

SÍNTESIS DE LOS TEXTOS

Version en inglés
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WHAT IS THE PAINTING OF HISTORY?

THE ROOTS of the word "history" refer to the quest of information, of truth, to the telling, the analysis and the interpretation of events, to a history that is the course of life and fate as well as the discipline that studies them. The means of expression have become more numerous over the centuries, images have come to reinforce writing. Photography changed the course of representative art, imposing its testimony, and taking away from the painting of history one of its *raison d'être*, the visual account of facts. As for Ramón Oviedo, he has never stopped reinterpreting and reinventing history.

Mythification was an integral part of traditional rhetoric and painting of history. Both the classical and the romantic eras were times of tributes and apologies. Official art didn't give the artist much room for freedom. Its favorite form was the court portrait, Rigaud's portrayal of King Louis XIVth being typical of this genre. However some painters like Francisco de Goya did cast a critical eye on their models.

The painting of history was always questioned, even by "its" painters. From Baron Gros, Napoléon I's painter, whom the great neo-classical painter David advised to go back to "the genuine painting of history", to David himself, none of them was spared critics.

In the XIXth century, the artists took reality to "surrealistic" levels, weaving the glorification of fallen heroes with eternal life in kitsch worlds full of half-naked deities and sun rays bursting through the

clouds. The work of French-Guadeloupean artist Guillon-Lethière, showing Haitian generals Pétion and Dessalines sealing their union under the look of God and trampling the chains of slavery, is an example of this style. Eugène Delacroix, the last great European historical painter, was able to breathe a mythical dimension to political and social realities.

The advent of photography and the first photoreports were to change Western painting of history. Figurative commemoration was to survive in some compositions during the XXth century, about World War I, for example, going back to outmoded aesthetic forms. As for painting under the Western dictatorships, it was a mere propaganda vehicle of poor pictorial quality.

A masterpiece was then to show the new way to the painting of history in European and universal modernity. Pablo Picasso's "Guernica", a metaphor of this Bask city flattened by German bombs in April 1937, is also the work that motivated Ramón Oviedo most. In it, Picasso's allegory and visual fable were able to represent, not only the tragedy of a people but also that of violence, of total destruction, creating a fascination that spontaneously produces silence.

In Latin America, where painting of history and official portraits of the XIXth century were following European realistic schemes, Mexican muralism opened an original, didactical and revolutionary path. For David Alfaro Siquei-



OVIEDO. *Extinction of a race.*



PABLO PICASSO. *Guernica*

ros, one of the three great Mexican muralists, it was a monumental and heroic, human and popular art, a vibrant lesson of patriotism and art. The hostile reaction to this school on the part of younger painters took Mexican painting of history to the same place as elsewhere in Latin America and Europe. In actual fact, contemporary painting of history in the world doesn't seek to report facts or exalt remembrances, it aims at transforming pain, denunciations, claims. After World War II, it reached a point of almost abstract expression, as if to reject the extraordinary atrocities of the concentration camps, the holocaust and the atomic "punishments".

Human rights, torture, civil and military violence, injustice, are among the topics developed, especially since the 80's and in Latin America. We shall quote Oswaldo Guayasamín's -great friend of Oviedo's- "Chapell of Man", a gigantic work, the walls of which pay tribute to the Indians, denounce colonialism and fight dictatorship.

This "new commitment", nowadays expressed more often through installations, "performances" or mixed supports than painting, is often radical. We shall mention here Uruguayan artist and critic Luis Camnitzer's works, always

conveying solidarity with the victims. Cuban art in the 80s and 90s, at least as critical towards the revolutionary regime as laudatory about its success, is also a good example of this trend. For despite the rise of some political and religious fundamentalisms, our time rejects dogmatism in art. The plastic transposition of history has become a personal and critical business, often in solidarity with the weakest, the wretched, the victims. Studies and investigations are carried out to support often iconoclast works proclaiming both the cultural identity and universal actuality, an "interbreeding" that is also a reflection of the ethnic reality and leaves its mark on history-inspired art.

Exhibitions in Venice, Sao Paulo, Johannesburg and Kassel, among others, have presented many of these artists who are the new "historiographers" judging our time.

