

ART of the Americas bulletin

current activity in Latin American Art



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Castillo
+
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Cover: Iron sculpture by Sergio Castillo of Chile. Exhibited in the Aztec garden of the Pan American Union.

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The OAS is an outgrowth of the International Union of American Republics, created in 1890 during the First International Conference of American States, held in Washington, D. C. Today, it operates through a large number of different agencies and institutions throughout the Hemisphere, all contributing to the objective of preserving the peace and security of the member states and promoting, by cooperative action, their economic, social, and cultural development. The Pan American Union, the central and permanent organ and General Secretariat of the OAS, has its headquarters in Washington, D. C.

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There is an extrasensory phenomenon -- mysterious, oneiric -- that I have experienced on occasions -- adding my own "soundtrack" to certain visual experiences that produce a profound, emotional effect. Has this not happened to you? For example, while walking alone through a field, or catching a sudden glimpse of the sea, or meeting a person, have you never sensed a kind of interior vibration, a melody within that seems to correspond to -- in fact, germinate from -- the images before you?

Last year I went to Mexico to assist art critic José Gómez-Sicre, Chief of the Division of Visual Arts, conduct a series of interviews with actress Dolores del Río. There was a two-fold purpose: the Secretary General of the OAS and the PAU Department of Cultural Affairs were planning a formal tribute to the actress, in recognition of the important role she has played in the enrichment of the theater and films not only in her own country but internationally as well; secondly, an article was being prepared for publication in *Américas* magazine, eventually to be enlarged upon and published as a book.

Miss del Río's house, poetically named "La Escondida," (The Hidden Place) is located in Coyoacán. As we waited for her to receive us, I wandered into the dining room, where I saw an oil portrait by Diego Rivera. Her look is that of a surprised gazelle -- a timid, doe-eyed creature, slightly bewildered at this invasion of privacy. Candelabras on both sides illuminated the painting. As I moved closer, attempting to see the detail, the lights began to dim slowly -- a defect in the electric current. But it was as though the image feared destruction because of my closeness. Perhaps the biographies of actors should be viewed and judged only in the floating shades of footlights and the reflections of celluloid.

When the curtain falls, what remains with us? Elusive profiles? Recorded voices? Distorted close-ups? The mask that hides the face? I remembered the Zen expression, "When the violin stops playing, where does the music go?" For several minutes I mused over these soon-to-be-answered questions.



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Dolores del Rio was coming down the stairs. (Would she enter as the Goddess or the Woman?) Memories of scenes: Maria Candelaria, Bugambilia, Resurrection, What Price Glory? Lady Windermere's Fan, La Malquerida, The Fugitive. She invited us to sit down, and the interview began without unnecessary preambles. Questions on both her personal and professional life were asked and answered. As the silent spectator, I was totally fascinated.

That evening we were invited to attend the rehearsal of Hugo Betti's The Queen and the Rebels, in which she was to star. I followed her backstage at the end of the performance, reluctant to say goodbye. When I finally left, I had the impression that I had savored one of the most genuine personalities in Latin America.

I have known few human beings with a greater capacity to grasp reality without acquiring a certain hardness, with greater interest in others without feelings of false pity, with a greater ability to communicate without dependence on borrowed emotions. How gratifying it is to confirm that these qualities exist outside Olympus.

I did not see Dolores del Rio again until her arrival in Washington in November. At the formal ceremony, in the Pan American Union, attended by ambassadors and personalities from the theater and film world, she was presented with a bronze plaque

In the John Ford film The Fugitive, made in Mexico in 1947, Dolores del Rio portrayed an unwed mother who aided a priest (Henry Fonda) in his escape attempts. The movie depicted the beginning days of the Mexican Revolution.



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Diego Rivera's portrait of Dolores del Rio, oil on canvas.



and praised for her "classic dignity and serenity" that "has brought the ideal of Latin American beauty to the screens of the entire world." Her acceptance speech was full of love and simplicity, her manner as natural as when I first met her in Mexico.

Woman and actress, she is everything that makes us feel the profound -- like a melody of Albinoni.

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Luis Lastra, Editor
Visual Arts Division

DOLORES DEL RÍO

JOSÉ GÓMEZ-SICRE

On the last train that left Durango for Mexico City in November of 1910 was a little girl four years old, poorly dressed, and her mother. Rumors of revolution were spreading, and she had been told not to speak to any passenger, much less to show her good clothes hidden under the provisions in her basket. The trip was long and slow. Terrified people, some with weapons, piled into the car at the many stops. The child's mother, a cousin of Francisco Madero, hoped to reach the capital. The father had fled in the opposite direction, to cross the frontier and seek asylum in the United States. The child, with brilliant dark eyes and very black hair, was called Dolores. The mother, born in Durango, like her daughter, was called Antonia López Negrete de Asúnsolo. The father, Jesús L. Asúnsolo, from a prominent family in Chihuahua, was the director of the Bank of Duran-

go. Although a person of impeccable public and private conduct, his position and his heritage made him a ready candidate for hasty extermination in the initial confusion of the Revolution.

In Mexico City the mother and her only daughter took refuge in the house of relatives. By 1912 the father was able to join them; it was always a close, affectionate family. Dolores was enrolled in the Convent of Saint Joseph, run by French nuns, when she was six years old. It was a day school where all teaching and conversation was in French. At home, her parents spoke to her in Spanish.

It was customary to complete a girl's education at home. Girls were taught "accomplishments" that would enable them to take their places in society. Dolores' "accomplishment" was Spanish dancing. At seven she was taking lessons from famous dancer Felipa

López.

The girl grew into a beautiful adolescent, who took her first steps in society while still a pupil at the convent. A portrait of her then by Alfredo Ramos Martínez shows a tall and serene young lady, of aristocratic bearing. In 1921, shortly after her fifteenth birthday, she left school and married Jaime Martínez del Río, a lawyer educated in England and France and a rich and socially prominent *hacendado* who was eighteen years her senior. Her name was now Dolores Asúnsolo de Martínez del Río.

The honeymoon lasted two years, with long stays in London, Paris, Madrid and Rome. Dolores sometimes danced for benefit fiestas. In Madrid in 1922 the young wife of the Mexican aristocrat danced for the wounded of the Melilla campaign, during the Spanish-Moroccan War. The monarchs of Spain praised her elegance and dexterity as

much as her generous *gesturé*. After returning to Mexico the couple suffered their first setback, in 1924, when the economic disaster to cotton caused serious losses in Jaime's income, which was primarily from agriculture.

The dance was Dolores' driving force. Encouraged by her husband, she prepared small dramas, modest "ballets" for one person, which she choreographed. "It was my only emotional escape," she told me recently. "With my dancing, I realize today, I wanted to act." The Martínez del Río family did not lead a frivolous social life. They mixed with intellectuals. Jaime was interested in writing. He introduced his wife to reading and to a taste for archaeology and classical music. "He opened my eyes to a new world," Dolores confided to me. "Jaime taught me to cultivate the spirit."

During the twenties the painter Adolfo Best Maugard, one of the new figures in Mexican art, was a close friend of the Martínez del Ríos'. At the beginning of the summer of 1925 he entertained two pairs of newlyweds from Hollywood who were on a double honeymoon in Mexico. One couple was movie actors Claire Windsor and Bert Lytell; the other, director Edwin Carewe and Mary Aikin. They had asked the painter to introduce them to some upper-class Mexicans so they could know more than typical markets and tourist spots. Maugard took them to the house of Dolores and Jaime. Dolores recalls that she spent the evening without saying a word, because of her ignorance of English. Jaime served as interpreter and kept up an active conversation. Carewe stared at her fixedly to the point of disturbing her. Through Jaime he asked her if she were interested in acting in a movie. Dolores replied that her only stage experience was Spanish dancing.

Jaime, understanding and encouraging, made her see the interest of the adventure. The obstacle now was to conquer the scruples of the rest of the family, on both sides. Mexico was strict

in its habits; the opinion of all the members of a family, according to Spanish custom, then prevalent in the country, had to be taken into account in any decision that could affect the good name of the family. The Asúnsolos and the López Negretes, with the exception of Dolores' mother, were reluctant; the Martínez del Ríos disapproved completely. It was almost a scandal. Jaime, nevertheless, as the husband who was legally responsible for his wife, then still a minor, approved and took the initiative.

Dolores, at the beginning, thought it a temporary matter. She would have a part in one movie, perhaps dance, and then she would come home. She thinks now that her husband's enthusiasm came from the idea of a total change in both their lives. Jaime was dreaming of escaping a social setting that did not satisfy his restlessness and an economy then dubious. Perhaps he also saw the possibility of developing his literary inclinations. He told her that he thought he could make a career for himself writing movie scripts, even if she didn't get anywhere.

On August 27, 1925, after five long days on the train, Dolores and Jaime del Río arrived in Los Angeles. The first step, for publicity, was to shorten her name to make it euphonious in the foreign language. Dolores Asúnsolo y López Negrete de Martínez del Río became Dolores del Río. A star was born.

