have exhibited in 1957 at the National Museum in Quito. The same year, Maldonado left for Rome with a grant from the Ecuadorian government. There, he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts for eight years and was awarded a national prize for his work. Shortly after his arrival, he participated in the "First Exhibition of Latin American Artists" at the Palazzo Venezia in Rome. In 1961, he had his first individual exhibition there, at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni and was awarded a prize in an exhibition there two years later. In the following years, he exhibited extensively and participated in the Venice Biennial of 1966.

For several years, like Molinari, Maldonado struggled to reconcile the conflict between his fascination with primitive symbols and the rigors of geometry. He also developed an interest in the new industrial materials available to artists in Italy. In 1959 and 1960, traveling through Italy and Western Europe, he saw an extensive range of ancient and modern art. He admired the work of Picasso, Mondrian, Kandinsky, and Miró, and he was particularly drawn to the primitive signs in Klee's work. After he encountered Tábara in Spain and saw Spanish informalism, with its Jungian search for primordial roots, he began incorporating symbols, circles, stepped frets, and textures into his work. He had already experimented with geometry in sculpture and painting, blending it with floating, Miró-like

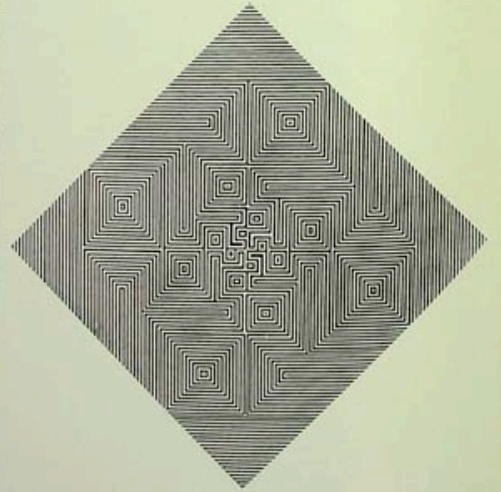


Estuardo Maldonado
Estructura Modular No. 25, 1976
Stainless steel with color,
93 x 93 cm





do Maldonado
ra Modular No. 33, 1976
s steel with color,
cm



Estuardo Maldonado
Estructura Modular No. 32, 1976
Stainless steel with color,
93 x 93 cm

biomorphic forms etched into the surface, as in *Constelaciones* (Constellations, 1967). He also did a series of paintings in which he used encaustic to build up the surface, later adding gold and silver as a base into which he incised all-over patterns and totemic designs inspired by Tábara's informalism. For a while, his subjects included idols, sorcerers, bewitched suns, and lunar images similar to the "Precolombinos" of Villacís and Tábara.

During his stay in Rome, concrete and neoconcrete art movements emerged, and several groups were formed that collectively experimented with different materials. The Gruppo T in Milan, the Gruppo N in Padua, and especially the Sperimentale P and Gruppo Operativo R in Rome were working with industrial materials and methods involving mathematical logic to arrive at optical results. In the late fifties, artists evidenced an interest in industrial design as a source for art in a revival of Bauhaus theories: Enrico Castellani worked with methods for treating the surfaces of industrial materials, and Getulio Alviani cut and assembled aluminum sheets into geometric patterns with smooth surfaces polished in such a way that the shiny, flat aluminum appeared wavy.

In 1967, on his way back to Ecuador, Maldonado traveled through the United States, exhibiting in Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C. In Ecuador, he exhibited at the Galería Siglo XX although he did not belong to the Grupo VAN. Quite the contrary, he had been appointed as official delegate by the Casa de la Cultura to select work from other Latin American countries for the Quito Biennial.