THE PAINTING OF HISTORY IN DOMINICAN ART

ALL LATIN AMERICAN and Caribbean countries have sought to find their own national plastic expression, and the Dominican Republic is no exception. The first manifestation of truly Dominican art is the small caricature of a Haitian soldier carved on wood, a piece attributed to Domingo Echavarría. The first artists who tried to define a local identity were, in their style, late romantics. Although there were not many of them at the end of the XIXth century, and the history of art dedicates more attention to some of them than they might have received at other times, they played an important part in the development of Dominican plastic arts.

Alejandro Bonilla treated geographical and historical themes in a somehow "naïve" way that holds for us today an attraction maybe not well perceived earlier on. Luis Desangles, a versatile artist, concentrated on the historical genre, between testimony and mythification: exemplary and patriotic scenes, epic and allegorical episodes of secular or religious nature, portrayal of social customs, colonial architecture, portraits of notables, probably make him our "purest" historical painter, and Juan Pablo Duarte's best portraitist.

This longing to excite the heroism of the past also appears in Abelardo Rodríguez Urdaneta's statues, and in Enrique García Godoy's paintings, whose "Encounter between Martí and Máximo Gómez", although not his best work, is precious to our heart for the accuracy of the facts and people it presents.

The artists who launched the modern period were only marginally interested in a plainly commemorative or patriotic painting. Under Trujillo (1930-

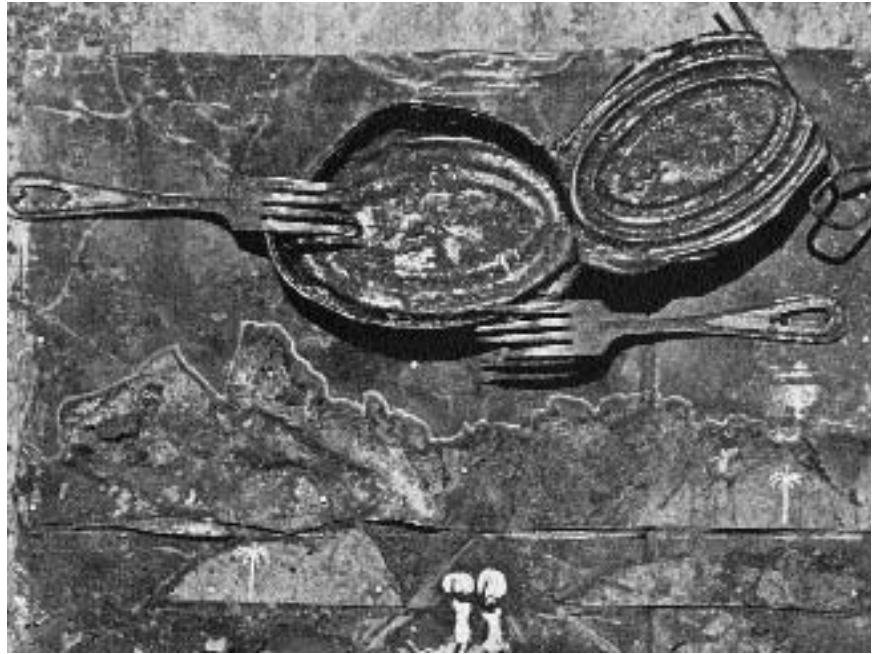
1961), who didn't bring as much pressure to bear on plastic arts as on others, the "chief"'s feats didn't stimulate them any more. Although one can discern a subtle opposition in some of Silvano Lora's and Eligio Pichardo's works, the "glorifying" works, commissioned portraits and busts were of rather poor quality.

In 1961, the execution of the dictator created great commotion. Jaime Colson immortalized a decisive moment of the struggle with his "Heroes of Espaillat street". Democratization opened the way to a free and dynamic cultural life in art and literature. Four years later, when the April Revolution broke out after the coup d'Etat against Juan Bosch and the Second North-American Invasion, a militant painting surged from the city in arms, and History launched the great era of Dominican painting.