Like all the girls then, Dolores loved the movies. She wrote to the stars, she read movie magazines, she collected photographs. Her collection was rich, especially, in the tragic Italians Pina Menichelli and Francesca Bertini. She also admired Mary Pickford, Gloria Swanson, and Norma Talmadge. Riding in the Pullman car that took her from Mexico to California, she did not for a moment imagine she would become a Hollywood actress; she was excited by the mere possibility of meeting the stars whom she admired. Far less did Dolores suspect that, in a short time,

she would have the same kind of contract as Mary, Gloria and Norma, with the same company: United Artists. With that company also was another of her idols, Rudolph Valentino, the only artist who could understand her Spanish when she was introduced on one of the sets where the Italian gallant was interpreting *The Eagle*.

In the first days of September she was already before the camera with a small part in her first picture, *Joanna*. She played a Spanish countess. It was a second-rate film, for trying out new names. Before giving her star billing, Carewe put her name in the second and third lines of the cast. The public had to learn a new foreign name so unfamiliar that, at first, the words "Spanish Actress" were added. Dolores had to insist for quite a while to get the adjective changed to "Mexican."

Dolores del Río was born in a cinema that was just outgrowing its infancy. It was not yet a mechanical entertainment. The novelty could also be an art, perhaps the most complex of all the visual arts. Years before, it had rid itself of the idea that it was photographed theater. The screen's needs did not include, for example, theatrical acting. Cinema developed its own techniques. The identification of characters was done by the close-up. The principal actors enjoyed, furthermore, more close-ups than the supporting cast. An intimate contact between the spectator and the actor was established this way. It was the director's job to see that the right emotion was portrayed by telling the actors what gestures to use from a wide repertory of mimicry, and by the more or less skillful and imaginative use of montage—the addition of shots that, in counterpoint to the great faces, added place, dramatic situation, and continuity.

The movies began to establish the predominance of stars, top actors created by the close-ups, protagonists whose faces filled the screen. In Hollywood slang this was called the star sys-

tem, and it consisted of the subordination of everything else to the importance of one name. The plot, the director, the photographer, the action and even the sets had to accommodate themselves to those new gods who, through the intimate and direct message their faces transmitted to the spectator, became mythical figures. The art was also an industry. Production was planned and profits depended on how much influence the gods and goddesses exercised over the absorbed spectators who, like true believers, surrendered themselves, entranced, in the darkness of the cinematographic temples.

Close-up communication, however, was not easy. It required faces with special characteristics. "We had faces," exclaimed Gloria Swanson in a key scene of that great expressionist self-portrayal *Sunset Boulevard*, with which she magnificently closed her career. Certainly, the stars of the golden era of the silent screen had faces. Their faces gave them their communicative power, their contact with the public, their fame. The decadence of present-day cinema, since sound came in, is, with few exceptions, traceable to the subordination of unique faces to a pattern of ordinariness among leading actors. Today's cinema, compared artistically with the best phase of the silent, leaves much to be desired. It has lost mystery by becoming a mirror of daily local events, almost parochial, represented by common beings, without a halo, without poetry, identifiable with the neighborhood people we see every day, without an aura of mystery, without the strange nimbus that crowns all myth.

For mystery to function there had to be totally distinctive faces, much as mythological gods have unique characteristics. An Olympus on which Venus, Mercury and Jupiter might all have been represented in the same way could not have forged the first great religion of the Western world. Even the Vatican, until the sixteenth century,

prohibited making the elements of the Trinity identical when they were to be represented in art: it was absolutely forbidden, as blasphemy, to represent the Father or the Holy Ghost with faces like that of the Son.

The stars of the silent screen, unlike those of today, were impossible to confuse. Far from imitating each other, they emphasized the characteristics that gave them individual personalities. "We had faces," and, one might add, "they were not interchangeable." In modern movie studios the make-up departments turn out faces in an alarming industrial mass production. If someone has a distinctive characteristic, it is mutilated to make the features like those of the crowd. Today the screen is starving for gods. The magic has dissolved. Now, with few exceptions, it is our friends and neighbors who file by on it, singing, crying, or laughing in their familiar ways.

The faces of the stars had to have, above everything, a certain plasticity, a special quality to offer the implacable lenses watching from constantly changing angles, much as sculpture in three dimensions must have meaning in its volumes, relationships and harmonious balance from all angles.

If distinctive faces were indispensable in the silent star system, they were made even more effective by the use of the uncommon. A prevailing romantic flavor in the appreciation of human beauty led inevitably to the exotic. Nita Naldi, Barbara La Marr, Pola Negri, Theda Bara, together with the only great Latin actor, Rudolph Valentino, were supreme exotic gods of the Hollywood mythology. They gave sharper flavor to the screen parade of startling faces that dictated a gamut of emotions to the spectator.

Dolores del Rio's was the first Latin American woman's face to peer out from the screens of the world. From the beginning it has exercised an influence that has remained undiminished in forty years of appearances in the darkened



Now an established star of the "talkies," the Mexican actress and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., filmed the movie *Accused in London* in 1936.

rooms where we still adore those gods who vanish with the light. Coming to Hollywood in the most splendid age of movie-making in the United States, Dolores survived its crises. She had the best directors, shared honors with other top stars, and played in almost every kind of movie. When she felt that Hollywood was no longer a propitious field, she returned to her own country—she had never relinquished her citizenship—and was, in part, responsible for the best period of Mexican cinema.

In addition to U.S. and Mexican films she has made movies in Argentina, Spain, England and Italy during forty-two years of incessant work. During the last decade she has also appeared on the stage, in English-speaking roles in the United States and in Spanish in Argentina and Mexico.

In her early days in Los Angeles Dolores' exotic face and the rush-like figure which had qualified her spectacularly for *Joanna* were to serve for a characterization based on Nita Naldi's work. But her discoverer, Edwin Carewe, did not want her to become stereotyped. After her fleeting tryout the supposedly Hispanicized Mexican had parts

in two short and varied works: a comedy, *All the Town is Talking*, with Edward Everett Horton, filmed in 1925, and *Upstream*, in 1926, with Walter Pidgeon. Pygmalion wanted his Galatea versatile and he was preparing her great stellar appearance when he permitted her to participate in a picture of great impact directed by Raoul Walsh and which today is considered a landmark: *What Price Glory?* The entire world knew then that a new star had flashed across the screen: Dolores del Rio, as the French country girl Charmaine, coquette, tender, loving, and self-sacrificing. The road was open. Now a fundamental work was needed to confirm the importance of the new discovery of the U.S. cinema, and Carewe had it reserved for himself. That was *Resurrection*, based on the novel by Tolstoy. Dolores appeared as a full-fledged star.

With the premiere of *Resurrection* in 1927 the fans everywhere confirmed that a new personality had been born, different from all the rest, in her physical appearance and in the Latin emotion she could impart to her work. The psychological development the protagonist had to undergo—from an innocent Russian peasant girl to a prostitute, finally converted into a derelict and redeemed by love in full defeat and unhappiness—was a challenge for any actress with more experience than the young Mexican, who still didn't know English. Relying on her intuition, she received the director's instructions through interpreters. *Resurrection* was the decisive proof of her dramatic potential. As an artistic expression, every close-up of Dolores was a revelation. A distinctive person had taken over the screen. We Latin Americans had placed our own goddess on the Olympus of the silent films.

The success of *Resurrection*, treated with the greatest scenic fidelity, with Tolstoy's son as production advisor, led Carewe into the temptation of looking for a new Russian theme to exploit the attention that his discovery was attract-

ing. The title he found was *The Red Dance*, and, as a sequel to commercialize on a success, it passed unnoticed. The desire to identify Dolores with Russian characters for simple box-office considerations received as its reward oblivion. If two earlier Mexicans had been the first Latin American contributions to Hollywood—Antonio Moreno and Ramon Novarro—without denying their origin, then Dolores as the first Spanish-speaking woman to achieve renown in the seventh art had a right to have her nationality known. Shortly after her triumph, other actresses from her country would come to work with rival companies. Raquel Torres, Lupita Tovar, Lupe Velez, and others came to Hollywood to show the public that Dolores del Rio was not the only Mexican movie actress. For various reasons they all disappeared from the scene and there remained only the one who had begun alone.

In the mid-twenties United Artists was the company with the greatest prestige. The names of its founders were all associated with the birth of the art and industry of cinema photography: Charles Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, David Griffith, a director who is considered a pillar in the history of movies, and the producer Joseph M. Schenck. The young Mexican girl's name figured among the great stars of the time: Gloria Swanson, Norma Talmadge, Vilma Banky, Ronald Colman, and John Barrymore. Only Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer could compete with that cast with its two exclusive stars, Greta Garbo and Joan Crawford.

