

with the crown piece. Specialists have seen in this style. "...the most utterly revolutionary way of thinking sculpture, which is an essential characteristic of Brancusi".

We have to imagine Fleitas in one of three collective exhibitions that in Paris and Brussels might have allowed him to study those brancusian pieces that developed the kindred model. Perhaps images sculpted in oak, *La Químera*. (1915), the *Rey de Reyes*. (1935), might have helped him to visualize that ovally perforated plinth at the same theoretical height as the biomorphic head of the mentioned works, when not as model for the stylised base that acts as plinth for *Recién Nacido*. (1926). (Just Born). In this kind of base there is already a strong indication of how Plácido Fleitas is going to evolve.

The formal artistic influences tend to make up two different groups that the sculptor develops in the 1950's: the first in quebracho wood, a hard material that came from the argentinian Chaco and which could be found in the Puerto de la Luz, the port of Las Palmas, among other nutritional imports that Perón sent to the islands by way of post-war cooperation. In figures such as *Gato*, (1952), and its series, the oval half-moon that dominates the sculpture's volume is suggested, crowned with zoomorphic crests and a round central perforation. The elegant curves that Fleitas produces in all the sculptural or pictorial works that date from that epoch, repeat the oval composition in a series of elliptical hollows, with a descending axis of increasing diameter as it progresses outwards, in at least six known works.

Without overlooking in these characteristics a certain influence from Joan Miró, especially in the more Hans Arp-like facial features, we can otherwise safely state that in his physionomies the imprint of Brancusi is decidedly clear. An elliptical style that Fleitas won't abandon, although he will start to smooth out any roughnesses and will model transitional curves that produce streamlined surfaces. This happens with the geomorphical shapes sculpted in sandstone that he made during the 60's, erroneously attributed to the influence of Henry Moore. Such attribution obviates

the slow process of self-definition that marked Fleitas's creative career, and these works are the result of a personal synthesis, of a symbolic economy, that entitle the sculptures of the period to be esteemed as original, and not excessively indebted to Henry Moore. The primacy of the central void or hollow, is a culmination, as Lázaro Santana would say, with dramatic and magical elements, for, "Fleitas is more interested in the hollow as an invisible volume rather than as a void".

Another half dozen works, (the numerical vagueness is just another consequence of the chaos that still surrounds the cataloguing of his work), reinforce the suggestion. Those Sculptures in ebony, (1958), with an oval contour, that punch two symmetrical oval hollows in the piece, running parallel or super-imposed, have a very evident brancusian look about them, as all the work in wood from that period.

The affinities aren't apparently limited to a mere visual comparison of his 50's and 60's series with the pedestals and other parts of Brancusi's sculpture, as we can glimpse from the photographs that the rumanian artist took himself in his studio, which has been carefully restored in the neighbourhood of the Centre Georges Pompidou. Brancusi in Fleitas can also be seen in a broader context of mutual sources of inspiration. Both sculptors were fascinated by primitive Black African sculpture, a fascination that seized many great beginning of the century artists to develop into a vast body of influence later on. There is a brancusian figure of 1914, his Caryatide, hieratic and self-contained, whose spirit Fleitas seems to reproduce in one of his works, the image of an african man whose feet are very reminiscent of Brancusi.

Anyhow, both men refused the label of abstract sculptors. The rumanian artist expressed it like this: "Those who say my works are abstract are stupid, for what they call abstract is realist, for reality is not the exterior form, but the idea, the essence of things." (3). Fleitas also incorporates this idea into his praxis, and there are works by him that endorse the biomorphic theory, beyond

the automatic description of the tract", that will prove so successful in the descriptive field, although conceptually contested. For example, there is a work, (in ebony or quebracho wood?), whose sole graphic testimony is a photograph that shows it in the studio of the Calle Torres, Las Palmas. (1973). It is a volume oval in shape, and with parallel oval hollow inside.

The work endowed with lips, a pair of arms and feet, like two immense fins that prop it up, makes us think that we are beholding a métis fetish of a given canarian ethnic type, that Fleitas had in a previous period popularised, and also certain perceptible african suggestions, emphasized by the black hue of the wood, (an innocent kind of symbol in Fleitas's essentialism).

Undoubtedly Fleitas succumbed to the temptations of influence that certain decisive sculptors of the early twentieth century posed. We have to recognise that these stimuli enabled him to discover morphological realities of nature, already visible in other artists like Hepworth and Nicholson. Let us accept that what is perhaps most brancusian in Fleitas is that "tournant mystique", that he was able to adapt without mimetic harshness. Brancusi, somehow, was within him.



