

HORACIO TORRES

1924, Livorno, Italy - 1976, New York City



Self portrait, c. 1940s

Horacio Torres was born in Livorno, Italy in 1924. His father was the Uruguayan Constructivist painter Joaquín Torres-García, his mother Manolita Piña, was Spanish. The family moved to the South of France the year after his birth. His father had left New York dreaming of a bucolic Italy and instead found a country dominated by the Fascist campaign. In 1926, they moved to Paris where Horacio Torres grew up in an intense artistic environment. Mondrian, Van Doesburg, Lipchitz, Arp, among many others, visited his father's studio where Horacio and his siblings were encouraged to participate. Horacio could remember visiting the iron workshops of the sculptors Julio González and Alexander Calder, where he first saw the Circus performance. In 1933, the economic depression forced the family to leave Paris. After a year in Madrid, his father, after being abroad for 43 years, decided to return to his native Uruguay, far from the crisis that ravaged Europe.



Horacio Torres sitting on his father's lap, Paris, 1927

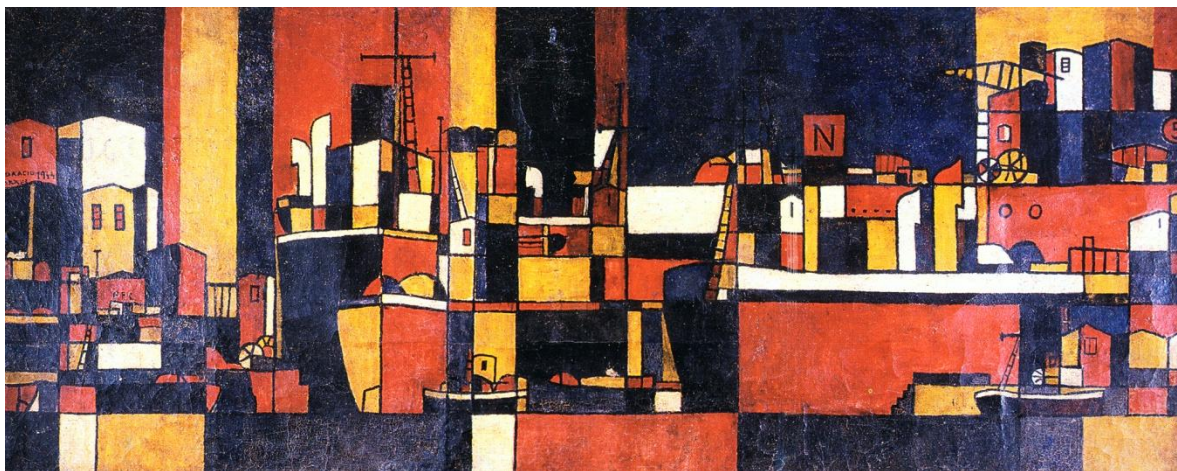


Torres-García and his students, 1947. From left to right, seated: unknown, Manuel Pailós, Joaquín Torres-García, Julio Alpuy, Rodolfo Visca. Standing: Horacio Torres, Augusto Torres, José Gurvich, Manuel Cuña, unknown, Guido Castillo, Jorge Visca, Francisco Matto and Gonzalo Fonseca.



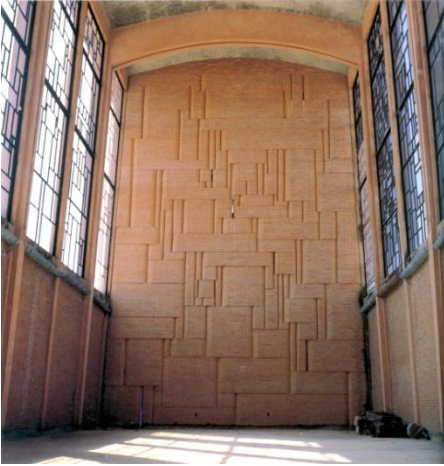
In Horacio Torres' studio, Montevideo, 1965
From left to right: Manuel Pailós, Augusto Torres, Francisco Matto and Horacio Torres

In 1935, Torres-García created the Association of Constructivist Artists, with his son Horacio as a member. In Montevideo, Torres-García resumed the publication of *Cercle et Carré* (The Circle and the Square) the first periodical of geometric abstraction he had co- founded in 1931 in Paris with Michel Seuphor. Horacio's earliest work was featured in several issues of the magazine. In 1936, together with his father and his pupils, Horacio (then twelve years old) submitted works to the Salon des Surindépendants in Paris. Horacio studied painting and took drawing lessons at home, painted still lifes, portraits and works of geometric abstraction. The emphasis of his father's teaching was always on achieving a plastic structure regardless of whether the work was figurative or not. In 1942, Torres traveled to Bolivia and Peru to study Pre-Columbian art. By 1943, with a new group of young artists, his father created the Taller Torres-García. They were determined to shake-up the local art scene and Horacio Torres actively participated in all of their exhibitions and the manifestos issued by the group. In 1944, he painted two large Constructivist murals in a Sanatorium. He also continued his violin studies with a Russian teacher.

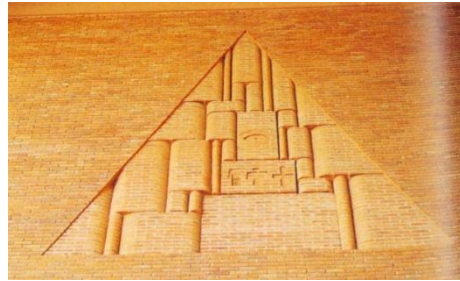


Mural at Hospital St. Bois, 1944, 187 x 74 in. 480 x 190 cm.