Cándido Bidó, Gilberto Hernández Ortega, Norberto Santana, Coco Gontier, Asdrúbal Domínguez, Ada Balcácer, Domingo Liz, Ramírez Conde, and of course, Silvano Lora and Ramón Oviedo: art, and culture at large stood up, in 1965, for national sovereignty and the return to the Constitution. Posters, caricatures, and expressionist paintings all shouted out "Yankees, go home!", one could even see a painting of a Christ of the barricades, a rifle in his hands. This passion lasted until 1972, when the "New Image" exhibition was held in Santiago. Later on, styles diversified and commitment weakened as the art markets strengthened. Art became largely non political, the history of Western painting interested painters more than the painting of history. Few of them did not follow this trend. Oviedo, painting



THÉODORE CHASSERIAU.
Black man falling into space.



SILVANO LORA. *Those*.

past and present times in symbols; Ada Balcácer and Fernando Peña Defilló, exploring Dominican myths; Alberto Bass, the only photorealist in the country; José García Cordero then making his debut; Jorge Severino and José Cestero, who used history and the history of art in their paintings and drawings; José Perdomo and Antonio Guadalupe, introducing in their works elements of Taino origin. But the inspiration at large came from the artists' personal history.

This painting of history almost totally disappeared over the last twenty years, and exceptions to this trend will probably not come down to posterity. The celebrations of the Five Hundredth Anniversary of the so-called "Discovery of America", in 1992, was for Silvano Lora the opportunity to paint a series of great symbolic and critical strength.

Photography, as elsewhere in the world, has taken over from painting to convey emotions linked with reality. Wilfredo García, Polibio Díaz, Martín López report the often tragic moments of the life of the Dominican people. But there too, the perspective has changed, the artist re-invents, "surrealizes", uses irony. History isn't being told visually but in an indirect, allegorical way that requires an intellectual effort from the viewer. The artist uses a fiction of signs and symbols

and, beyond painting, presents them in installations, these metaphors of upsetting realities. Also the artist sometimes chooses to express values and beliefs in a remote historical context, like Fernando Varela with biblical times.

The big issues of this ending century are of concern to the artists, and when Tony Capellán, Marcos Lora Read or Jorge Pineda go from anthropology to ideology through paintings, drawings or installations, those environments allow them to reach a particularly strong and relevant expression. Ramón Oviedo, thanks to his system of signs and symbols independent from descriptive references, manages to recall the distant past as well as the crisis of today. The onlooker has to read through them a historical perception which he will be able to follow like a thread through most of the Master's works.

RAMÓN OVIEDO'S PAINTING

AFTER THE DEATH of our lamented Darío Suro, a pioneer of Dominican contemporary art, Ramón Oviedo is the Dominican painter who keeps the fire of permanent experimentation and constant renewal burning.

Ramón Oviedo started both late and early. Early, because he demonstrated in his tender years great talent in drawing; late, because he had to work while others were studying, thus postponing his public appearance and enriching his work at the same time. Oviedo is a man who made himself, between local and universal dimensions, curious about everything, training his hand, looking at and listening to what happened around him, admiring Velázquez, Cézanne and Picasso.

A precocious artist, he virtually went from total ignorance to surprising pictorial and practical solutions. A master of drawing, he sides with Ingres who said that, to be a great artist, you have to be a great drawer. His art fits in with the social history in his country and the lot of humanity. Although he is able to catch the charm of feminine faces, he has devoted himself above all to impress our senses, our peace of mind, in compositions exposing with vigorous energy the ravages of poverty and injustice.

An epic painter, Oviedo fixed in legible signs patriotic episodes, genuine "Dominican Guernicas", because, beyond his admiration for Picasso, he possesses this unbelievable ability to translate the violence of the aggressor and the resistance of the oppressed. While the Catalan genius stigmatized German bombings, Oviedo faced up to the canons of the American invader ("24 de abril 1965") or of the former Spanish

colonizer, immortalizing Caonabo's martyrdom, and was able to give to the representation of slums this same telluric strength, the same militant philosophy.

In the 70s, Ramón Oviedo concentrated on his canvasses a deep anxiety, extending his investigations to the existential path of the being ("Uno que Va, Uno que Viene, Uno que Va, Uno que Viene", -One who Goes, One who Comes, One who Goes, One who Comes- 1974)... and always giving in to his thirst for experimentation. At that time, he was piling up paste, rolling, grating, rubbing, marking it with lines, applying on it his "seal", the obsessive print of his self-portrait. He didn't hesitate to paint one canvas on top of another one, as if phasing two moments of creation or two historical dimensions into each other. After the famous "Oviedo red" came the blue, and Oviedo-the-clairvoyant went on with his cosmic exploration of future prospects. Like Tamayo, he always was a man of his time, fascinated by science and technology, by the discovery/experimentation/progress process. His exhibition "Oviedo. Urgent, 300.000 kms/sec.", in 1986, was resolutely looking at the future and presented a vision of an apocalypse provoked by a man wild with speed and mathematical formulas, running the risk of self-destruction. The uneven texture of the works also conveys physically this fatal disturbance.