His work was still informalist and filled with the symbols of ancient cultures, but shortly after his arrival in Quito, he evolved his first modular work "in the midst of ancient stones, in a closed world with no access to reviews and art books," according to Marta Traba. At the time, he worked with polychromed wood, and a little later, formica and aluminum. His first geometric compositions also incorporated biomorphic designs. Gradually, he evolved a sign in the shape of an angular S, which first covered whole surfaces of paintings like ancient symbols, then became an isolated element. From then on, he alternated two-dimensional and three-dimensional work, with the S as his module. He composed it into an infinite number of arrangements, including serials, labyrinths, interlocking open or closed formations. Sometimes he stacked the modules into tower structures, or compartments, adjustable components, propeller-like arrangements forming a circular sculpture. Some comprised designs on flat surfaces.

The Brazilian critic Murilo Mendes referred to Maldonado's S as a "magic" sign and noted the fact that Maldonado was only four years old when he began tracing this sign in the sand. Maldonado adopted it unconsciously before learning that it was an ancestral life-and-death symbol. About 1968, he made an arrangement of eight interlocking S modules lined up diagonally along the floor that bears a curious affinity with a work by the Brazilian sculptor and painter Rubens Gerchman of about the same date consisting of the letters S O S spelled out across the floor in large sculptured block letters. It is conceivable that the two artists knew of each other's work, since Gerchman was living in New York when Maldonado went through, and Maldonado had exhibited in Rio in 1968 and was in contact with concrete and neoconcrete artists there. In the sixties, letters were frequently used in Brazilian painting and sculpture because of the influence of concrete poetry, which turned syntax into words, words into objects, followed by the adoption and inclusion of words and letters into sculpture and painting. In Brazil, concrete poetry and the plastic arts became interchangeable. Gerchman's letter sculpture was also conceived with a social function as a potential means to instruct the illiterate. Undoubtedly these factors made Maldonado's letter modules especially appealing to the Brazilian sensibility. But unlike Gerchman, Maldonado used the letter in a universal constructivist way, and the formal possibilities for constructing it were unlimited. As sculpture, it was geometric, precise, and expressive of modern architecture and industry. Maldonado assembled the S modules into shapes that evoked everything from ziggurats and Moorish designs to the most advanced forms of contemporary architecture.

He returned to Rome in 1968 and began experimenting with optical ef-

fects, first by painting on wood and engraving on metal. In 1969, he engraved pre-Hispanic symbols into metal as if for printing. Then in an attempt to obtain more controlled results, he began refinishing the metal into geometric patterns of opaque and brilliant surfaces. Although he liked the polished character of stainless steel, he was dissatisfied with its lack of color. But in obtaining the colored surface, he did not want to forfeit the precision of modern industrial materials.

In 1972, a physicist told him that a process existed for coloring metal for industrial purposes. Maldonado found out that it was being used at the Sillem Company, in Verolanuova, in Brescia. He joined the research team there, and for the following year, his work was filled with excitement, apprehension, trial, and error, until he hit on the exact chemical combination that enabled him to obtain color on metal. By 1974, he could produce six different colors on stainless steel. He first experimented by soaking sheets in a hot chromosulfuric solution, in a process resembling copper-engraving methods. The result depended on the length of time the steel plate remained in the solution. Fifteen minutes were required for bronze, seventeen for blue, longer for yellow, and so on, until he obtained red, green, etc. The brilliance or opaqueness of the color depended on how he finished the metal before soaking. He first worked with small individual sheets, one per color, but in order to be able to use all those colors or any combination of them on a single sheet, he developed an enamel substance to coat the portion of the metal not to be colored—similar to the methods in engraving. Although the process of coloring stainless steel is not new in itself, the process for hardening the colored finish into a durable surface is. Maldonado is said to be the first artist to use this particular method.

All Maldonado's works since 1974 are entitled "estructuras modulares" (modular structures), in what he calls "acero inox-color" (stainless-steel color). He has utilized the method in both two- and three-dimensional works of infinite variety, often with optical effects achieved through either color or line. As a result of his technical discoveries, he has been invited to participate in numerous exhibitions focusing on modern materials. In 1974, he exhibited at the Art Center in Brescia; in 1975, at the International Center of Constructivist Art at the Museum of Modern Art in Gelsenkirchen, Germany; in 1976, at the International Art Festival in Basel; and in 1977, at the Museum of Modern Art in Caracas. His colored stainless-steel pieces have been exhibited in France, Spain, and the United States, as well as Italy, Switzerland, and Germany. They were not shown in Ecuador until 1976, when Maldonado had exhibitions within a short period at the Municipal Museum in Guayaquil, the Casa de la Cultura in Cuenca, the Galería Altamira in Quito, and the Museum of the Central Bank in Quito.