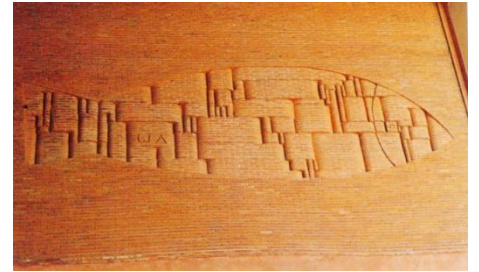
In 1949, at the age of 75, Torres-García died. A few years later Horacio Torres returned to Europe and traveled to Spain, Holland, Greece, England and Italy to see the work of the great masters. He stayed in Paris for two years, exhibited his work at the Galerie du Haut Pavée and in 1955, at the Salon des Surindépendants, from which the L'Organisation des Musées de France acquired several of his works.



Apse, 1965, Constructive hand-cut brick relief, 14 meters high. Church of the Archdiocesan Seminary



Trinity, 1965, Constructive hand-cut brick relief, Church of the Archdiocesan Seminary

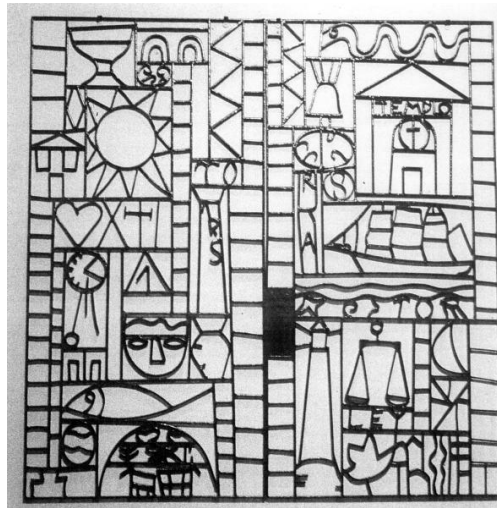


Pez, 1965, Constructive hand-cut brick relief, Church of the Archdiocesan Seminary

On his return to Montevideo, he began to paint nude studies and large figure compositions. In 1962, he was commissioned to design three large Constructivist murals in brick and the stained glass windows for a church. Horacio Torres traveled to New York in 1970 for the opening of Torres-García's retrospective exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum. In New York, Horacio Torres was taken under the wing of the influential art critic Clement Greenberg, who had met Horacio in 1968 while visiting Montevideo.



Wrought-Iron Doors, entrance to his home in Montevideo, 1960, Painted iron



Wrought-iron door stained glass window, 1960



Horacio Torres sitting by a window of his home in Montevideo, 1974

Horacio Torres' first New York one-man show at the Noah Goldowsky Gallery in March of 1973 was an instant success. Greenberg introduced Torres to Kenworth Moffett, who went on to curate Torres's exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 1974. For the catalogue essay Moffett wrote "... their [Torres' pictures] sincerity and conviction lie essentially in the deeply felt way they are painted. This is not simply a matter of loose painterly handling, but an expressive phrasing that must be continually invented; ordered yet varied, avoiding both mannerism and empty bravura, acknowledging the decorative and, at the same time, evoking a rich and mobile reality."

In New York, Torres enjoyed the appreciation of a group of artists and critics who supported and greatly encouraged him. In February of 1976, after a short illness, he died in New York of cancer. He was 51.

Horacio Torres' unique artistic upbringing allowed him to choose figurative painting. He felt the tradition of painting was dying and he fought its demise. He maintained that it was as valid for him to find inspiration in the Renaissance tradition of heroic painting as it had been valid for Picasso and Braque to look to African sculpture during the formative years of Cubism.

"In spite of the academic poses, these six paintings were not only extraordinarily good, but also contained a fresh quality. Torres has abstracted sections of the human figure, truncating them, in effect; his concerns lie not with individuated figures, and certainly not with humanity, but with mass and volume, with the formal elements of certain anatomical parts."

Bell, Jane. Horacio Torres at Noah Goldowsky, Arts Magazine, May-June, 1973

"Torres' paintings as a group offer a striking lesson on how to appropriate the mannerisms of the Great Tradition from Titian to Cézanne, while avoiding those of its elements deemed extraneous to modernist purposes: content subject meaning, moral value, sensuality... In other words, the shards of art history are arranged to reveal the truly contemporary painter's distance from its most cherished concerns. They are not imitations of nature but marks on canvas; they are part of a painterly tradition but they are modern in their self-consciousness about the means of art."

Nochlin, Linda; [Alfred] Leslie. [Horacio] Torres, New Uses of History, Art in America, March-April 1976.

"The tension between confidence and uncertainty is essential to Torres' power. In "Two Figures Resting" you can feel the artist considering inch by inch, the line of the shoulder and body of the woman at the left. The body of the woman on the right in "Three Figures" has a justness that you almost never see in figurative painting anymore - a searching, empirical precision that is always a moral act."

Michael Brenson, The New York Times, Friday, January 5, 1990.



Horacio Torres in his New York studio on Wooster Street, 1974



Horacio Torres and wife, Cecilia de Torres, New York, 1972