

Museums Review

In the galleries: Extraordinary images from ordinary settings in ‘Places We Find’

By Mark Jenkins

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Jose Gurvich

Born in Lithuania in 1927, Jose Gurvich arrived in Montevideo, Uruguay, as a small boy. Under the tutelage of Joaquin Torres-Garcia, he developed a constructivist style and a major reputation. There's a museum devoted entirely to the artist in Uruguay, whose local embassy is showing "Jose Gurvich." It includes several paintings and two small sculptures, but mostly works on paper.

After World War II, Gurvich traveled widely. This selection includes a realist watercolor-drawing of the Israeli kibbutz where he spent a few years in the mid-1950s, as well as scenes of New York City, where the artist lived (and died) in the early 1970s. Gurvich was partial to earth tones and everyday places, whether to depict Montevideo's port or Manhattan's streets.

Constructivism, which originated in Russia, observes schematically. Although Gurvich worked in various modes, some of the most effective works in this show follow that approach. There's a study of a tortoise that treats the animal as an example of industrial design and a cityscape of Uruguay painted on multiple overlapping panels. The goal is to both break down and build up, discovering reality in its pieces.

Jose Gurvich Through Nov. 2 at Embassy of Uruguay, 1913 I St. NW.