Ten years ago, during his second retrospective in the Santo Domingo Museum of Modern Art, Oviedo presented more than 700 works in an intent to show the totality of his production, including his weak points. He thus told the



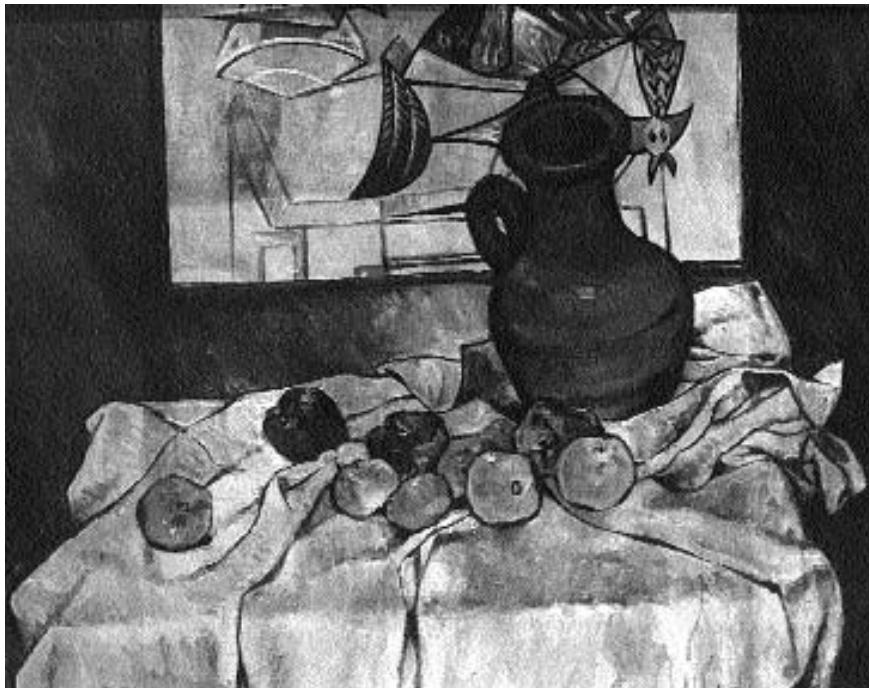
OVIEDO. *Percussion shape.*

story of a quarter of a century of artistic creation along with centuries of local, continental and universal history, without forgetting the history of the arts, with Picasso in the lead, followed by Velazquez, Cézanne, Gauguin, Francis Bacon and Rufino Tamayo.

Oviedo demonstrates his absolute mastery of his art on murals of considerable proportions as well as on tiny formats, even with a ball-point pen on a grocer's paper bag. Although he strongly identifies with expressionism, no "ism", no style holds him, and only abstraction never tempted him, because he wants his painting to talk to each and everyone, to the ignorant and to the neophyte, to the insider and to the expert.

Says art critic Laura Gil: "at the age of seventy, he still defines himself as a rebel, always ready to denounce social injustice, to refuse, as an artist, to be labelled under a given theme or style". He became even more radical lately -which is exceptional for an artist with his experience-, schematizing figures into concepts, sensations, intellectual references, within an iconographical world wrapping all worlds.

A virtuoso of lines and strokes, Oviedo is also a tireless investigator of matters, textures, layers of pigment, of hues in all ranges. Lately he has been reducing the layers of painting with metal blades almost to the point of intangibility, creating "dematerialized", incredibly light surfaces.