The publicity campaigns used various means in those days when the star had to be surrounded with an aura of mystery and, at the same time, greatness. There were marriages with ruined nobles from Europe, or among artists of renown; there were descriptions of the mansions with ample swimming pools, along Sunset Boulevard, in Beverly Hills, or in Santa Monica, that sheltered the new Celluloid gods. For a man, there

would be a goodly number of racing cars, or a well-chosen stable of blooded horses. For a woman, dresses and jewels. For a publicity photograph Dolores wore an imposing hat with roses; her mouth was puckered in the form of a heart, and her eyes were underlined in black. The caption, after describing her as a rich heiress and social leader of Mexico, added that she had "recently arrived in Hollywood with \$50,000 in shawls and combs." It added the information, to leave the spectators open-mouthed, that she "is . . . said to be the richest girl in Mexico." The truth was that the Martínez del Ríos' fortune had already been lost in a cotton crop failure.

Another publicity gimmick was to fabricate romances between stars and directors or producers. The publicity office of United Artists decided to suggest a sentimental relationship between Dolores and her director-producer, Edwin Carewe. One photograph which showed the Mexican star and the daughter of the director, Rita Carewe, who had acted in some pictures with Dolores, asked candidly in the caption, "Will they be future mother and daughter?" Such publicity gimmicks, although they lacked any solid basis, began to disturb the matrimonial tranquility of the Mexican couple. When the filming of *Ramona* was finished in 1928, her second great success, the separation had already taken place and later came the divorce of the Martínez del Ríos.

Ramona put the definitive seal on the fame of the artist. For the first time, furthermore, she played a character in keeping with her nationality, although the story was set in California. Based on the novel of that title by Helen Hunt Jackson, it was a nostalgic evocation of the Hispano-Mexican era in the Pacific region of the United States. The genuine atmosphere that Carewe had known how to give it and, above all, the convincing acting of the star, the physical idealization that her imponderable plasticity conferred upon the role, rendering

Ramona the prototype of feminine beauty in the Americas, made the film the finest starring vehicle. Like the other great actresses who worked for the studios of United Artists, Dolores had, after *Ramona*, her own bungalow on the company lot. In it she could prepare for each scene, rest, cook, receive her friends. The few visitors who were admitted to the studios were shown the little houses as though they were the shrines of the gods or goddesses.

Ramona coincided with the introduction of a kind of publicity that had taken over the silent screen—commissioning a popular song writer, the most romantic possible, to compose a melody that would have the same title as the picture and keep it in the public's attention. For *What Price Glory?* a waltz by Mabel Wayne, *Charmaine*, identified the French girl Dolores had portrayed. For *Ramona* the same composer was assigned to write another waltz. Today both melodies are heard nearly as often as they were forty years ago.

Meanwhile, the movies were looking for a way to use sound. Dolores cut a record with her soft and well-modulated voice singing *Ramona*. Recording techniques had improved notably. Orthophonic victrolas, which had abolished the screechy registers for the first time, were now on the market. The melody of *Ramona* was the greatest success in years.

In 1928 United Artists sent its star to appear in person at the first nights of the picture. After a tour through the cities of the United States, she went to Europe. Paris, Berlin, Brussels, Rome and London were astonished to find the goddess was even more beautiful than her image on the screen. Protected by the police, she was surrounded by crowds seeking even a glimpse of the Mexican deity. Possibly for the first time, the frivolous European perception of Latin America was undone by the evidence that we too could produce beautiful women of an aristocratic bearing.

In London Dolores found herself staying at the same hotel as her ex-husband, Jaime Martínez del Río, whom she had not seen in a long time. The goddess yielded to the woman. She invited him to take tea in her suite, and all resentment was eliminated, all the bitterness of the period of the divorce was erased in a smooth and nostalgic conversation. "I was convinced," she says now, "that Jaime had been the most positive person in my life. If I could appreciate anything, if I knew anything, I owed it to him. I realized the depth of the love that I felt for him, but by now each of us had taken on his own destiny. He was a writer. I could not suddenly cancel my career, which had begun so auspiciously." They did not see each other again. Jaime died months later.

When she returned from her tour United Artists had another film ready for her, *Evangeline*, based on the poem by Longfellow. This was in 1929, a decisive year for the movies. In the first place, it marked the introduction of sound by the use of records, a method known as Vitaphone whose patent had been held by Warner Brothers for years. Exactly as had happened with the magic lantern, the public was fascinated with the new entertainment. Panic spread through Hollywood. United Artists was almost ready to distribute its silent *Evangeline*. The immediate solution it found—not to lose the fortune its production had cost—was to add three fragments with sound: three old French ballads sung by Dolores del Río, heralded as the novelty of the picture. The movie

Emilio Fernández directed Dolores and Pedro Armendáriz (below) in *Flor Silvestre* in 1943. The film marked Dolores' debut in the Mexican cinema.



was saved.

When full sound was ready for use the country suffered the stock market crash of 1929 whose repercussions were world wide. As economy and austerity invaded the movie studios many famous actors began to crumble when faced with the necessity of communicating verbally. Defects of the speech organs, accents, or poor modulation of the vocal chords disqualified many who had, until then, occupied the summit of fame. The system, because it was primitive, was implacable. When sound was first introduced there was no way to improve the voice recording. A fixed microphone above the set required a new type of acting, static, that eluded the old grandiloquent mimicry. The industry had to find actors with experience in diction. It looked for them in the theater. As long as the voice was adapted to the medium and was pleasing to the ears of the multitudes, nothing more was asked.

The silent gods waited. Some gathered up their belongings and made an Olympian exit. Others stayed on, accepting the loss of prestige. This, however, was not the case with Dolores del Rio. A new phase opened for the movies and into it came the great Mexican personality to begin her career anew.

While English-speaking actors saw themselves obliged to retire from the contest, and foreigners, with their accents, were left aside, the Mexican star, still lacking a complete command of English, continued in her high position. Some short classes to place her voice in English, some acting lessons for the new medium, and she was in control of the situation. Her softly international accent, not markedly Latin American, was pleasing to the audience. The first sound film in which she acted was *The Bad One* and, like the other first "all talkie" experiments, it was mediocre.

The film was made in 1930. On March 30 of that year she married Cedric Gibbons, who was in charge of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer sets and cos-

tumes. An architect and setdesigner of refined tastes, he exercised on her a beneficent influence in a medium such as Hollywood, which at that time was debating between vulgarity and affectation. Gibbons, with his austere white sets, white furniture, and a certain schematization in the concept of decoration, was a true innovator. The marriage lasted exactly eleven years, the rest of her career in U.S. movies. When the use of sound made dubbing necessary for movies made in English, the studio did not permit Dolores to do the Spanish version. They kept her for the English-speaking public. As she became less and less exotic and conformed more and more to daily life, the Mexican actress was being formed. In 1931 and 1932 she was in *The Dove* and in *Bird of Paradise*, respectively. In 1933 came the development of the musical picture, which, like the western, is a genre invented and perfected by Hollywood. The Mexican actress played the heroine in one of the most important films of that genre, *Flying Down to Rio*, for which Fred Astaire was imported from England. The movie is still shown frequently and is in many film libraries. In it Dolores del Rio dances a tango with Fred Astaire. Few know, however, that it was she who taught the famous dancer the steps of the Argentine dance, which she had learned from Valentino.

In 1934 Dolores was in *Wonder Bar*, another musical, which paired her with the famous Al Jolson, along with Dick Powell, Kay Francis and Ricardo Cortez. That same year she completed *The Widow From Monte Carlo*. The next year she did *Madame Dubarry*, a character whom Pola Negri and Norma Talmadge had played in the silent films, and also *I Live for Love*.

In 1936 she made *Accused* in London, opposite Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. The following year she did *Lancer Spy* with Peter Lorre and the English actor George Sanders, who was beginning in U.S. cinema. With Sanders she also figured in *International Settlement* in

1938, and in 1939 she played with Wallace Beery in *The Man From Dakota*.

In 1940 her father died. For Dolores, brought up in a home of perfect equilibrium, her father had represented the idol of her childhood, her example of manliness and of correct deportment. This was her first great emotional shock, and to compensate for it she devoted herself more and more to her mother, her constant companion from the beginning of her career.

At this time she met Orson Welles, *enfant terrible* of the strolling troupe of that moment. The genius and sparkle of this genuine movie creator exercised a powerful influence in her life: it was the revelation of a new creative concept. Once again in her life, admiration and love were confused. The relationship brought on her divorce from Cedric Gibbons in 1941. One year later she appeared in *Journey Into Fear* with Welles and Joseph Cotten. Thus ended a period that, immediately, gave way to another. Putting an end to this amorous relationship, Dolores felt an emptiness around her. Instinctively, she decided to return to Mexico to ruminate upon her sentimental failure. In 1942 she sold her house in Hollywood and acquired the old place in Coyoacán called "La Escondida (The Hidden Place)," which she gradually converted into the sober and comfortable mansion that is still her home in Mexico.

Around 1942 the Mexican movie industry was having its placid moments and its falls, the latter more frequent than the former. It had become a powerful industry with the public at large, and, in the Spanish language, had no competition except that offered by the Argentine movie industry, then at its height and directed to a public of a higher cultural level. Two successful pictures in 1937, *Allá en el Rancho Grande* (There on the Big Ranch) and *Jalisco Nunca Pierde* (Jalisco Never Loses), had produced fortunes at the box office and engendered a school of imitations that became the daily bread



Pencil sketches of Dolores del Río by Colombian artist Enrique Grau.

of the Mexican movie industry, shared sometimes with serials in which there were ingenious atrocities. Furthermore, Cantinflas was there with his special way of interpreting the speech of the common people and his extraordinary comic verve that established him, despite the poor quality of his pictures, as an international favorite, bringing very high earnings.

