

No. 91 Volume 12 Year 2013

ArtNexus

Adrián Villar Rojas

Luis Tomaseo • 9th Bienal do Mercosul

Abstract and Geometric Art in Mexico

The (Inter) National Salon • Curitiba Biennial

PhotoEspaña 2013 • Vik Muniz



sculptures, was open to the public from July 25 – September 5, 2013.

Given Flórez's trajectory in architecture, the idea of construction is at the base of a creative process that originates in his interest for capturing space in terms of a containing frame, of a geometric dimensionality with linear projections.

In his formal explorations, Flórez uses tools from the field of design such as drawing, modeling, computer models, and planimetrics. From the latter, he takes the process of transferring the features of a terrain into the two-dimensional plane using grids. Almost all the works in this exhibition are created in the manner of "boxes" in which the lines constitute grids that generate angles, movement trajectories, and fine rectilinear volumes inserted in the geometric rigidity of the constructions.

The vacuums and walls of Flórez's sculptures play with the perception of the viewer as they subtly bring forth the duality between the two- and the three-dimensional. One must come close to the works, especially those in small formats, to enjoy the detail of the tension in the lines, the calculatedly tiny orifices they penetrate, the colors of the planes and the formal effects achieved by light and shadows.

In the words of the artist: "The process of creation for these works is connected to the development of the MURA project (Museo Rodante Audiovisual), which consists of small buildings in scale, itinerant and able to be taken apart, installed temporarily in a variety of contexts. The design materials for these devices were also the raw materials for the development of *Castillos en el aire*. The works in the show were presented, in one way or another, as moments in the constructive (or destructive) process of these architectures. And they combined sculpture with the drafting and photographic print of the 3D models."

Máximo Flórez's works can be described as special conceptions in different material and thought dimensions, from technical drawing to geometric sculpture. Despite the unmovable discipline of an absolutely controlled and "perfect" production, we perceive the intention of transgressing the rational need to define space. With this I am referring to the fact that Flórez's *Castillos en el aire* challenge our notions of weight and weightlessness, up and down, trace and imaginary line, horizontality and verticality, etc.

The scaled models of some of the works in the show are notable for the way in which, besides reflecting Flórez's training as an architecture student, they verify this process of conceptual transference of space into a mental projection and then into matter. They bring forth the rational transit of the idea of spatial volume and vacuum into a palpable object with comparative correspondence.

Asked whether he conceives an idea after exploring space, or adapts it to works he has developed prior to reconnoitering the space they will inhabit, the artist answers that his dialog with the exhibition space is essential. He requires a prior reading of that space because "its characteristics (circulation, lighting, textures, etc.) are what begin to shape the idea of the body of the show."

The step that follows Flórez's reconnaissance of the space is its mental abstraction to generate a preliminary representation, based on its documentation by means of plans, images, and models. In what the artist defines as a "mise-en-scene," Flórez simultaneously reflects on ways to adapt the space to the specific space, modifying the models and formats through the repetition of forms extensions, additions, and subtractions, as well as the modification of the spatial surroundings by means of light and color.

Regarding color, Flórez notes: "I lean towards textures and colors that come from the materials, in this case wood. However, when I saw the first renderings, I thought it'd be interesting to treat some of the works as the materialization of virtual volumes and to give them that aspect with flat, lively colors. Some of the works were painted on colors that corresponded to those assigned them (by default) by the computer modeling program."

At a more sensible level, Flórez perceives space by experiencing and establishing it as a memory. His previous work in other Bogotá spaces has fed into this experience, reinforcing a predilection for certain materials. In that sense, the nobility of elements such as wood and thread also implies a physical relationship, and in consequence the enjoyment that the artist refers to when he says that manual labor is the essence of his work. While other media are involved in his creative process, such as video or photography, the constant to emphasize is that he always seeks to have them be connected to the processes of sculpture.

María José Ramírez



Máximo Flórez. *Castle in the Air*, 2013. Wood, print on photographic paper and threads. 11 ¾ x 9 ¾ x 1 ¾ in. (30 x 25 x 5 cm.).