OVIEDO. *Still life.*

RAMÓN OVIEDO'S MURALS

AT THE BEGINNING of the XXth century, Mexican muralism "art for all, art for the struggle" (David Alfaro Siqueiros) had a deep influence in Mexico and abroad. A great lesson of history and an instrument of revolutionary propaganda, its ideological objective was essential. Murals in the Dominican Republic were also concerned with popular education but less militant, dominantly in neo-classical style. Spanish master José Vela Zanetti left in Santo Domingo a great heritage in this area. Oviedo, who practiced his themes with acrylic on canvas, expressed the transformation of the world and accompanied humanity with a message full of hope. He is the only Dominican who painted murals abroad. His "Mamamérica" (1982, OAS, Washington D.C.), and his "Cultura Petrificada" (Petrified Culture, 1991, UNESCO, Paris) evoke the final victory after the sufferings and the struggles of humanity.

In his country, the mural at the Natural History Museum offers a vision of the human condition through scientific conquests. Pyramids, old metropolis, Aztec calendar, ideograms, compass, telescope, radar, rocket, satellite, planets: 55 undulating square meters recall the progress of human knowledge, the acceleration of which Oviedo can feel. In 1983, at the Board of the Central Bank in his country, Ramón Oviedo painted "Evolution", a gigantic canvas depicting humanity through time and space, from tense red to peaceful and hopeful blue. At first merging man and the earth, telling about slavery and colonization, exalting the march towards independence and freedom, it announces a radiant future of light-bathed childhood.

In another bank, the BHD, "Sinfonía Tropical" (Tropical Symphony, BHD) presents a genuine lesson of history of classic and modern art. He who, in the 70s, had recreated Velázquez' "Meninas", there makes eyes at the Flamish painting of the XVIIth century. Movements and hues, tones and cadences, visual rythms also express a tribute to music and combine in a delicious work of art.

Oviedo's murals demonstrate brilliantly his multi-facetted talent. The most ethno-anthropological of them all is the one he painted at the Faculty of Architecture and Engineering of the Universidad Autonoma of Santo Domingo. Under the title "Raices" (Roots), this allegory of ancestral heritage relates the formation of a cultural identity on the basis of the interbreeding of Spaniards, Africans and Amerndians. In Haina, at the Customs' Offices, "Turbulencia Milenaria" (Millenary Turbulence) evokes the anxiety brought about by the enigma of our presence to the world, of our destiny.

Oviedo, a painter of the third millennium, also feels what has not happened yet. In this recent mural, a luminous creature in formation is making its way through the darkness of times. Goya would not have denied this strange painting where monsters bring to life a surrealist space. Maybe Oviedo remembered Guayasamín saying that we are going through the worst period in the history of humanity, but the embryo brings a message of hope, just like the light-child at the Central Bank. "I never am a defeatist but a triumphalist", insists Ramón Oviedo, and each of his murals is, in its own way, a witness to it.



OVIEDO. *Mural in O.A.S., Washington.*

EASEL PAINTING AND THE THEMES OF HISTORY



OVIEDO. *Sketch for the portrait of two titans.*

OVIEDO, OF COURSE, is one of the favourite painters of art critics, some of whom are great friends of his. Says one of them, poet Efraim Castillo: "... since 1963 and until 1988, (...) this quarter of Dominican century can be read through Ramón Oviedo's pictorial and graphic objects. (...) no other national plastic artist has told this story with the same heartbreak, the same pain and beauty, with the same humanism."

Paintings, drawings, sketches, thousands of works attest the route this artist has followed, a symbol of their age, underlining even the historic account they bear. The former copywriter learnt the lessons of his old trade, immediately capturing the attention in works of striking message and composition. Although he never completely abandons a theme (self-portraits) or his main style (expressionism), Oviedo is always investigating. Each of his periods lasts about five years. 1963-1965 corresponded to the tough times of the coup d'Etat against Juan Bosch and are a key moment in Oviedo's career. The fall of the tyrant had unveiled the misery of the people under Trujillo's regime; Oviedo painted very hard pictures, with grotesque or schematic characters whose scrawny figures and despondent looks still have the energy of the common people.

Under the rags, behind the hunger, the instinct of survival goes with a muted violence, ready to burst. There is nothing to lose, and of the worker in "Obreros de Brazos Caídos", (Workers with Lowered Arms) or of the woman in "La Fila" (The Queue) are humiliated bodies, their stare unbearable, elementary beings radiating a serious and disquieting atmosphere.