Some producers from time to time undertook something that would go beyond pre-established molds. In 1934 Carlos Navarro, a director of a certain intellectual seriousness, made *Janitzio*, with a rare atmosphere of poetry and of evocation that immediately interested the literate public—a minority in all parts of the Americas. In it appeared a young actor, Emilio Fernández, known as El Indio (The Indian), who had had some experience in Hollywood. He had, at least, his own idea of the road that Mexican cinema might take. The actor Fernández soon became the national screen's strongest director.

Although the films he had already directed had been of an uneven quality, Fernández received a free hand from producer Agustín Fink on two pictures filmed in 1943, *Flor Silvestre* (Wild Flower) and *María Candelaria*, with Dolores del Río in the principal role, opposite Pedro Armendáriz. The photography was by Gabriel Figueroa. The immediate success led, the following year, to the appearance of the same actors in two other films, *Las Abandonadas* (The Abandoned) and *Bugambilia*. In addition to Dolores' start in Mexican films and her debut in Spanish, they marked the birth of a Mexican cinematographic style dealing with Mexican themes, preferably those with protagonists who were Indian or mestizo.

For a second generation of the movie-going public once more a star was born—a star who, before the searching lens of Figueroa, acquired un hoped for photogenic values. Dolores' beauty was not one of conventional features. Rather, it was serene and majestic, a

symbol of the more subtle mixing of bloods. With her experience in the silent films, in the English language talkies, more measured and restricted in expression than the Latin, she created a new movie personality that was the essence of Latin America.

Mexican cinema had notable directors such as Chano Urueta, Julio Bracho and Roberto Gavaldón. With Fernández it acquired a director who gave the seal of nationality to his work. If abuse of certain elements brought a routine weariness in its wake, this must be seen historically as a different contribution. At least, when the same group of collaborators got together in 1949 to redo in a Mexican setting *La Malquerida* (Unloved) by the Spanish writer Jacinto Benavente, the result was a superb picture, austere, which resists time and maintains undiminished the universality of its theme.

Before the Benavente film Dolores appeared in two Mexican productions, *La Selva del Fuego* (Jungle of Fire,

1945) and *La Otra* (The Other Woman, 1946) and in an American film, *The Fugitive*, in 1947, filmed entirely in Mexico and spoken in English, directed by John Ford for his old outfit, United Artists. In it were Henry Fonda, a priest who flees during the Revolution, and Pedro Armendáriz, an implacable soldier who pursues him. The photography, excellent, was by Gabriel Figueroa.

In 1948 Dolores was given a contract by an Argentine studio to film in Buenos Aires *Historia de una Mala Mujer* (History of an Evil Woman), a version of Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* directed by the Argentine Luis Saslavsky, one of the pioneers of good Latin American cinema.

The Wilde play served her in 1958 for her debut in Spanish on the Mexican stage. She had first appeared on the stage in English in 1956 in *Anastasia*, which she played in various cities in New England. Tempted by this excursion onto the boards, Dolores del Rio took special classes in the technique of theatrical acting at the workshop of Estelle Adler in New York. She took *Lady Windermere's Fan* all over the Mexican Republic in 1959. It took her back to her native Durango, after so many years of absence. The authorities named her "favorite daughter." She continued with *Fan* to Buenos Aires, in 1961, directed now by her present husband, documentary film maker Lewis A. Riley, whom she married in 1959.

The theater brings the goddess nearer to her believers. There she is a being who breathes in front of them, who perspires under strong lights, who coughs, who can forget a line—an honest human error. The duality, however, does not break the mystery. The spectator of the dark rooms of the movie houses asks himself before the transparent gods, when he sees them in person, if they were not dreams, if the whole thing had not merely existed in his imagination. Deification, at times, can adopt magical overtones. Dolores

tells me that once in Mexico her plane flew into a very bad storm. Despite the order to fasten the seatbelts, a frightened lady from across the aisle came over to her seat and said to her, with devotion, "How wonderful that you are on board, Miss del Rio, because now nothing can happen to us." The spectator's identification of the artist with the supernatural can take on the magical characteristics of mass hysteria or of individual adoration. When she was in a large downtown store in Mexico City she felt, in the crowd, a little hand touch her shoulder. She was about to turn to look at the child who gave such a show of affection when she heard the child's mother, who was holding him up, saying: "Go on, son, touch her, touch her, so that she will give you luck, money, and a long life."

When such popularity is given to the actor in the seventh art it is not surprising to find certain movie artists wanting to go into politics, to take advantage of their influence over the multitudes. Dolores del Rio has had not a few offers from prominent Mexican politicians to accept a candidacy for deputy but the artist always refuses with her accustomed simplicity. "I can't put anything in the way of my work. Politics would take a great deal of my time, and, above all, of my tranquility," she said to me. "Nothing in life is sufficiently valuable for me to put my career in second place." Even more categorically, she explained her reactions to the attitude of the spectators: "I don't want to be admired because they think of the supposed benefits of a movie star: I want them to love me, to feel me, like that child that touched my shoulder." She went on with humility, "I don't want the clothes I may wear on the screen to awaken the envious admiration of the women or to provoke unhealthy sentiments in the men. I prefer to have them love me for something spiritual that I transmit to them, for some breath that might

have blown on them in a difficult period of their lives."

For Dolores del Rio her career is like an immovable block. Cinema absorbs her and has incorporated her into each of the new steps it has taken. It associates her face with the actor in vogue, with the new directions that it takes as an art. The new faces need the support on the screen of this magnificent face that holds so much serenity. Sal Mineo and Elvis Presley have been her sons on the screen. Sophia Loren appeared with her in her most recent film *C'Era una Volta*, in English entitled *More Than a Miracle*.

Television has claimed her also. In 1951 she did her first program for CBS in New York. In 1958 she took part in an hour-and-a-half program, in the "Public Prosecutor" series for the Theater Guild. In Mexico she frequently appears on the small screens. In Los Angeles she acts on Chuck Connors' television show, or films in Arizona, for Warner Brothers—in *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964), she was again directed by John Ford. Or she goes to Madrid to star in the movie version of *La Dama del Alba* (Lady of the Dawn, 1965) by Alejandro Casona.

Meanwhile, she continues her theatrical activity in Mexico City. "I am never absent a day from rehearsals or productions, no matter how exhausting the work," was the only evidence of professional pride that I could note in six afternoons of conversation in her house in Coyoacán. In these placid conversations, without interruption, in the elegant austerity of her home, I had before me a goddess turned into a human being! Surrounded by pre-Columbian archaeological pieces suitable for a museum, with a painting by Carlos Mérida on one side and, on the other, water colors by José Clemente Orozco, a crimson oil by Frida Kahlo, and everywhere, books, books, histories of Mexico, Spanish and Mexican literature, plastic arts and archaeology, works of

theater and philosophy. There are Ariels (the Mexican Oscars), and a cup that proclaims her the most beautiful of the Wampas, or Hollywood starlets, in 1926. There is, above all, a woman and her career, a career always serious and professional, in which a rare physical beauty, unalterable by time, is associated with a vocation of inviolable fortitude. In the garden, the vegetation surrounds a portrait of her in stone by the Costa Rican sculptor Francisco Zúñiga. Next to the idols it could be one more Toltec piece. In the dining room is the oil portrait that Diego Rivera did of her years ago.

Dolores insisted on her immutable devotion: "I fear neither old age nor death," she said to me, "and I will continue while my health lasts. I watch time pass with optimism and with serenity." And she told me of a sad episode, when she was in a stage play in Mexico City in 1962. She was playing in Ibsen's *Ghosts* to a full house every night. Her mother, who had always lived with her, was ill. That evening, departing for the theater, Dolores had left her in a coma. The outcome was expected, but, with natural egotism, she cherished hope for improvement, perhaps a miracle. When the play was over, while she was preparing to leave hastily for the death-bed, her husband arrived. By the expression on his face she understood what had happened. When she reached the house her mother was already enshrouded. The following day she accompanied the body to the cemetery and, against the opinion of everybody, asked the chauffeur to take her to the theater. She dressed in silence, without knowing whether she was going to be able to

go on. When she appeared on the stage the public gave her a standing ovation for several minutes. They had understood her effort and this was their response. Wounded within, but firm, she finished the play.

This painful experience exposes to us a solid spirit, the essence of a legitimate vocation, with a plan of life followed through the length of a life. "I complain of nothing, I envy no one, hate no one," are the very words that I heard from Dolores del Rio in her house. "I have been loved and I have known how to love, above all my parents, whom I adored. I am not in debt to life," she adds finally, "except to the extent that I offer it my work."

On the last day, as we were saying goodby, she was told she had a long distance call from London. I could hear single phrases: "Sean Connery . . . end of November . . . thank you . . . send me the script. . . ."