In an interview in 1976, Maldonado told Hernán Rodríguez Castelo of his plans for a satellite city in Ecuador. It would be a "city of the sun," a new image of Central and South American architecture "bridging the explosive and dynamic architecture of the Mayas, Aztecs, and Incas . . . [a fusing of] natural elements with geometry to serve man." It was conceived in Rome with the advice of psychologists, sociologists, urban planners, architects, painters, and sculptors, and would have pre-Hispanic museums, workshops, and looms in its center "to liberate national craftsmanship from the exploitation of intermediaries and from the pressure to falsify art. In the center of the plaza [there would be] a large [artificial] sun that could function as an accumulator of solar energy." It was agreed that this city should be located along the equator.

Unlike the other five artists in this exhibition, who have all returned to Ecuador to live, Maldonado must stay abroad because of his reliance on materials and processes unavailable in Ecuador. Although he uses "un-Ecuadorian" materials, like Villacís he enjoys the intrinsic quality of the materials and processes with which he works.

In Conclusion

The work of these six artists may raise the question of what is Ecuadorian in Ecuadorian contemporary art. Villacís and Tábara seem to be the most "Ecuadorian," Araceli and Rendón, the most "Parisian," and Molinari and Maldonado, the most "international."

A conversation I had in Quito with a young painter illustrates the subtle but complex aspects of this question. His parents were Russian; he was born in Shanghai and came to Ecuador in the fifties. After studying in Spain for seven years, he returned to Ecuador in 1971. His own paintings veer toward surrealistic representations of people trapped within an expanding urban environment, in a style that seems to combine Velázquez and Goya. He felt that artists who lived abroad were not really representative of Ecuadorian art. "But you once lived abroad. Does that make you less Ecuadorian?" I asked. "Well, no. I am living here now." "And so is Molinari," I answered. The conversation ended there, but not the issue. The prevailing question is, of course, whether the works are relevant to the country's social conditions. The answer is the same as it is for every country. Some are and some are not. Furthermore, the criterion for what is socially relevant and what is not changes with time. In the forties it was indigenism, and in the sixties *precolombinismo*. No matter how "national" an artist wishes to become, there is no way he can escape some form of contemporary international syntax. The only alternative is to revert to earlier forms of expression—many of which were once international also.

The evolution of Ecuadorian art is closely linked with the art of other countries and has been ever since the conquest. One might even put some blame on the Incas, who, after all, had invaded an area that not only already had a rich culture, but the oldest one in the New World. The fact that these six artists have sought ideas in many places (as did their predecessors) testifies to their thirst for a broad visual experience, their need for the perspective of distance, and the intelligence with which they have been able to use this experience and perspective to arrive at entirely original solutions free of standardization and bandwagon thinking; it does not signify a lack of concern for national issues. In spite of their exposure to programmed art, pop, minimal, funk, ecological, body art, photorealism, followed by anti-industrialization, antiserialization, and antiguilt-complex art, their own art developed methodically, quietly, and independently.

Their work has none of the visceral rebellions or gut-spitting allusions of some art in Spain, Colombia, Brazil, even of some more recent graphic currents in Ecuador. It is mellow and contemplative in its fusion of idea and material; it is not expository, narrative, or didactic. Its basic ideology is not, as one might suppose, generated by a consumer society, as is pop art, for example, but by universal values derived from the theories of Torres-García. The question of making "Ecuadorian" art is less important to them than their identities as Ecuadorians making art.