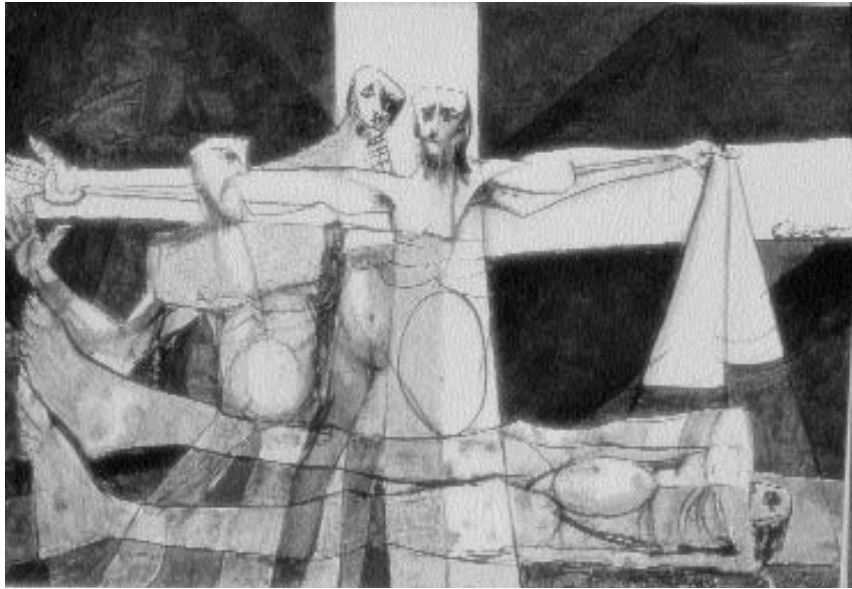
"La Caída de un Tirano" (The Fall of a Tyrant) was painted in 1965. Trujillo had been executed and could no longer do any harm, but -and this is still true forty years later- the collapse of his absolute power had a dreadful impact. Thus the sinister, monkey-like figure about to crumble gives the impression of threatening gigantism, a terrible hook suggesting the viciousness of the creature or what is left of it.

"24 de Abril" (April, 24th), although painted the same year, could be the work of someone else, but despite the difference in style, both pictures are stamped with death.

Between the angular expressionism of "El Espantajo" (The Scarecrow) in 1969 and "Levántate Lázaro" (Get up, Lazarus) in 1970, Oviedo is taking a new course, which could be one of the readings of this work, the religious theme of which also alludes to the resurrection of the country.

"April 24th" and "Caonabo, Primer Preso Político de América" (Caonabo, First Political Prisoner of America) are Oviedo's "Guernica", expressing the love for freedom and bravery. In the heat of the battle of April, 24th, Oviedo painted like a visionary, transcending local events at universal level. In the historical genre, this painting is the most important work in Dominican history, in plastic arts as well as in ideology.

The "Caonabo" painted in 1972 recalls the history of Spanish colonization with the same furious indignation as if it were a barbarity of present times. Besides, the artist introduces the idea that, although history can not be rewritten, the hope to see the people triumph has not yet been buried. This work, even



OVIEDO. *Get up Lazarus*.

more "picassian" than "24 de abril", displays splendid drawing and conveys a huge psychical and physical tension.

Oviedo's historical gaze can also be lighter, funny even, as in "El Segundo Viaje" (The Second Journey) in which, without ever giving up his solidarity with the poor and the wretched, the artist gives way to humour and play.

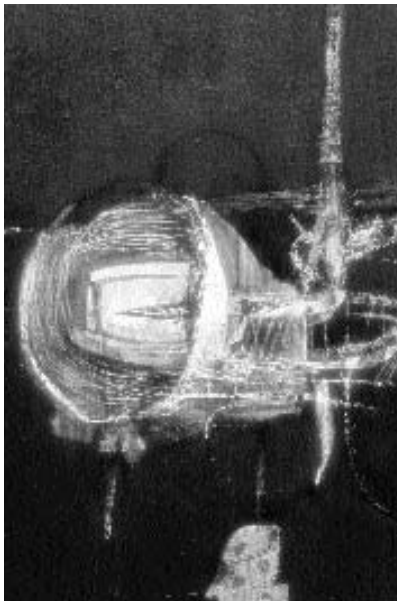
In 1974, when Oviedo last produced a painting of history with his "Boceto para el Retrato de Dos Titanes" (Sketch for the Portrait of two Titans), his "Uno que Va, Otro que Viene, Uno que Va, Otro que Viene" (One who is Going, One who is Coming, One who is Going, One who is Coming), a contemporaneous classic and a landmark in the history of Dominican and Latin-American art, earned him the Great Prize of Honour of the National Biennial of Plastic Arts. In it Oviedo investigates the inexorable way of the cross of humanity since the beginning of times, sending out a cry of helplessness and revolt.