When she hung up I could not contain my curiosity and I asked her, "James Bond too, Dolores? Another role in a new cinema direction?" "Yes," she confirmed, "the call was from the producer of Agent 007 to offer me, in the name of the star, an important role in the next movie of the series. As you heard, I will not accept definitely until I see the script. That's the way it is. It seems that the movies need me in all their phases . . ." she said to me while she laughed with that frank youthful expression that does not abandon her. As I was leaving I admired once more a marvelous piece of Olmec pottery that represents a child smiling. Here, I thought, is the eternity of Mexico. □

OUTDOOR SCULPTURES

For many years Xochipilli, the Aztec goddess of flowers, reigned without rival in the garden of the Pan American Union. Not far from her, sharing her solitude, was the classic bust of Cordell Hull. Surrounded by perennially green shrubs, blue pines, oak trees, and aquatic flowers floating in the pool; they seemed to carry on a dialogue about their two cultures, two ages, two ways of life. One symbolized the glorious past of Mexico, a country rich in pre-Columbian tradition; the other, the United States in the era of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the strengthening of the Good Neighbor Policy.

This summer, by a kind of magic that only art is capable of producing, the garden was suddenly populated with other forms—sculptures of iron, bronze, and copper created by Sergio Castillo of Chile.

Castillo's sculptures, designed for outdoors, are almost musical, at times leaping into the air and at other times tied to the earth by rootlike extremities. They are trees bristling and exploding. They are softly but strongly delineated forms and volumes. The pieces are reminiscent of the landscape of Chile, with its mountain ranges and its proximity to the sea, and somehow they seem not far removed from the gigantic volcanic stone figures of Easter Island or the extraordinary fauna that inhabit the Juan Fernández Islands.

Castillo can be considered among the most important personalities in the contemporary art of Latin America. Born in Santiago in 1925, he studied in Paris from 1948 until 1950, returning to his own country in 1952 to study at the School of Fine Arts of the University of Chile. He has won eleven prizes in salons and competitions and has had fourteen one-man exhibits, including a show at the Pan American Union in 1962. Small examples of his work are included in private collections in the United States,

PAU exhibits

Sergio Castillo of Chile with his *Lunar wave*, on display in PAU garden.



Door of Perception, iron
sculpture by Sergio Castillo.

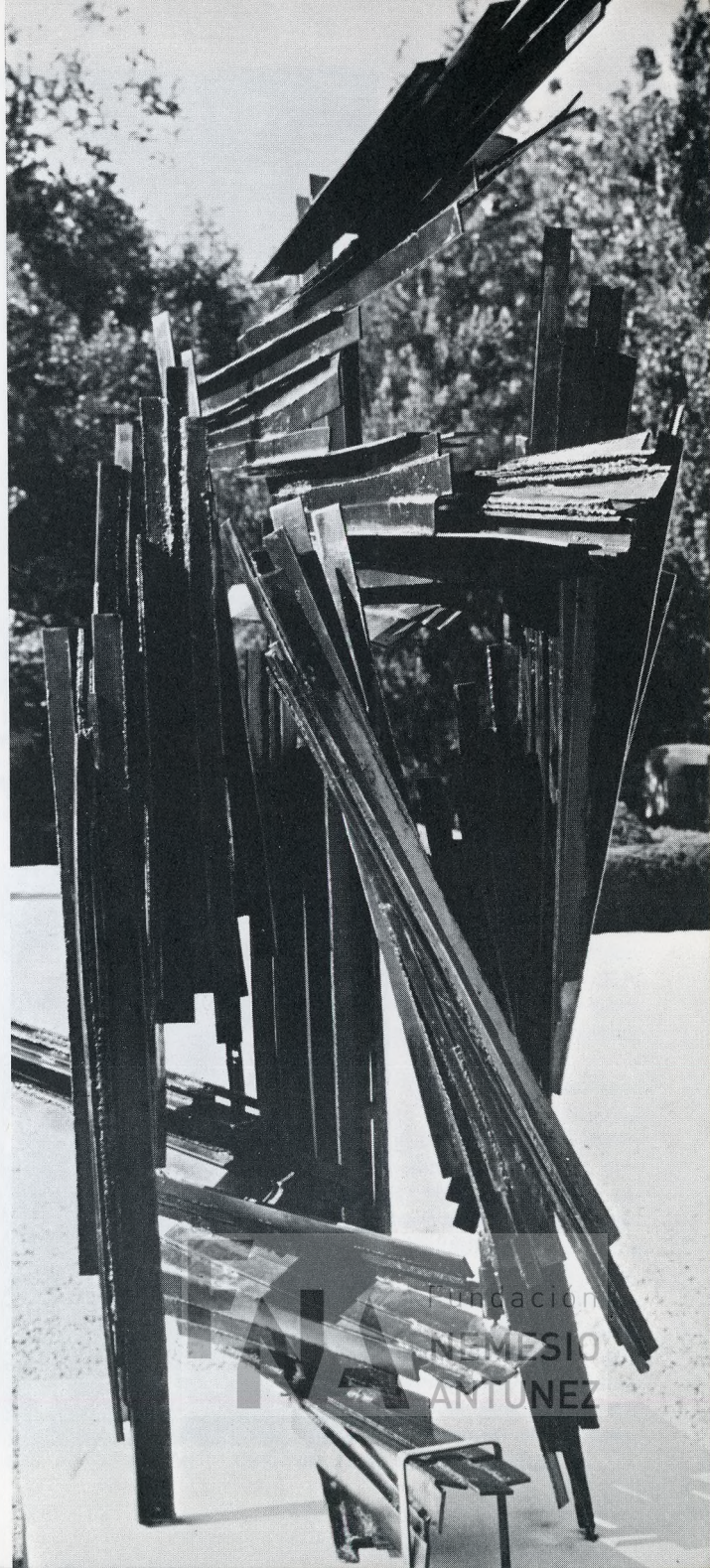
Latin America, and Europe. His large sculptures are on display, both indoors and outdoors, in Chile and in New York. The present exhibit opened on June 21 and will continue through September 21.

MEXICO AND PUERTO RICO

The works of two artists who represent opposing tendencies in modern art were exhibited during the summer months in the Main Gallery of the Pan American Union.

Arnaldo Coen (June 15-July 9), one of the youngest artists of major importance in Mexico, was born in 1940. Since the beginning of his professional career in 1963 he has appeared on the Mexican art scene with great frequency. Following his first exhibit at the Israeli Sports Center Gallery of Mexico City, he has presented one-man shows in several of the prominent galleries there: Mer-Kup, Novedades, and Juan Martín. Coen has also participated in numerous group exhibits, including the Esso Salon (1964) and Confrontation '66, organized by the Mexican National Institute of Fine Arts.

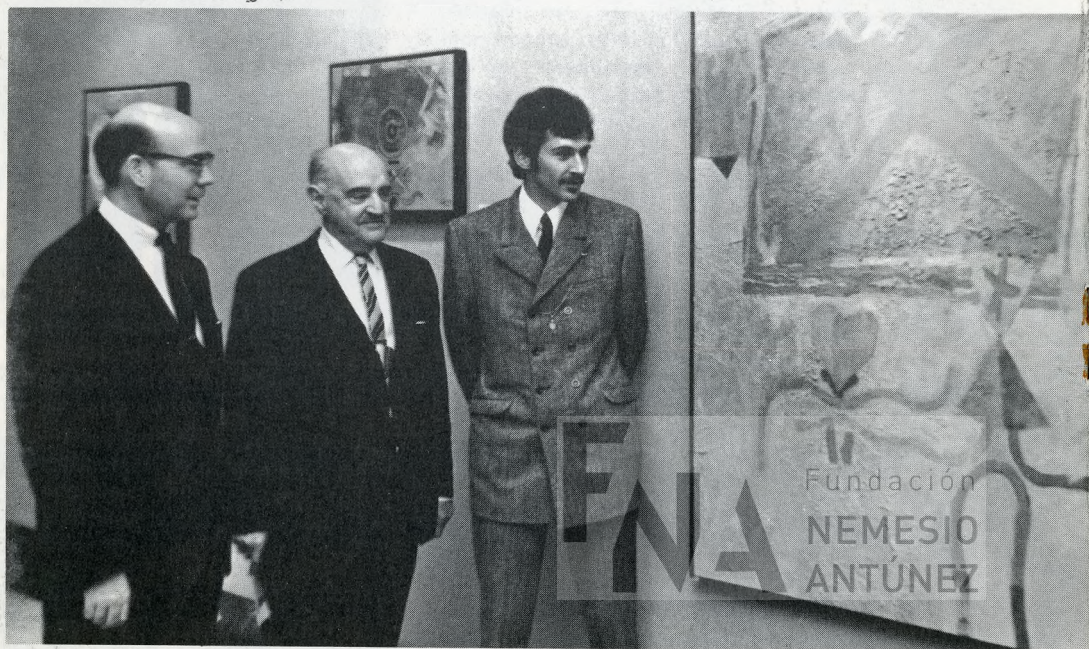
María Señeriz, born in Puerto Rico in 1929, began her studies at the University of Puerto Rico in Río Piedras, and continued them at the Art Students League in New York, in Florence, in Madrid, and in Mexico City. She has worked in the media of painting, drawing, and sculpture, and recently completed the polychrome cardboard reliefs that were exhibited at the Pan American Union in July.