As in other countries, contemporary art in Ecuador has been richly fertilized by cross currents. It is not an art of negatives. Indigenism was to some extent an art of negatives, and Marta Traba denounced it as the "humiliation of the vanquished" and praised the *precolombinismo* of Villacís and Tábara as the "exaltation of the vanquished." There is no doubt that this contemporary art is an exaltation, but not of a vanquished people. The continuing creativity and originality of the work of these artists is proof of a conquest over time and circumstances. As Araceli said of Jan Schreuder, each one of them is "Ecuadorian at heart," and as Schreuder's pupil Oswaldo Viteri said, "In art one must accept all the good wherever it comes from."

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MANUEL RENDON

Major One-Person Exhibitions

1926 Galerie Zborowsky, Paris
1927-1940 Formed part of the Galerie "L'Effort Moderne", Paris
1949 Galerie d'Art du Faubourg, Paris
1951 Galerie Ariel, Paris
1955-1956 Galerie de Berri, Paris
1955 Pan American Union, Washington, D.C.
1958 Gres Gallery, Washington, D.C.
Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas
1959 Centro Ecuatoriano-Norteamericano, Quito
1961 Club Urbis, Madrid
1967 Galería Siglo XX, Quito
1970-1973 Museo Municipal, Guayaquil
1971 Galería Pachacamac, Guayaquil
1974 Galería Altamira, Quito
Museo del Banco Central, Quito, Retrospective

Major Group Exhibitions

1917-1925 Exhibited with the Salons "Independants", "Automne", "National", "Tuileries", Group "La Horde", Paris.
1917-1936 Salon des "Surindépendants," Paris.
1918 Galerie Vildrac, Paris
1932 Galerie "L'Effort Moderne", Paris "Ouevres anciennes et récentes"
1943 Salón de Bellas Artes, Quito
1946 Unesco Internacional Exhibition, Paris.
1951 Primera Bienal Hispano Americana, Madrid, (First Prize)
1954 II Bienal Hispano-Americana, Havana (First Prize)
1955 Salon de Réalités Nouvelles, Paris
1956 Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C.
1957 IV Bienal de São Paulo
1959 Salon Fundación de Guayaquil, Primer Festival de las Artes (Gold Medal)
Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, "South American Art Today"
University of Nebraska Art Gallery, "Paintings and Drawings from Latin America"
1966 Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, "Art of Latin America Since Independence"
1967 Casa de la Cultura, Guayaquil
Salon Fundación de Guayaquil, Segundo Festival de las Artes (Gold Medal)
1977 O.A.S., Quito, "Formalismo e Informalismo en la Plástica Ecuatoriana"

ARACELI GILBERT

Major One-Person Exhibitions

1953-1954 Galería Arnaud, Paris
1955 Museo de Arte Colonial, Quito
1956 Steuregallériet, Stockholm
1957 Asociación Brasilera de Prensa, Río de Janeiro
1959 Centro Ecuatoriano-Norteamericano, Quito
1960 Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, Quito
1972 Galería Altamira, Quito

Major Group Exhibitions

1943 Centro Ecuatoriano-Norteamericano, Quito
1948 Universidad Popular de Mexico, Mexico
1951 Galerie Henri Tronche, Paris, "Contrabienal Hispano-Americana de Barcelona"
1953-1956 Salon Réalités Nouvelles, Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris
1954 Vereinigung Bildender Kunstler, Viena
1957 IV Biennial, Museum of Modern Art, Paris
1959 Museum of Art Liljevalchs, Stockholm
1960 Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, Guayaquil, IV Salón de Octubre (II Prize)
1961 VI Bienal del Museo de Arte Moderno de Sao Paulo
VI Exposición Mariano Aguilera, Quito, (Mariano Aguilera Prize)
1964 Museo de Arte Colonial, Quito, "12 Pintores del Ecuador"
Centro de Estudios Brasileiros, Quito, "Artistas del Ecuador en las Bienales de São Paulo"
1967 Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, Quito, "Testimonio Plástico 1967"
1968 Museo de Antropología de la Ciudad de México, México, "XI Olimpiada Cultural"
1969 Inaugural Exhibition, Museum of Modern Latin American Art, Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, Quito
1972-1974 Galería Altamira, Quito
1975 Galería Goribar, Quito, "Presencia Plástica de Guayaquil"
1977 O.A.S., Quito, "Formalismo e Informalismo en la Plástica Ecuanoriana"

