

Contemporary colombian art

BY RODOLFO CHARRIA

In almost all writing and in what is generally said about contemporary colombian art, the discussion centres on the degree of its participation in international trends, or the ranking it would hypothetically be awarded in such a scale of value. I have the feeling that neither of these judgements is particularly relevant, yet I don't have at hand any valid definition of what is and when something is colombian art.

I haven't therefore at any time set out to define this issue, for I think, that at the close of the century it seems futile to confine to political boundaries what nations are determined to transgress.

Colombia is permeable, like indeed all of Latin America, to cultural influences, (especially those coming from the north), yet at the same time, and fortunately, it is the promoter of great creative processes and it belongs to a constantly evolving cultural territory, product of an exceptional universe conditioned by social changes that are only comprehensible within the framework of a fascinating and



Nancy Friedman, *Flower of the Paradise*, 1993. Acrylic on canvas, 90 x 70 cm.



Mª Fernanda Cardozo.

accelerated destiny of construction and deconstruction.

It isn't thus an issue of planning selection in terms of originality, nor of searching for products that fit in with a complaisant eurocentric art vision. I have intended to show the work of twelve different art creators, that lead us to plural reality, and that even when their relationship with trends such as minimalism or constructivism is more evident, continue to express a remarkable vitality that is the consequence of the special conditions that have determined the recent history of the country. They share the fact that they have gained recognition and have developed their work during the 80's; they are representatives of actuality. As far as diversity goes, we can indicate that they explore different paths, from installation to abstract sculpture going through the most varied forms of painting.

Painting is the classical medium common to most of them, with two marked trends. One towards



G. Botero, *Crisol*, 1992. Bronze and aluminium. Photos courtesy Casa de América, Madrid.

abstraction, (Margarita Gutiérrez, Luis Fernando Roldán), and the other figurative, and of a marked narrative character, (Rodolfo Vélez, Nancy Friedmann).

We can beside cite the cases of Luis Luna, whose work, influenced by the constructivist school of Torres García provides the example of promising renewal where colour and expressiveness are key factors, and Claudia Hernández, who taking as models well known works of universal painting develops her individual vision that is very akin to the most classical aspects of pop art.

Rodrigo Facundo escapes standard

classification as he uses unusual media like clay to fix photographic images whose symbolic contents take us to ritualistic mises-en-scène. Ritualistic are the elements that likewise compose the work of María Fernanda Cardoso, the most conceptualist of these artists, and who in her untiring search for constructivist principles resorts to as many elements of popular culture as she finds.

The sculpture of Mónica Negret and Germán Botero belong to a geometric discipline where volume is the role player in space. Negret recycles waste industrial iron, steel or glass, while Botero transforms industrial objects,

emptying them and then ordering them in such a way that they come to signify something else.

Pablo Van Wong is a builder of mysterious objects that defy tactile approach and negate all apparent sensuality. Talking about appearances, we must say the trunks or suit cases of Carlos Blanco appear as what they are, except for the fact that inside they guard secrets the spectator must guess.

In general, this exhibition pretends to give an idea of the possible expressions of art in a country so singular as Colombia and to provide a picture that is understandable to a European mind.