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In Julio Alpuy's art the myth of the return to origins takes a different form. Alpuy is not interested in the animism of primal art forms or constructed fragments, but in nature as the beginning and source of every living form. In his case, nature functions as a framework for the artist's archetypal personal symbolism based on a fascination with the organic and the primordial. The concern with the magic function of the work present in the other TTG artists is here explored through the mystery of life-forces and life-origins. Alpuy explains "My [concept of] nature is nothing else but a suggestion of nature, and the forms that represent it in my painting are only expressions of essences that transport us to the origins."¹

His most immediate point of reference, however, is not pre-Columbian art but the classical tradition embodied in Greek mythology. Alpuy feels very attracted to mythology, as "the way of feeling of antiquity".²

In Alpuy's oeuvre, the transformation away from the constructive languages of El Taller took place in the drawings and wood constructions that he developed after his arrival in New York in 1961, where he followed the same path taken by Fonseca and Matto of liberating the symbol from the grid structure and giving it a life of its own. In Alpuy's case, however, this process was accompanied by the exploration of the two basic themes that have constituted the focus of his production until the present: fertility and the relation of man with nature. These themes would require the replacement of the TTG symbols by a more suggestive vocabulary rooted in the organic world: abstracted symbols suggestive of plants, animal, embryonic and phallic forms, as well as cosmic symbols of the sun, the moon, the stars, and the elements. Since, like Torres-García, Alpuy understands the relationship of man with nature as a structural one (everything lives in relation to everything else), landscape emerged in this work during this period as the ideal means to convey and reveal this relationship. *The Primal Age* (1963) and *The Stone Age* (1968) are two landscape drawings that exemplify the thematic and stylistic transition undergone by his work in the early 1960s. Here the orthogonal grid has disappeared and the new symbols alluding to the natural world have haphazardly taken over the composition.

Like Fonseca and Matto, Alpuy discovered in wood constructions and ideal medium to explore the magic function of the work. *Universus* (1964) is an example of the series of wood constructions he did while in close contact with Fonseca that are characterized by rough, poked surfaces and the inclusion of carved abstract effigies and motifs.³ In this work the entire surface is poked with holes and slashes accentuated by pieces of colored crystals that play upon the

¹ Julio Alpuy, Julio Alpuy, n, pag.

² Alpuy explains (interview with the author, New York, 7 November 1989): "My chosen culture is the Greek, the more ancient the better. My favorites lectures are the ones related to Greece. Pre-Columbian culture never touched me. I have never gone to Mexico. At a certain moment that ceased to interest me."

³ Fonseca and Alpuy were in close contact during this period in New York. Alpuy had arrived in New York in 1961, after a stay in Colombia and Venezuela. Fonseca made available to him his studio in Long Island, where he worked on most of the wood constructions of this period (Alpuy interview).

contrast between empty space and surface. The human form on the carved niche to the right recalls tribal fetishes. The holes, which resemble the black holes of the cosmic universe, accentuate the function of the piece as a metaphor for a primal landscape. *Genesis I* (1964) is another construction that forcefully summarizes the theme of the origins. In this piece a series of horizontal bands containing schematic figures and nature symbols organizes the composition in two levels that evoke the levels of the creation of man and universe.

In their organics and spirit of evocation and affirmation of the natural world and its primal life-forces, Alpuý's works, however, already signal a more radical departure from the constructive tradition of the workshop artists. Explaining the process involved in the creation of the pieces, he stresses his rejection of the intellectual process involved in Torres-Garcia's constructivism, in favor of retaining a more immediate referent to the natural world. While Torres-Garcia's starting point for the elaboration of a composition was geometry, Alpuý prefers to double the process: he works from the object to geometry and then back to the object, always using the golden section. Through continuous amplification, and building up from the natural image, he obtains a structure. Yet it is a structure that retains traces of the life-referent. The vitalistic effect is aided in his production after 1960, by the replacement of the orthogonal grid by the rounded curve, a resource that endowed his drawings and constructions with rhythm unlike any of his early works. This process is at work in *Fertility* (1966), where Alpuý has represented a series of abstract motifs that recall prehistoric life-symbols, such as womb, a snail, and a bird. Although the symbols have been reduced to simple abstract forms, they retain traces of the natural shapes that inspired their form. The organic quality is accentuated by Alpuý's maximum utilization of the rough surface and grain of wood.

The emphasis on the natural referent and its vital function in Alpuý's art differs from the abstract quality of Fonseca's or Matto's constructions and signals a new direction within the TTG legacy. The structure, while present, is not longer the main focus of the work. In many ways it represents a shift away from the rational abstract principle to the recognition of the intuitive, unconscious forces at play in the creation of the work.