BUENOS AIRES / ARGENTINA

Manuel Espinosa

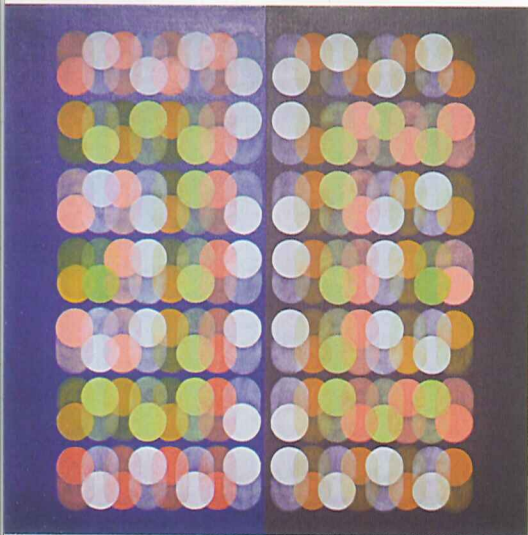
Buenos Aires Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Buenos Aires

On exhibit at Buenos Aires Museo de Arte Contemporáneo is an excellent show, curated by Ayelén Vázquez, about one of the most distinguished names in Constructive Art in Argentina: Manuel Espinosa (1912-2006).

The exhibition is titled *Geometría en movimiento* and introduces us to Espinosa's work from the 1960s, his relationship with kinetic art, and the three-dimensional objects he created: acrylic boxes and one object, *El juego de la Matusa*, with which he participated already in 1984 in a group exhibition titled *El juguete*, which brought together important artists from the local scene.

Manuel Espinosa began to act decisively in the local scene with Asociación Arte Concreto Invención (AACI), alongside Maldonado, Lidy Prati, Hlito, Iomni, Molenberg, Souza, Lozza, in creations that scandalized the audience with their use of the trimmed frame and the belligerence of their ideas.

Afterwards, and after his visits in Europe with Max Bill, Vantongerloo, Vordemberge-Gildewart and other constructive artists, Espinosa began to explore unlimited space with free constellations.



Manuel Espinosa. *Untitled*, 1968. Oil on canvas. 39 1/3 x 39 1/3 in. (100 x 100 cm).

The show we are reviewing now illustrates with great accuracy the moment when Espinosa abandons unlimited spaces and opt definitively for two-dimensional space, on the basis of which he would embark on new, unexplored paths.

There is a vast display of Espinosa's production from the 1960s and the variations he did around the theme of the circle. This basic module is reiterated against monochrome backgrounds, always with the same dimensions, that act as elements in a group. A group that, on the other hand, always works according to a rhythm.

In Espinosa, horizontality has enormous strength and the displacements of the circles takes place along rigorous horizontal lines that, in turn, make it possible to organize other visual figures through color, their differentiation, and the degree of luminosity.

The superposition's are organized with strict symmetry. A complex symmetry that can correspond axially to its horizontal or vertical axis, or can be doubly inverted.

The exhibition includes oils on canvas and on cardboard from the circles series. It was only during the following decade moved from the use of oil to acrylic. A good number of works that exemplify the many possibilities engaged by the artist are on display.

There even are some works that were included in the exhibition *18 variaciones sobre un tema* and were installed in 1968 in a way that was absolutely new.

A different group of works, very directly connected to optical kinetic art, is comprised on inks on paper, *Basie*, a large, tremendously

forceful oil on canvas, and one acrylic on canvas that—as attested by its unusual title—belongs to the era when Espinosa was profoundly interested in James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

Espinosa's acrylic boxes from the 1960s, only one of which is dated, are interesting for the visual adventures they provide for viewers through their reflecting stainless-steel surfaces and their potential for many iterations and transformations.

The boxes are well arranged to form a boundary line at one of the space's ends, and lead into *El juego de la Matusa*, mentioned above. In a small adjacent area viewers have an opportunity to create their own *Matusa* using loose colored acrylic pieces that are placed on a large table.

