

María Freire

b. 1917, Montevideo, Uruguay - d. 2015, Montevideo, Uruguay



María Freire is one of the Southern Cone's most productive and engaged, if also one of the least-known, artists working in the Constructivist tradition. Freire trained at the Círculo de Bellas Artes in Montevideo from 1938 to 1943, studying under José Cuneo and Severino Pose and at the Universidad del Trabajo under Antonio Pose. Her first sculptures indicate the profound influence of African art on her work, something of an anomaly for an artist in South America at that time. In the early 1950s, after meeting her future husband, the artist José Pedro Costigliolo, her art became more influenced by European non-figurative art, such as Art Concrete group, Georges Vantongerloo, and Max Bill.

In 1952 she co-founded the Arte No-Figurativo group with Costigliolo in Montevideo, and exhibited with them in 1952 and 1953. Freire exhibited regularly in the National Salons from 1953 to 1972. In 1953 Freire and Costigliolo were invited to the 2nd Sao Paulo Biennial, where they came into contact with Brazil's enthusiasm for geometric abstraction. In 1957 Freire and Costigliolo won the "Gallinal" travel grant which they used to live and study in Paris and Amsterdam, and to travel throughout Europe until 1960, meeting many of the historical pioneers of abstract art, including Antoine Pevsner and Georges Vantongerloo. In

1959 they exhibited in Brussels, at the Galerie Contemporain. She was invited again to the Sao Paulo Biennial in 1957 and the XXXIII Venice Biennale in 1966.

Freire developed her work within a strict, yet variable formal vocabulary, often switching between periods of greater or lesser degrees of abstraction. Her series *Sudamérica*, worked on from 1958 to 1960, employed cut planes and polygonal forms in a reduced palette. Freire taught drawing in an Architecture Prep School and wrote art criticism for the journal "Acción" from 1962 to 1973. Around 1960, she began to experiment with looser forms of abstraction, and a more expressive range of colors, resulting in her series *Capricorn and Cordoba*, 1965-1975, and later on she would create volumetric disturbances by dividing the surface with repeated forms or by creating chromatic modulation sequences in her series *Variantes y Vibrantes*, 1975-1985. In 2000, she began to produce large-scale public sculpture in Uruguay.

Main Solo Exhibitions

- 2016 *María Freire*, Museo de Bellas Artes Juan Manuel Blanes, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 2006 Galería de las Misiones, Punta del Este, Uruguay
- 1998 *Retrospectiva*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1992 Goethe Institute, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1990 Exposición Retrospectiva, Galería Bruzzone, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1987 Cátedra Alicia Goyena, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1977 Galería Bruzzone, Montevideo, Uruguay
Golf Club, Punta del Este, Uruguay
- 1976 Galería Portal, São Paulo, Brazil
- 1975 Galería Aramayo, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1970 Galería Imagen, Buenos Aires, Argentina
Galería Moretti, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1967 Galería Lirolay, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- 1966 Pan-American Union, Washington D.C.
- 1959 Galerie Les Contemporains, Brussels, Belgium
- 1958 Ateneo Barcelonés, Barcelona, Spain

- 1956 Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, Brazil
 Museu de Arte Moderna de Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- 1955 Instituto de Estética. Facultad de Arquitectura, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1954 Galería Salamanca, Montevideo, Uruguay

Group Exhibitions

- 2019-2018 *Latinoamérica: volver al futuro*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Buenos Aires, Argentina
- 2016 *The Illusive Eye*, El Museo del Barrio, New York
- 2010 *Bright Geometry*, Cecilia de Torres, Ltd., New York
 Sites of Latin American Abstraction, MoLAA, Long Beach, California
- 2008 Sites of Latin American Abstraction, CIFO, Miami, Florida
- 2005 *Homenaje al Centenario del Círculo de Bellas Artes - MNAV*, Montevideo, Uruguay
 Daros-Latinamerica, Zurich
Works on & off paper, Modern and Contemporary, Cecilia de Torres, Ltd., New York
- 2004 Latin American Art: Contexts and Accomplices, Sainsbury Centre, Norwich, United Kingdom
- 2003 4th Bienal do Mercosul – Porte Alegre, Brazil
- 2002 Museo Rufino Tamayo, México City, México
- 2001 *Arte Abstracto del Río de la Plata*, The Americas Society, New York
- 1998 Museo Extremeño Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo, Badajoz, Spain
- 1997 Latin American Art, First site at the Minorities, Colchester, UK
Arte Madí, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid
- 1996 *Selection of Works from the University of Essex Collection of Latin American Art*, Bolivar Hall, London, UK
 Premio Figari - Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1995 *90 años en el Arte Nacional*, Círculo de Bellas Artes, Montevideo, Uruguay
Propuestas estéticas, Círculo Miró, Museo del Gaucho y de la Moneda, Montevideo
- 1994 *Constructivism in Latin America*, University Gallery, University of Essex, Colchester, UK
 Salón de artes plásticas, Salto, Uruguay
- 1994 *Propuestas estéticas*, Círculo Miró, Museo del Gaucho y de la Moneda, Montevideo, Uruguay
 Salón de Arte Embajada Mujeres de América, cuartel de Dragones, Maldonado, Uruguay
- 1993 *Colección pinturas*, Palacio Legislativo, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1992 *From Torres-García to Soto*, Art Museum of the Americas, Washington, D.C.
- 1990 *La mujer en el arte*, Cámara del Libro, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1983 *Pintores uruguayos*, Alianza Francesa, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1982 *Embajada Mujeres de América*, Palacio Municipal, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1980 Salón de la mujer, Congreso Latinoamericano Wizo, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1979 *Pintores uruguayos*, Sala Vieytes, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1977 *Pintores geométricos*, Instituto Anglo Uruguayo, Uruguay
12 artistas contemporáneos, Club de Golf, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1972 Salones Nacionales y Municipales de Arte Plásticas, Uruguay

- 1971 Pintores uruguayos, Museo Dámaso Arce Olavarría, Argentina
- 1970 Primer Bienal de Pintura de Uruguay, Punta del Este, Uruguay
- 1966 XXXIII Biennale de Veneza, Venice, Italy
- 1964 Primer Salón de Pintura General Electric, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1962 *Forma & Espacio*, Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile
- 1961 *De Blanes a nuestros días*, Punta del Este, Uruguay
Pintores sudamericanos, Galería Sudamericana, New York
- 1957 Bienal de Sao Paulo, Brazil
- 1956 *Seis pintores modernos*, Facultas de Humanidades, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1955 *19 artistas de hoy*, Subte Municipal, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1954 *Retrospectiva Pintura Uruguaya*, Homenaje a UNESCO, Museo Blanes, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1953 Bienal de Sao Paulo, Brazil
- 1953 Salones Nacionales y Municipales de Arte Plásticas, Uruguay

Education and Professional Activities

- 1938/43 Sculpture and Painting, Círculo de Bellas Artes, Universidad del Trabajo, Uruguay
- 1950/66 Teaching, History and Artistic culture, Architectural Training
- 1952 Co-Founder: Arte No-Figurativo
- 1957/60 Gallinal Grant, study trip to Europe
- 1958 Paris, Louvre School, art courses
- 1962/73 Art criticism for the newspaper *Acción*
- 1966 Study trip to Europe
- 1978 Municipal government selects Freire and José Pedro Costigliolo to design the beachfront pavements in Montevideo and Punta del Este, Uruguay