Rafael Squirru, Director of the PAU's Department of Cultural Affairs, Arturo Morales-Carrión, and William Sanders talk to artist María Señeríz at the opening of her exhibition.

Mexico's Ambassadors to the United States and the OAS, Hugo Margain and Rafael de la Colina view painting by Arnaldo Coen. (left to right).



SEPTEMBER WINDOWS

After the summer hiatus, the windows of September open on an art scene notable for the energy displayed by museums and galleries. Painting and sculpture, engraving and drawing, all forms of expression—both new and traditional—hold forth. Each trend finds its echo and its reply. Abstractionism, figurativism, Pop art, geometry or vibrations—like a great neon sign—seem to spell experimentation. The multifaceted image is but the reflection of our times.

An interplanetary world surges forth brilliantly from the graphics of Venezuelan Luis Chacón, whose work opened at the Pan American Union following shows by Mexico's Arnaldo Coen and Puerto Rico's María Señeríz. Chacón, adding a new dimension to his engravings through the use of metallic papers, becomes an innovator. He works with gleaming circles on dark backgrounds. The result: dynamic forms in rotation that reverberate before the eyes of the spectator—a kaleidoscope of planets in constant motion.

INDEPENDENCE OF CHILE

The Embassy of Chile, in collaboration with the University of Chile

and in honor of Chile's Independence Day, September 18, presented a group show at the Pan American Union. The breadth of the exhibit, entitled "Contemporary Art of Chile," recalled the various cultural events sponsored by the Embassy in the past. Included were works by famous as well as younger Chilean artists. Roberto Matta, Jorge Eliot, Nemesio Antúnez, Luiz Mandiola, Enrique Castro-Cid, Raúl Valdivieso, Juan Downey, Rodolfo Opazo, Guillermo Núñez, Ricardo Yrarrázaval, and others were represented with paintings, sculpture, engraving, and photographs—a true panorama of the present-day art of Chile.

LATIN AMERICA ABROAD

Panorama in Philadelphia. Interest in Latin American art continues to grow outside of Latin America. An example is the exhibition "New Art in Latin America" currently being held at the Philadelphia Civic Center Museum. It will run until October 8. There are works loaned by the New York Museum of Modern Art; "Ten Argentine Painters" from the D'Arcy Galleries (New York); "Contemporary Peruvian Paintings and Sculpture," presented at the Corcoran Gallery (Washington; D.C.) last year; "New Names in Latin American Art"

from the Traveling Exhibition Service of the Smithsonian Institution of Washington; and the "Esso Salon of Young Artists." The latter two shows were selected with the assistance of the PAU Division of Visual Arts. Finally, two Cuban artists who live outside their country were represented: Roberto Estopiñán, with sculptures and drawings, and Cundo Bermúdez, with oils and gouaches.

Mexican in Washington. Mexican artist Leonardo Nierman showed his recent oils—explosive in form and color, and intensely dramatic—at the I.F.A. Galleries in Washington, D.C. Nierman's works seem to offer a world of expanding nebulae.

In Japan. In Tokyo the department store Mitsukoshi Ltd., which has its own museum and exhibit hall and maintains an active cultural program, presented a show of Mexican art. The selection of notable contemporary artists as well as pre-Columbian work was made with the cooperation of the National Museum of Archaeology of Mexico and the Galería de Arte Mexicano. Among the artists represented was Rafael Coronel, whose figurative paintings evoke a surrealist atmosphere full of nostalgia for a world of jugglers, magicians, and Gothic spirituality.

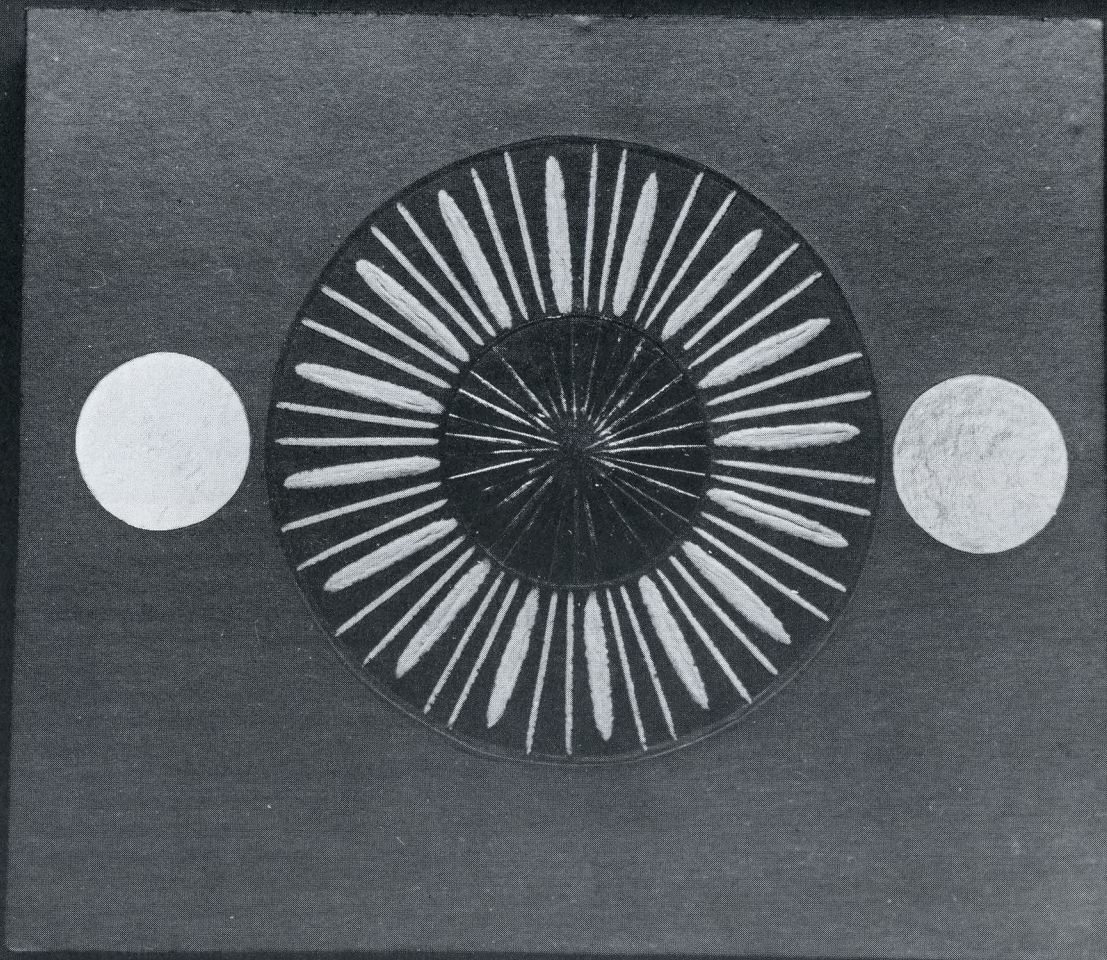


Prisoner, mahogany sculpture, by Roberto Estopiñán of Cuba.

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Object-engraving, untitled, by Luís Chacón of Venezuela.



Contemporary Art of CHILE

Inside the Mountains, oil, by Nemesio Antúnez.

Dialogue, oil, by Rodolfo Opazo.

Raúl Valdovinos



Introducción
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OLD DREAMS II, oil, by
Rafael Coronel of Mexico,
1966.



Sensation of Flight, oil, by
Leonardo Nierman of Me-
xico. Exhibited in IFA Gal-
leries, Washington, D. C.



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MEETING OF EAST AND WEST

Manuel Chong Neto, a young Panamanian artist of Chinese ancestry, has come forward on the Central American scene as a vigorous and promising personality. The sculptural figures of his paintings, wrapped in somber colors, have the serenity and delicacy of the land of a thousand reverences; at the same time, there is nostalgia and humor in his recreation of themes and attitudes common to the decadence of the nineteenth century—something like the *belle époque* of the tropics. Chong Neto's oils and drawings were exhibited at the Pan American Union from October 10 through 29.

CARACAS, CENTER OF ART

The artistic activity that is taking place in the capital of Venezuela, largely in celebration of the four hundredth anniversary of its founding, has not been dampened by the earthquake that damaged the city a few months ago.

The Biennial of Drawings and Graphics organized by the Central University of Venezuela will bring together young artists from all of Latin America. First prize for the two categories, equivalent to about \$900, will be awarded November 12. The event is sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Relations, the National Institute of Culture and Fine Arts, the Quadricentennial Commission, the Mendoza Foundation, and various private enterprises.



Laxity, oil, by Manuel Chong Neto.

Bottle, mixed media, by Mauricio Aguilar of El Salvador. The artist represented the Pan American Union at the Sao Paulo Biennial, 1967.