The exhibition also has a significant catalog with a text by the curator, Ayelén Vázquez, a biography, a listing of exhibitions and awards, a general and special bibliography, an the English-language version of the texts. The catalog features photographs not only of all the works in the exhibition, but interesting documents referred to the artist.

Doctor Elena Oliveras wrote the introductory prologue.

Nelly Perazzo

Kenneth Kemble

Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires

Buenos Aires' MALBA is presenting an exhibition of works by Kenneth Kemble (1923-1998).

An important artist in the context of Argentinean art, Kemble was also an art critic for the *Buenos Aires Herald*. His critical writings, along with his book introductions and interviews, were gathered in two publications in 2012.

The compilers of these two volumes, Florencia Battiti and Justo Pastor Mellado, are also the authors of the texts featured in the catalog that accompanies this show, and Battiti is its curator. The exhibition features 30 works selected from Kemble's production between 1953 and 1995.

For both an audience already familiar with Kenneth Kemble and those who are not, the selection brings into relief formal constants sustained through temporal variations.

As the various periods in his oeuvre are different, so are the techniques used: collages using newsprint or other printed matter; corrugated cardboard; maps; wallpaper;

wickerwork or cloth rags; *arpillera* cloth; nails; bottle caps; fabric; canvas; wire. Kemble used oil and acrylic paint, on either paper or canvas supports. The show includes a sparkling violet-colored chair with a crimson pillow titled *Apeadero para gato verde* and dated from 1962.

This title by itself suffices to bring forth the controversial nature of Kenneth Kemble's art, which perhaps found in *Arte destructivo*, his 1961 group experience at Lirolay Gallery, its highest expression. Enrique Barilari, Jorge López Anaya, Jorge Roiger, Silvia Torras, and Luis A. Wells accompanied Kemble at the time.

Beyond the controversy, this exhibition is harmonious in the best sense of the word. It invites us to a wealth of experiences that can be enjoyed as we reflect about the shifts in the art field during the Twentieth Century.

Kemble's earliest works, cubist in tone, are followed by his oppositions of color and graphic elements from the mid-1950s, which were rooted in constructivism; the shreds, blotches, oxidizing planks, aggressive holes, and piled rolls of his informalist period; and his color explorations of the 1970s, always with the fragmentation that characterizes his work but now luminous, vital, sumptuous.

The works on exhibit belong to public cultural institutions such as the Museo Provincial de Bellas Artes de Entre Ríos and the Palais de Glace, which holds Kemble's 1994 National Art Award, to private collections, and to the artist's own.

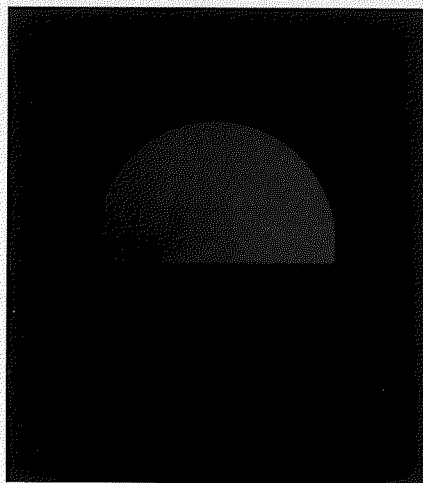
Nelly Perazzo

Leandro Katz

Fundación Telefónica

With *Leandro Katz: arrebatos, diagonales y rupturas* at Espacio Fundación Telefónica and *Leandro Katz: rincones y refugios* at Galería 11 x 7—the former an anthology exhibition curated by Bérénice Reynaud; the latter, a selection of recent works—the presence of this artist is strongly felt these days in his native Buenos Aires (Katz lived and worked in New York City between 1965 and 2006).

The protagonist of Katz's anthology show at Telefónica—the first of this kind for the artist—is a technological organism comprised of photography, digital art, and works in film and video, all made between 1965 and 2013. One of the central revelations of this



Manuel Espinosa

Edited by: Manuel Espinosa Collection
Buenos Aires, 2012.

The exhibition entitled “Manuel Espinosa. Moving Geometries,” presented at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Buenos Aires (MACBA) under the curatorship of Ayelén Vázquez, and the book centered on Espinosa that was launched concurrently with the exhibition, represented highly relevant events for the understanding of one of the most prolific periods of Latin American geometric art.