**PEDRO  
GONZÁLEZ**  
IN THE DEEP  
OF THE WOOD

BY CARLOS DÍAZ BERTRANA

The series of paintings that, with the title "The Wood", have been presented by Pedro González in Las Palmas, (Galería Manuel Ojeda), and in Tenerife, (Círculo de Bellas Artes), dispel any lingering doubts as to the function of anecdote in his art: merely irrelevant Whether it is the sea, the wood, an interior, a still life, a portrait or abstraction, the painting of Pedro González adapts the subject to a structural concept of pictorial space.

What matters is exactly where the patches of colour fall and how the parts transform into sensibility. It isn't so much a question of painting trees but one of recognising his painting in the woods.

A limitless forest that we carry within us and which the artist has been exploring for many years, he clarifies concepts, adjusts sentiments to ideas, incorporates them into pictorial language with talent and imagination, and tells us all about what he encounters, with the passion of the sincere artist who knows that falsehood can't dwell in painting. The leaves talk, revealing the artist's motivation, a romantic being for whom nature and consciousness are inseparable manifestations. Image doesn't represent, it interprets existence. Novalis wrote: the secret way runs inwardly.

Pedro González creates an imaginary wood, forged by oblivion and desire. A painterly bound wood, subject to its emotive and formal syntax: what matters is the pictorial essence of the work, how the artist resolves the pictorial problems and assumes courage. Pedro González thinks that "what matters about a painter isn't what he is saying, but rather how Rubens finds the solution to a painting where three suspended bodies appear, or how Velázquez tackles the redness of a floor. The sea or the woods are excuses for painting, and nothing else. Furthermore, they're not real, the image is invented. Frankly I continue to be an abstract painter. The thing is that

it is easy in my most recent works to identify the colour areas."

This quotation is revealing as to the painter's working praxis, of painting as a living and self-sufficient organism, to which he has to add his personality. An ordered will that tries to settle chaos, an existential stance that is engaged in the creation of new images, an effort to transform ideas into visual, existential metaphors. His paintings, other than being a reflection on painting and its technical possibilities are images of infinity, of the untiring movement of things and ideas, of a global life vision that does not stop at small detail.

In his painting the artist doesn't allow the trees to hide the wood from us: in a sense, what we see are sketches, general notes rather than specific definitions. His work can be seen, can be interpreted and construed as a whole, for the parts serve the spirit of structure. When the idea is clear, then the elements have a subordinate role. The woods of Pedro González aren't the leaves and the trunks, it is the forest in itself, the concept of the wood, the abstract and precise image that the word "wood" evokes. The elements therein contained must be present, they are formal parts of the discourse. Nothing is gratuitous, although everything is interchangeable, the role of a birch tree can be perfectly taken on by any bush, in the heart of the woods, the pulsations are so immense that they engulf all things. And, though, like in the fractal images of the

hologram, a part reproduces the whole, it is nonetheless the concept of the wood that proves all-unifying.

It is that same distant gaze that contemplated the sea and didn't miss the waves, with their foamy and liquid presence; yet it tried in effect, to make us feel the essence of the sea. Now, in a similar way, he invites us to unravel the forest, to make out what lies concealed in its tortuous shapes, to experience what image really is. Let's forget about the anecdotal, if we want to penetrate this wood that is his own as well, don't count the acanthus leaves, listen to their inner heartbeat.

To put all of these ideas and many others on the canvas is the painter's ambition. In an epoch that is enthralled by the appearance of things it is hard to look deeper, to sort out the leaves in order to feel the tree. Anecdotes impose their virtuality on essence. The décor of the table and the cost of the menu all too often diminish the importance of culinary pleasure. Let's not swallow, we should think and feel, interpret and change what we dislike. Let's nourish our choice, we should take from the wood that which aids our development, says Pedro González and his painting. The shape of things guard their identity, and in the discovery of what grants them consistency there are many offshoots. Don't stop at the obvious, at the wood. As Luis Sepúlveda's indians say, "During the day there is man and the jungle. At night, man is the jungle".



## REVIEWS

**INEZ VAN  
LAMSWEERDE**  
FASHIONING  
THE HUMAN BODY  
  
BY BENJAMIN WEIL

In H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*, the travelling scientist has conceived such a device to take a journey into time looking for a state of civilization when humans live in peace and harmony among each other, when destructive impulses have been ruled out, and when only constructive energies remain: a dream for the return to the Golden Age

of humankind. After numerous attempts, he lands in the 21st century, when he at first thinks he finally has discovered what he has been looking for: young and healthy looking blond people all dressed in white seem to be living in a state of leisurely peace. Unfortunately, he later finds out that those people have no sense of community – they would not rescue a