Spatial Absolute No. 4, brass sculpture, by Alberto Collie of Venezuela.
This artist also represented the PAU at the Sao Paulo Biennial last year.



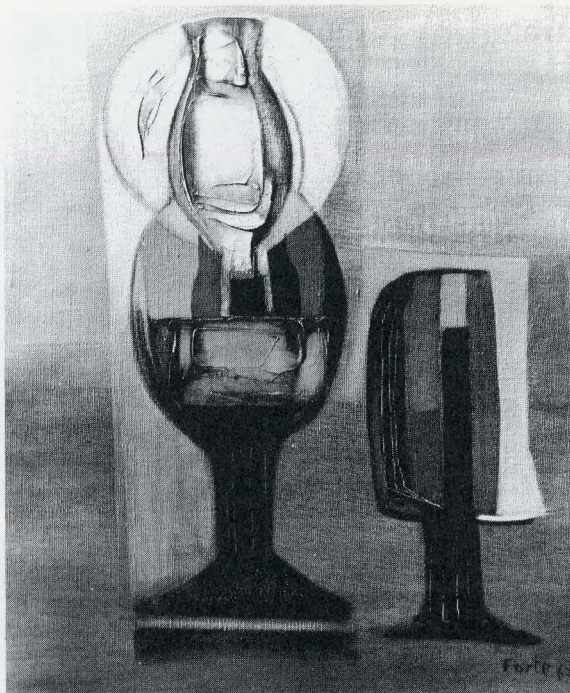
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SÃO PAULO BIENNIAL

The Grand Prize for this international exhibition was awarded to Richard Smith (England), a painter whose shaped canvases verge on sculpture. Latin American artists receiving prizes were Carlos Cruz-Diez (Venezuela), David Lamelas (Argentina), and Alejandro Obregón (Colombia).

VICENTE FORTE

This master of Argentine painting, noted for his still life and birds in flight, recently exhibited at the Rubbers Gallery in Buenos Aires. Forte represents one more example of the artist in whose work there is eternal value without dependence on mode or fashion.



Old Lamp, oil, by Vicente Forte, 1967.

Bermudez, Dignac show in Caracas

Works by two Washington residents—José Y. Bermúdez of Cuba, Chief of the PAU Graphic Services Division, and his wife, Geny Dignac of Argentina—were exhibited to critical acclaim in Caracas recently, under the sponsorship of the National Institute of Culture and Fine Arts of Venezuela.

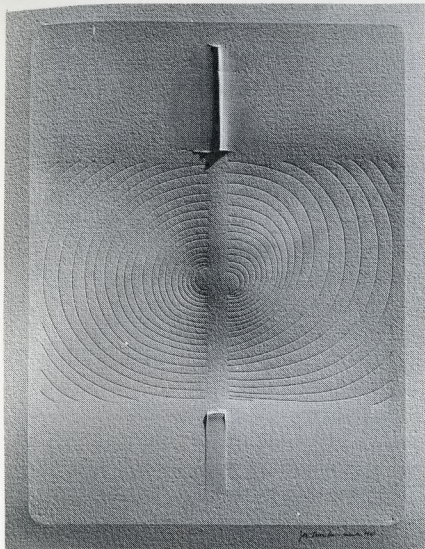
Bermúdez, whose reputation as a sculptor is well established, has lived in the United States since 1953. His works have been exhibited in Havana, Washington, Detroit, New York, and Denmark, and are included in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York and in museums in La Paz, Bolivia, in Cartagena, Colombia, and the states of Ohio, Maryland, and Michigan, and in Washington, D.C.

In the Caracas Museum of Fine Arts Bermúdez presented twenty-seven drawings "inspired by the winter snows," according to the artist. With undulating, rhythmic lines cut into rough-surfaced paper, and applications of gold or silver metallic paper or a touch of paint—white on white—the

image is like a memory of summer written on the pureness of snow. Venezuelan artist Alejandro Otero called them "an admirable combination of graphic art, painting, and drawing."

At Gallery 22, Geny Dignac showed twenty-two object-sculptures with luminous effects. Using plastic caps and strips of the same material mounted on shiny, polished surfaces, she creates multiple images in which, as if echoing the sounds of a symphony by Schoenberg or Varèse, distortion plays with reality and the intermittent lights play with the spectator.

Dignac's works have been exhibited in Washington's Corcoran Gallery of Art and included in a traveling exhibition throughout the southeastern United States and in the 1966 Op Art Festival of New York City's East Hampton Gallery. They are in private and public collections in Argentina, Ecuador, Italy, Mexico, Spain, the United States, and Venezuela.



Intaglio drawing and white acrylic on papier d'arches,
by José Bermúdez.

Black on red, bubble in plexiglas, vinyl, and
intermittent electric light, by Geny Dignac of Argentina.



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Perez Celis: *An Image of the Americas*

Argentine artist Pérez Celis, whose paintings were shown in the Pan American Union from October 30 to November 19, was born in Buenos Aires in 1939. A self-taught artist, he has had nine one-man shows in Argentina, including one of tapestries, and one individual exhibit in Lima. He has also taken part in group shows in his country, Peru, Spain, and Japan, and his paintings are included in modern art museums in New York, Buenos Aires, and Bogotá.

The following evaluation of his work is by Argentine scholar and poet Fernando Demaria.

□

Pérez Celis is, first of all, an American heart. A heart in which the positive forces of the Americas beat. He is an artist who reminds us of the Upanishad teaching that the Divinity dwells in the lotus of the heart.

But he also has a profound, calm intelligence, capable of filtering the essential things that his New World imagination transmits to him.

Each of Celis' works seems to us the result of a long decantation of his faculties, which, in the subconscious of the artist, have elaborated a material made difficult by its force and its abundance. And I believe that it is that harmony and calm of his spirit that has allowed Celis to receive and transmit something very personal and very recondite of the call of our Hemisphere. Something that is perhaps the most lofty, the most positive part of that message.

In Pérez Celis photography should be considered an invitation to his work and to living contact with it.

I realized this on examining his mural *Force of America*, in which the artist unfolds, with a validity that projects itself

over the entire future of his creation, the vitality of the primary energy of our continent.

The thing that most surprised me about that mural was the tenderness of that great force presented by means of dark green masses of cement. And also the synthetic power of this composition, in whose form the energies present in our life are fused and individualized. This work by Pérez Celis has given us art's proof that the force of the Americas is creative because it is full of tenderness, and that the sense of our action and our message resides in that sentiment.

In one of his ever renascent epochs Celis depicted the sun of America in paintings, tapestries, and murals. In truth that sun is always present in his works, whether as a germ of light, a display of energy, or a final involution of that energy.

It is a sun full of events and of life. A sun conceived as a cosmic force, capable of spreading life and also death. A sun where the forces of life penetrate like a wedge and in whose energy the beings of that sun itself live and are nourished.

The sun of Celis can take on forms that are really tragic, like that on exhibit in his house in La Boca. A sun that he has named the phantom of the sun or the skull of the sun, and that brings some terrible Aztec divinity to mind. But it also knows how to assume the primitive sweetness of our pampas, the original goodness of our native Indians, in the simplicity of some tapestries that have received its image.

In his creation of suns Celis brings to my mind one of Heraclitus' thoughts—"the sun is new every day"—because he has known how to follow the sun's original course, like the artist motivated by a

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Constructive Bomb, oil, by Perez Celis.

theme that impassions and astonishes him.

Thus Celis' inspiration is not based on a search for themes but rather on a receptivity to abstraction, where the motif is elaborated as often as the richness of its presence demands.

In his cult of the sun Celis has shown himself to be a contemporary lover, like a priest of the sun, capable of bringing the light and the plenitude of our ancient father to us each day.

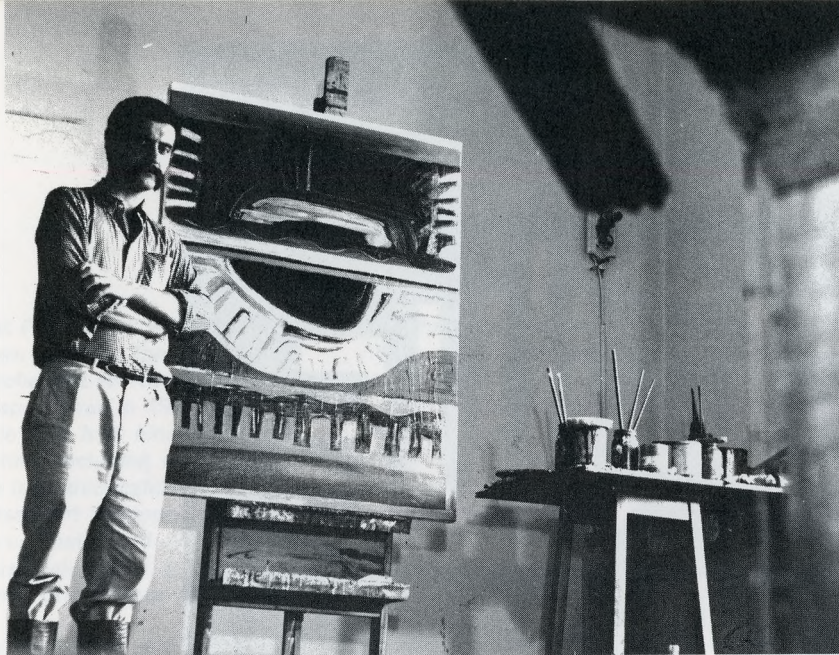
Celis, as a fully formed personality, also reflects Christianity in all his works. It is an original Christianity, as spirit and

faith always are; when authentic, they neither copy or repeat.