Oviedo, fascinated by the present and the future, wants to go further than the past. But while others become intoxicated with futurist perspectives, he expresses the panic that provoke in him the unforeseeable consequences of the accelerated change in our world.

He still worries about the fate of humanity, specially that of the peoples of Latin America. His "Cultura Petrificada" (Petrified Culture) that became a mural at the UNESCO Palace in Paris, launches a new "frozen cry", desperate resistance in front of the strategies of an all-pervasive power.

Looking for a way to escape from the globalizing hold of the future, Ramón Oviedo denounces with humour the televisual fascination and daily hypnotism in front of a new type of slavery.

THE HISTORY OF RAMÓN OVIEDO IS NOT OVER...



OVIEDO. *Shape to emit sounds.*

SO EVEN IF HE GAVE up the painting of history a long time ago, the whole of Oviedo's work bears the mark of the "worry about the constant crisis that is the life of man",.

Since 1994, his esthaetic and technical investigations on the "Evolutive persistence of form in matter" have made the image a visual event; deciphering its content is not a priority any more. The artist meditates on painting, using signs in space, forms in movement, vibrating nuances and very elaborate reliefs. His science of light increases the vitality of the surface. He strives for an almost transparent thinness of color; his titles are often physical, almost abstract: "Forma Insinuante" (Insinuating Shape), "Forma Atrapada" (Trapped Shape), "Forma de Llegar a Otra Latitud" (Way to Reach a Different Latitude), "Forma Confusa" (Confused Form). The painter lets the paint speak in complete freedom. It is not the intentions or the ideas of the painter that speak, but the forms". For the first time, Ramón Oviedo is giving up the meaning of the objects, allowing the lines and structures, colors et textures to speak; he hasn't thrown away his archetypes though, keeping his distinctive traits in iconography as in the titles. Humour and play, poetry and metaphor, enigmas and mysteries live under the same roof and feed his work. His rich backgrounds have their own dynamics, a signography narrowly linked with that of central or foreground figures.

Although the bulk of Oviedo's work is well known, it is not the case for his last creations, since 1997, and a quantity of them will be reproduced between now and the December 2000 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Santo Domingo. Its title, "Millenios" (Millenia), is rooted in time, an open door onto the infinite.

The remembrances of the past are making their way into the memory of the future... Ramón Oviedo's history is far from over.

REVELATION AND REBELLION OF AN ARTIST

RAMÓN OVIEDO was born in 1927 in the Dominican Republic, to parents who had three sons together and then parted. He remembers his grandfather, Santiago Oviedo, who was a general and the Governor of the Southern Zone, "One of these generals in the style of Gabriel García Márquez, with a machete in his belt and a blunderbuss."

The three brothers were separated, and Ramón was raised by his grandmother. When he got to the capital city, in 1934, he had already started to draw passionately. "I remember that when I was very little, I used to scribble with sticks, or with my fingers, attracted by graphics and painting. And then I got the stimulation of my father", a draftsman at the Ministry of Public Works.

Oviedo also remembers his uncle Alvaro, who had lost one leg, and had made him his morning accomplice in the daily inspection of the vegetable garden. "He would pick a fruit and part it for us to eat. I will never forget him, for he gave me affection at an age when all children need it." Ramón Oviedo had to begin earning a living very early. At nine, he was an errand boy in a photoengraving workshop and thus learnt about lithography and the printing of newspapers.

As a young man, he also worked for advertising agencies, as a "designer", but he says: "When you have a vocation, it doesn't matter what happens. It's like a classical musician who would have played in barn dances in his early stages... it doesn't spoil him, he will know how to change."

