

Title: Julio Alpuy: A Constructivist Painter

Author: Juan Bosch

Newspaper: Venezuela Gráfica

Date: 1959, Caracas

Translated by Trudy Balch

The Uruguayan painter Julio Alpuy is exhibiting his work in the Galería Mendoza, on Avenida Andrés Bello. The show features thirty-three oil paintings by this tireless, meticulous artist who has been in Venezuela for about six months now, cloistered in his atelier in Los Palos Grandes, at times painting day and night—quietly, seriously, and responsibly.

Alpuy is now forty, and he has spent a number of years traveling in Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East. Educated at the Taller Torres García in Montevideo, he is part of the Constructivist school that was founded, maintained, and expanded by Joaquín Torres-García during a twenty-year period, to propagate his artistic faith.

In the Constructivist school, of which Alpuy is a recognized member, painting is but a part of the entirety of artistic expression, or rather it becomes the representation—in color—of a partial manifestation of the artistic whole. For the Constructivists, any expression of life is an expression of Universal Art. The artist's goal, then, becomes to integrate his work into the task of living, to make it a part of everyday life, to have it appear in the home, in styles of dress, in the adornment of tabletops and the pictures hung on the walls. Yet painting itself is independent of this universal conception and must communicate on its own, using the absolute value of color combined with the absolute value of the line. Color and line must be concrete; for the Constructivist painter, it is this very concreteness that holds the true meaning of abstract painting.

For Alpuy, therefore, abstraction is not the imaginative expression of instinct. It is the expression suggested by a given form that takes shape through the deliberate use of lines and colors. This requires prior mastery of the techniques of painting, which means that the painter must not improvise knowledge of color, the direction of brushstrokes, or the amount of light.

Julio Alpuy has this painterly skill. Nothing in his work is improvised. Inch by inch, his paintings are full, carefully worked out, and conscientiously organized. His mastery of suggestive power, always based on his given forms, is extraordinary. He is capable of an amazing feat, which is that he can use identical forms and sometimes even similar colors and forms to offer the viewer whatever he wishes to give: a vision of Paris, Bogotá, or La Guaira; European mist or Caribbean sun; the tenderness of a landscape or the nervousness of a city.

Rarely has a painter so extraordinarily aware of his tools, of how to use them, and of the message he wants to impart passed through any exhibition gallery in Caracas. Among Julio Alpuy's diverse virtues as a painter, the most notable is the coherence in his work between the media he uses and the goals he pursues. To achieve this coherence, an artist must have a vast knowledge of painting—and Alpuy is, beyond the shadow of a doubt, a master of his art.