Pérez Celis is an artist who has achieved his own image of the Cross. Every age has its own representation of the Cross as the spiritual dwelling of mankind, and every authentic artist must have his own vision of it.

Celis' cross, revealed in his silkscreen *Life and Death*, is a leaning cross, like a giant tree falling to earth. It is a cross full of sap that collapses and looks as though it wanted to raise itself again. A log that is also something alive, as if Christ had been fused with the life and the death of the tree. The sun of the Americas gives

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The artist in his studio
in Buenos Aires.

it the most delicate colors of its indigenous prism, and the forces of the Hemisphere are its crossbar and its base.

I think that in his representation Celis has given us one of the most delicate experiences of the Christian drama, surrounding that tree, falling with its branches open, with life and tenderness, as though encompassing all the poles and making all antagonisms creators.

In his recent mural for the Formosa branch of the Bank of the Argentine Nation Pérez Celis has extracted from his inner ruminations one of the most powerful images of the Americas: an eagle-serpent. In it the wings of the eagle take on the undulations of a great American python, and both symbols transmute their beings in the force of flight. This new image of action, with the open arms of the sun as a background, to my mind takes on all the tragic grandeur of human action, generated by the struggle and assimilation of opposing principles.

In the mural the energies of a continent seem to converge in a dynamic synthesis, where the animal friends of Zarathustra are fused in an all-comprehending and unique reality. I believe that this myth

presented by Celis will live permanently as a key to our human essence, a fusion of opposing principles whose justification lies in the intensity of the flight.

In another painting, of the eagle-angel, Pérez Celis seems to go back to the divine principle of life, exalting it against the red and black background of human dualism. The rays of the mourning sun encircle the angel's almost vertical wings as if they were saying goodbye. And the sun bird, the sower of the Americas, seems to be willing to sow the germinated seeds in the entrails of the eagle.

In his most recent paintings Celis has repeatedly shown a hand covered with symbols and tattoos. It is the hand of the sowing artist that opens to receive the reciprocity of the cosmic forces.

I believe that art makes facts apparent and I believe that Pérez Celis, since his beginnings as an artist, has always communicated with those forces that invite anew, because they are already acting within him.

We can only bid farewell to this artist with a friendly request: that he always have confidence in that heart that he too, like the astrologer of the Inca tragedy, received from the sun. □



Etching by Juan Carlos Stekelman.

PAU EXHIBITS

Prints from Argentina. A series of lithographs by Juan Carlos Stekelman of Argentina were exhibited in the Pan American Union Prints and Drawings Gallery from October 30 to November 19. Stekelman has lived for several years in New York, where he has achieved success in numerous individual and collective exhibits. His prints are expressionistic faces and figures on backgrounds that show the grain of the wooden blocks.

Two Colombian artists. From November 17 to December 4 exhibits at the PAU highlighted two representatives of

present day Colombian art: Jorge Piñeros, in painting, and Edgar Tafur, in sculpture. Piñeros achieves explosive images with somber colors reminiscent of cellular chains seen through a microscope.

Tafur's works are well known in the United States, where he exhibits often; he is presently a professor at the University of Cincinnati. In Canada's *Montreal Star*, critic Robert Ayre recently commented: "The word for Tafur is gaiety. Humor, wit, lyricism and information are combined with an essential tact and modesty and carried out with technical skill."

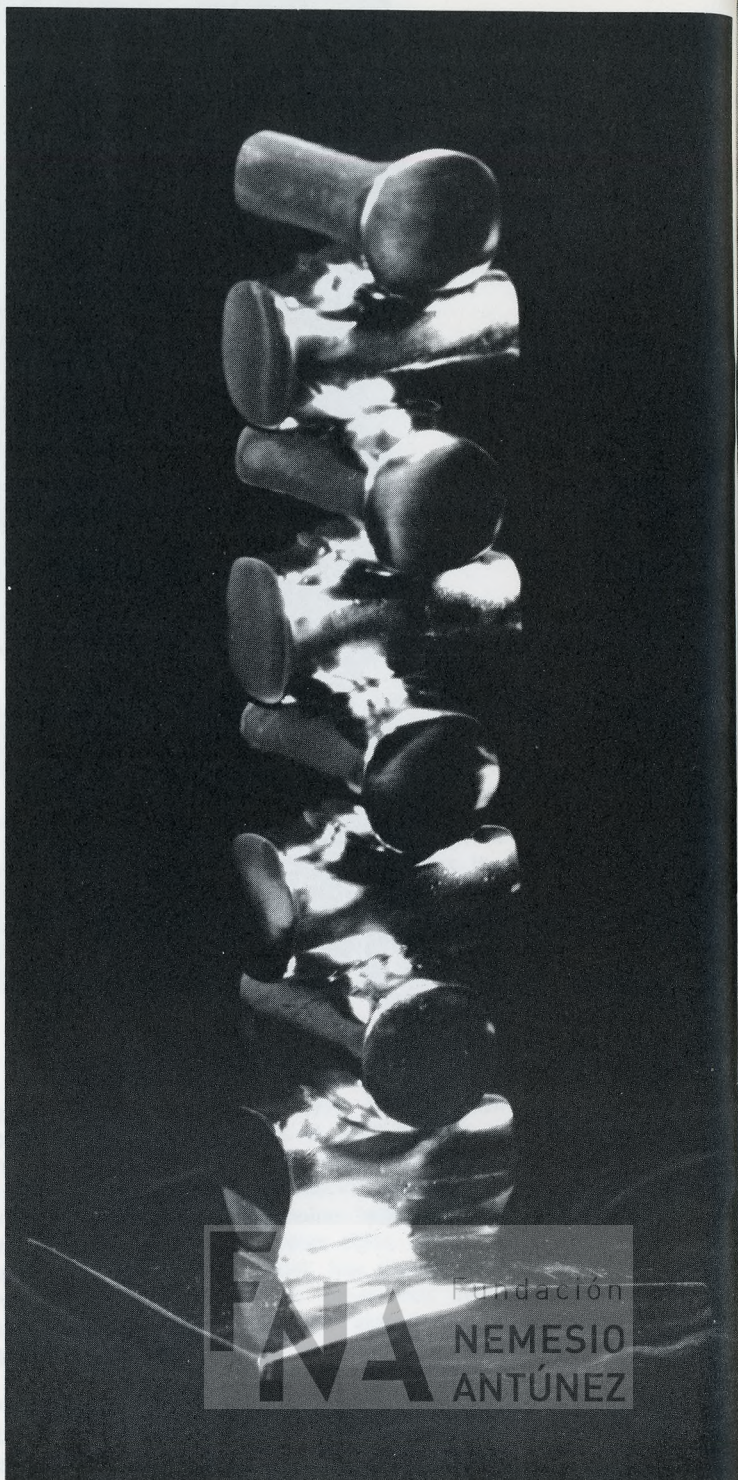
Mountains and ports. During December two PAU exhibits with similar themes showed the diversity of viewpoint characteristic of the geographical variety of Latin American landscapes. Fernando Montes, of Bolivia, with rusty tonalities that seem to have sprung from entrails of the Bolivian earth, presented figures, houses, and views from the La Paz altiplano. Oscar Meraldi, of Uruguay, uses a wide range of themes: from port scenes of Montevideo to imaginary portraits of typical persons. In contrast to Montes, Meraldi's colors are vivid and brilliant, almost like the Fauve paintings that were the talk of Paris at the turn of the century.

OUTSIDE THE PAU

International exhibit. An exhibition called "The Poetry of Vision" was held recently in the Museum of Fine Arts of Dublin, Ireland. It included works by fifty world famous contemporary artists, among them Appel, Bacon, Burri, de Kooning, Dine, Picasso, Rothko, Tàpies, and Vasarely. Latin American participants were Roberto Matta of Chile, Jesús Soto of Venezuela, and José Luis Cuevas of Mexico.

Cuevas in Acapulco. An exhibit of drawing and prints by young Mexican artist José Luis Cuevas, a follower in the great tradition of Mexican drawing, was presented during December in the Tasende Gallery of Acapulco. In the words of novelist Carlos Fuentes: "In Cuevas' world, the mad have installed themselves in the palace; the buffoons impart justice; the blind order executions and the deformed have established themselves as the image of the ideal."

Polished bronze column, cylinder series, by Edgar Tafur, 1967.



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Cuevas in Acapulco



Snakepit, lithograph created in Tamarind Workshop in Los Angeles, by José Luis Cuevas. This work appears in the portfolio Cuevas Charenton, published in 1965.

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