

Fundacion Pablo Atchugarry Miami

Press Release

José Pedro Costigliolo – La Vida de las Formas

To celebrate the opening of its second location in Miami, FL the Fundacion Pablo Atchugarry is pleased to present a retrospective exhibition of the Uruguayan artist José Pedro Costigliolo. The artist is recognized as a precursor of non-figurative art, and his contribution in the development of Geometric Abstraction has influenced artists nationally and internationally, thus putting Uruguay and Latin American at large as the center of birth of the movement. The exhibition is a tribute to José Pedro Costigliolo accomplishments and will showcase artworks representative of his artistic evolution across his life.

Born in 1902 in Montevideo, Uruguay, Costigliolo studied at the “Circulo de Bellas Artes” of Montevideo from 1921 to 1925. There, he was a student of the figurative painter Vicente Puig and of Guillermo Laborde from the Planismo movement. After graduating, the artist took a job as an advertising graphic designer, making posters and book covers. He was investigating hard-edge figurative painting, and this nascent interest in harmonizing blocks of strong geometric color was to influence his entire oeuvre.

In 1934 Joaquin Torres-Garcia came back from Europe to Uruguay and began to inform artists about Abstraction. Going against the Northern European movement, Torres-Garcia decided to include figurative elements related to Pre-Columbian cultures into Abstract art, creating the School of the South. In the early 50's artist began to revolt against Torres-Garcia's authority, and Costigliolo and his wife Maria Freire created the group Arte No-Figurativo in 1953. While promoting Abstraction like other artistic groups -such as the Grupo Madi-, they had no political agenda which allowed them to investigate further the creative process and to reach greater levels of artistic freedom and experimentation in Constructivism. Their research is considered pure and elegant, and less austere than the style developed in Northern Europe at that time.

In 1957, Costigliolo won the first prize at the III Salon Bienal Nacional de Uruguay which included a grant to travel to Europe where he stayed from 1957 till 1959. There he visited numerous museums, galleries and met with artists working on the Russian Constructivism and De Stijl style such as Antoine Pevsner, Friedrich Vordemberge-Gildewart and Georges Vantongerloo. During his travels, he also took a particular interest and inspiration from the colors and forms of the medieval stained glass in French church windows. The sunlight passing through the light forms, making each color shine and stand out, each circled by a black line: the experience influenced his artistic development for decades.

The work became more and more geometric, with the dark void slowly becoming black shapes moving among brightly colored spaces. The size of the elements, be it squares, triangles, and rectangles, became progressively simpler, conveying a strict order and total concentration on the inner workings of the components. The works appear to be machine made, and only if one comes closely can the rare hand irregularities be seen.

On the last twenty years of his life the artist developed artworks where he limited the vocabulary of forms to concentrate on the infinite variations to which they could be subjected. Each form is precisely positioned, creating complex angular shapes and making any simple figure/ground reading impossible. This special ambiguity and instability increase the sensation of a dynamic explosion in space, and the forms are liberated from visual reference and allude to themes of universal structure.

José Pedro Costigliolo died in 1985, leaving behind him an incommensurate participation in the development of Visual Art in the Twentieth Century. His legacy can be read as a research for a universal archetype or truth, as opposed to the experience of the uniquely particular.

During his lifetime the artist had numerous national and international exhibitions in the following institutions: Museo de Arte Moderno de Sao Paulo, Brazil (1956); Museo de Arte Moderno de Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (1957); Ateneo Barcelones, Spain (1958); Union Panamericana, United-States (1966); and was awarded several prestigious prizes such as the concurso de Afiches de Palacio de la Música (1929), 1er. Premio de acuarela y la Beca de Pintura en el III Salón Bienal Nacional (1957), 1er. Premio Medalla de Oro del Salón Nacional (1966), among others. His work is part of the collections of the Colección Essex, UK; CIFO CISNEROS Fontanal Art Foundation, Spain; Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales de Montevideo, Uruguay; Museum Municipal Juan Manuel Blanes, Uruguay; Museo de Arte Moderno de San Pablo, Brazil; Museo de Arte Moderno de Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Spain; and the Museo de Art Contemporaneo de Madrid, Spain.

José Pedro Costigliolo “La Vida de la Formas” Will be the first retrospective of the artist since 1983, and the first one exhibited in the United-States. This exhibition is part of a larger project including two supplementary exhibitions in two additional institutions: the National Museum of Visual Arts in Montevideo, Uruguay and the Fundacion Pablo Atchugarry, Uruguay. It will be the first exhibition of the artist at the MNAV. It is with great pleasure and pride that the Uruguayan sculptor Pablo Atchugarry opens his private collection of José Pedro Costigliolo paintings to the Miami public.