ANIBAL VILLACIS

Major One-Person Exhibitions

1951 Ateneo de Caracas
1952 Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, Ambato
1953 Instituto de Cultura Hispánica, Madrid
1954 Círculo de Bellas Artes, Madrid
1956 Museo Nacional, Bogotá
1957 Museo de Arte Colonial, Quito
1958 Centro Ecuatoriano Norteamericano, Ambato
1960 Pan American Union, Washington, D.C.
1966 Colegio Nacional Bolivariano, Ambato
1971-1972 Galería Altamira, Quito
1976 Galería Artes, Quito
1977 Galería "9", Lima
Galería de Arte, Lima

Major Group Exhibitions.

1950 Club Venezuela, Caracas
1957 Salón "Fiesta de la Fruta", Ambato
Salón "L'Ermitage", Ambato
Salón Nacional "Mariano Aguilera", Quito (III Prize)
1959 Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, "South American Art Today"
1960 Salón Nacional "Mariano Aguilera", Quito (II Prize)
1962 Salón "Asociación de Artistas Plásticos", Quito
1964 II Bienal de Córdoba, Argentina
1965 Salón Nacional "Mariano Aguilera", Quito (Grand Prize)
1966 Salón Bolivariano, Cali (II Prize)
1968 Primera Bienal Internacional Coltejer de Medellín
1969 X Bienal de São Paulo
Salón "Luis A. Martínez", Ambato
1970 Exposición de Pintura Contemporánea del Area Andina, Lima
Casa de la Cultura, Quito "Actualidad Plástica"
II Bienal Internacional Coltejer de Medellín
XIII Salón de Octubre, Guayaquil (I Prize)
1972 III Bienal Internacional Coltejer de Medellín
Salón Latinoamericano de Pintura, Quito (I Prize)
1973 "Homage to Pablo Picasso", Washington, D.C.
1975 Salón Nacional de Artes Plásticas, Quito (II Prize)
1977 O.A.S., Quito, "Formalismo e Informalismo en la Plastica Ecuatoriana"

ENRIQUE TABARA

Major One-Person Exhibitions

1952 Casa de la Cultura, Guayaquil
1957 Galería Layetanas, Barcelona
1961 Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Barcelona
1962 Madeleine Gallery, Milan
Kunterhaus Gallery, Munich
1963 Ateneo de Madrid
1964 Pan American Union, Washington, D.C.
1965 Centro Ecuatoriano Norteamericano, Quito
1966 Museo de Río Piedras, San Juan
1967 Casa de la Cultura, Guayaquil
1968 Galería Marta Traba, Bogotá
1970 Galería Altamira, Quito
1973 Colegio de Bellas Artes, Guayaquil
1975 Haus Ensebruck Gallery, Hannover
1976 Casa de la Cultura, Guayaquil
1976 Galería Bucholz, Bogotá
1977 Museo del Banco Central, Quito, "Persistencia de una Imagen"

Major Group Exhibitions

1951 Salón Nacional, Quito
1960 Swiss Exhibition of Abstract Painting, Lausanne (II Prize)
1964 Salón de Octubre, Casa de la Cultura, Guayaquil (II Prize)
1966 Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, "Art of Latin America Since Independence"
1967 Salón de Julio, Guayaquil (First Prize)
1968 Salón de Vanguardia, Guayaquil
1970 Salón Nacional, Quito (Gold Medal)
1971 Salón de Octubre, Guayaquil (II Prize)
1973 Colegio de Bellas Artes, Guayaquil (Gold Medal)
1976 Salón Nacional, Casa de la Cultura, Quito (Acquisition Prize)
1977 O.A.S., Quito, "Formalismo e Informalismo en la Plastica Ecuatoriana"