Oviedo recalls his promising start, the two great critics of that time, Pedro René Contín Aybar and Manuel Valldeperes, who spoke very well about his first

exhibition, in 1963, and better even about the one he presented in 1966, in Andrés Salon's gallery, where he opened his first mixed drawing-painting exhibition, about which Contín Aybar noted that it bore no trace of the "mechanics of publicity".

During the War of April, the artists stood by the side of the Constitutionlists and made posters, banderoles, exhibitions, a unique cultural work in Dominican history. "(...) we would stick propaganda everywhere, everywhere where the Americans could see it. The Americans took with them one of my caricatures of Uncle Sam".

Going back in time, Oviedo remembers how, in the 50s, he was once summoned to do the calligraphy and drawing homeworks of two of Trujillo's offspring... and also how one of the dictator's natural daughters had him make the portrait of her grandfather after a photograph, in 43 or 44. The lady just congratulated him from the top of the stairs and predicted him a bright future...



OVIEDO. *Imaginary self-portrait as a child.* 1976.

CHRONICLE OF AN ANNOUNCED MASTERSHIP



RAMÓN OVIEDO addressing the public at the presentation of his first monography, written by Hamlet Rubio.

FROM 1966 onwards, art changed from a political and social form of opposition to a broader thematic, at a time when the industrialization of the country was under way and a more acceptable regime was in power; "in the beginning, we had a rather pleasant impression of Balaguer's regime, later things deteriorated. (...) As for me, I had entered a different phase of painting, one that was rewarded with two successive prizes in the E. León Jimenes art competition, one for "The Scare-Crow", a light theme that has been widely treated, the other for "Get up, Lazarus", a more philosophical one.

The artist reached a more sophisticated, more narrative period in his work. It

was the beginning of his "red period", a time that put a stamp on Dominican plastic arts. Three of his works were turned down in 1970 at the Municipal Biennial; however one of them, "Jugadores de Ajedrez" (The Chess Players), was later purchased by the Sao Paolo Biennial, another one sold in Santo Domingo, while the third painting, the famous "Caonabo", is now hanging at the Bellapart Museum.

Two other works were turned down in 1965 at the Esso Competition for Young Painters. Between two bursts of laughter, Oviedo recalls the quarrels among artists during the hanging of this exhibition. More recently, in a collective exhibition, somebody took down one of his works from the central place it occupied and relegated it to a dark corner... it was the first painting to be bought in this event, while the usurper didn't sell anything. This memory still makes Oviedo laugh.

In 1974, Ramón Oviedo won the First Prize of Honor in the National Biennial that honored the most important representatives of national contemporary painting, "(...) my painting had undergone a new evolution, it was something new in Dominican painting. Today, this painting is still different ...". The following year, Oviedo exhibited ten new, very experimental canvasses that gave rise to many comments. "I have made many experiments... since the 60s, when I first used and mixed ashes and sand... Actually, I recently got to see again some of the works I did then and found they remained intact, as well done as a well baked biscuit!"

From 1976 onwards, after José Gómez Sicre and the jury of the National Biennial gave him the Prize of Honor,

Oviedo's career abroad "exploded": Museum of Latin-American Modern Art of the O.A.S., El Salvador; tribute to Joan Miró, Biennial of Drawing in Washington D.C., Domecq Biennial in Mexico...

The work changes, dominant blues and other colors, green, purple, enclosed characters and self-portraits gravitating in space, sewing of the canvas itself... "The red (...) marked the beginning of a radical change. It was difficult to get out of it... People tend to label you "The red is dominant in Oviedo's work"... But it is not so, I have used all colors, in background and in forms (...)"

Then there were the two special retrospectives at the Museum of Modern Art, the 1988 one was immense. "There was a huge number of works in the last one, it gave rise to critics. But that was part of what gave an idea of the ground gained (...)."

Ramón Oviedo is touched every time he mentions the great Cuban art critic Gómez Sicre, who did so much for the promotion of Latin-American art and fought for Oviedo to be commissioned a mural at the headquarters of the O.A.S.

Although Oviedo is in constant evolution, he doesn't break with the anterior phases of his work. There is a leading thread of forms and signs in his drawings and his paintings. "I always try to do better than I have done before. This is why I always wait a good while between each exhibition. I don't saturate the public with my works..."

Today there are many prestigious international projects in store for him -big festivals, museums, fairs, European collections-. It looks like Ramón Oviedo will also be an artist of the future.