

Title: A Uruguayan in New York

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The 1971 art season has given us the opportunity both to reacquaint ourselves with a number of artists who studied directly with Joaquín Torres-García (Anheló Hernández, Lily Salvo, Dumas Oroño, Alceu Ribeiro) and to observe the degree to which their paths have diverged. Now another member of Torres-García's first "batch" has appeared on the scene: Julio Uruguay Alpuy. Born in 1919 in San Gregorio de Polanco, Tacuarembó, he studied with Torres-García from 1939 to 1950 and later traveled in the Americas and Europe to further his studies, paying particular attention to the mosaics of Ravenna as well as murals and stained glass.

Joining the group of artists who have voluntarily (or perhaps not so voluntarily) gone into exile, Alpuy moved to New York in 1961, where he received two fellowships from the New School for Social Research. He exhibited in major galleries in the United States throughout the 1960s, and this year won a silver medal at the Artes Gráficas biennial in Cali, Colombia.

Distance has enabled him to affirm his artistic personality (which in Uruguay had been rather colorless, without a definitive profile) and arrive at a deeper, more intimate aesthetic vision; in other words, he has achieved a style all his own. It is impossible to draw definitive conclusions about an artist who has sent seventeen prints executed during the past two years; indeed, it would be outrageous to use them to evaluate his entire oeuvre by extension. What is possible, however, is to speculate that Alpuy has found a visual equilibrium that has launched a new expressive stance, while at the same time recapturing—without nostalgia—a fruitful past. In fact, he uses these metal plates, most of which are rather small, to explore the potential of the broad and alien world in a leisurely way. He expands the scope of his experience and incorporates new realities: here he prefers the scorched desert landscape and the dazzle of solitude and harsh sun, bulbous vegetation, the charm of Edenic gardens. There is something like a search for the primitivism lost in the hectic life of today (to which there is no reference), or a pastoral excursion to mythical, imaginary places. Some titles are significant in and of themselves: *Edad de Piedra*, *La puerta del Edén*, *Ofrenda a Ceres*, *Adán y Eva*, *Víspera de Alumbramiento*. The shadow of the classical spirit is sweetly cast, not summoned by force; at the same time, individual emotions erupt amusingly, breaking up the invasive transcendence. This is where the aforementioned equilibrium comes from. At times taking a lyrical approach, as though afraid to scratch the metal surface, Alpuy leaves emotion barely noted with warm tonalities (*Paisaje de Verano*). At others, he practically clings to a dark materialism that is intimately constructed, heavily textured, and laden

with circular forms (*Edad de Piedra*) or densely emotive (*Contemplación*). In every work, he sustains the figurative references incorporated into a magical, surreal space—a more rational, less demonic kind of Klee.

You may disagree with Alpuý's intimate message or the subtle resonance of his refined technique, but it is impossible not to recognize the persuasive eloquence of his poetic images.