LUIS MOLINARI

Major One-Person Exhibitions

1959 Galería Rose Mary, Buenos Aires
1963 Galería Ivan Spence, Ibiza
1967 Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, Quito
1971 Galería Siglo XX, Quito
1972, 1974 Galería San Diego, Bogotá
1975 Galería Altamira, Quito
1976 Museo del Banco Central, Quito

Major Group Exhibitions

1955-1959 Salón de Arte Nuevo, Buenos Aires
1962 Museum of Modern Art, Paris, "Latin American Art in Paris"
1963 III Paris Biennial
1965 Museum of Modern Art, Paris, "Latin American Artists in Paris"
1967 Universidad Central de Caracas
1969 IX Festival de Arte, Cali
Union Carbide, New York City, "Young Artists of the World"
1970 Primera Bienal Latinoamericana de Artes Gráficas, San Juan
IV Bienal Americana de Grabado, Santiago de Chile
Exposición Panamericana de Artes Gráficas, Cali
1971 First Nacional Biennial of Prints, Honolulu, Hawaii
1972 II Bienal Latinoamericana de Artes Gráficas, San Juan
Columbia University, New York, "Modern Art of Latin America"
1973 II Nacional Biennial of Prints, Honolulu, Hawaii
University of Massachusetts, Amherst, "Contemporary Latin American Art"
Queens Cultural Center, New York, "Contemporary Artists of Latin America"
1974 V Internacional Biennial of Prints, Krakow, Poland
IV Bienale Internazionale Della Grafica d'Arte, Florence
1976 Bienal Americana de Artes Gráficas, Cali
1977 O.A.S., Quito, "Formalismo e Informalismo en la Plástica Ecuatoriana"

ESTUARDO MALDONADO

Major One-Person Exhibitions

1952 Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, Portoviejo
1955 Galería de Arte Contemporáneo, Guayaquil
1957 Museo Nacional, Quito
1961 Exhibition Palace, Rome
1962 Galeria Artisti d'Oggi, Rome
1963 Galeria Scorpio, Rome
1967 Pan American Union, Washington, D.C.
Andrade Gallery, New York City
Casa de la Cultura, Quito
Casa de la Cultura, Guayaquil
Galería Sigio XX, Quito
Museo de Arte Moderno, Bogotá
1968 Instituto de Arte Contemporáneo, Lima
1970 Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Madrid
1971 Museo de Bellas Artes, Valencia
1972 Canning House, London
1973 Kiel Gallery, Hamburg
1974 Galeria Marco IV, Rome
1976 Museo Municipal, Guayaquil
Galería Altamira, Quito
Casa de la Cultura, Cuenca
Museo del Banco Central, Quito

Major Group Exhibitions

1951 Galería de Arte Contemporáneo, Guayaquil
Casa de la Cultura, Guayaquil
1953 V Salón Nacional de Artes Plásticas, Quito
1958 First Latin American Art Exhibition, Venice Palace, Rome
1961 Galería San Lucas, Rome
1967 Casa de la Cultura, Quito, "Testimonio Plástico 1967"
1968 Museum of Modern Art, New York City
1969 Museo de Arte, Bogota
X Bienal Internacional de Arte, São Paulo
Instituto Italo, Rome, "Vision 12"
Primera Muestra Internacional de Grabado, Barcelona
Museum of Modern Art, Bucharest
1971 Guenegauld Gallery, Paris, "Constructivism and Movement"
III International Festival of Painting, Cagnes-Sur-Mer
XXXVI International Biennial, Venice
III Bienal Internacional Coltejer, Medellín
1973 University Art Gallery, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, "Contemporary Latin American Art"
International Art Fair, Dusseldorf
International Art Fair, Basel
1976 Museo de Arte Moderno, Caracas, "Agrupación 1976"
International Art Fair, Basel
1977 XII Quadrennial of Rome, Exhibition Palace, Rome
O.A.S., Quito, "Formalismo e Informalismo en la Plástica Ecuatoriana"