Manuel Espinosa (1912-2006) is the most important representative of Optical Kinetic art in Argentina. Although he was never part of the institutional circuit, he was a reserved and silent protagonist, just like most of his work. This made it impossible for him to get the recognition that he deserved during the height of his career.

Thus the relevance of a book that—with texts by Nelly Perazzo, María Cristina Rossi and María Teresa Constantin—surveys and finds meaning in the various periods of Espinosa’s production in the field of painting and, circumstantially, in the field of sculpture.

With an introduction by Tomás Maldonado, the book places us in the beginning of the concrete art movement. Maldonado remembers meeting Espinosa for the first time in 1942 “when still uncertain and with some understandable regressions, I timidly began to distance myself from the representational experience. Ten years my elder, Manuel was then a well-respected leading figure of the new figurative paint-

ing movement in Argentina.” Nonetheless, Espinosa would soon “transition” into non-representational art. His contribution was significant not solely for the innovative content of his works, but also, as Maldonado explains, because of his personal qualities, his nobility, generosity and loyalty.

Nelly Perazzo authored a central text and the most extensive of them all. It was the result of thorough research that to this day is essential to understand the specificities of Argentinean concrete and geometric art.

Perazzo emphasizes the importance of Espinosa’s encounter with Maldonado in the beginning of the 1940s, the disillusion caused by the publication of the sole issue of the magazine *Arturo*, in 1944, and the creation of the Asociación Arte Concreto-Inventiva in November of 1945 through a document that included the signatures of artists Manuel Espinosa, Tomás Maldonado, Edgar Bayley, Antonio Caraduje, Simón Contreras, Claudio Girola, Alfredo Hlito, Enio Lommi, Raúl Lozza and his brothers Rafael and Rembrandt, Alberto Molenberg, Primaldo Mónaco, Óscar Nuñez, Lidya Prati, Jorge Souza and Matilde Werbin.

Perazzo addresses the significance of Espinosa’s trip to Europe in 1951, when he entered in contact with European non-representational constructivist artists like Max Bill, Richard Lohse, Georges Vantongerloo and Friedrich Vordemberghe-Guldewart.

The contact with these masters allowed Espinosa to confirm the results of his own inquiries on color back in Buenos Aires. He would discover the importance of Max Bill’s logical-mathematical thought and Vantongerloo’s attraction to the infinite and the unknowable.

Perazzo’s research delves into key moments of an artistic career centered on inquiries about the possibilities of the circle, the lozenge, the square, of complete vs. decidedly quadrangular supports, the open curve, translucencies, the minimal modulations of light through color, the interactions between light and shadow, and the use of black. All of which allows us to understand why optical kinetic art achieved one of its most suggestive solutions in Espinosa’s work.

In Manuel Espinosa, *La Densa Pasión de Vivir* (Manuel Espinosa, the Dense Passion for Living), María Cristina Rossi relies on a series of interviews with the artist as the basis for approaching the development of a

body of work that never paused. Rossi addresses the weekly meetings between the members of the Asociación Arte Concreto-Inventiva at the home of Raúl Lozza and the close and loyal friendships Espinosa developed through the years with Lozza, students, art critics and other artists, including sculptor María Juana Heras-Velazco.

Rossi points out that “when the problems with his eyesight stretched the limits of his outings, he began to receive daily visits from close friends to fulfill the desire to discuss a wide variety of current themes.” An educated and refined man, he felt particularly attracted to figures like James Joyce, Eric Satie and Duke Ellington.

Rossi recalls an answer Espinosa gave to the question—he himself posed—of who is behind the work: “A being that animates, dissects and reconstructs life.”

In *Un Epilogo Incierto* (An Uncertain Epilogue), María Teresa Constantin explains that, while an epilogue is the summary of a discourse—an operation whose purpose is to complete a meaning—she actually proposes “to think of Espinosa’s work in a broader sense open to new approaches.”

According to Constantin, Espinosa is a transitional figure that cannot be regarded as the mere continuation of the modernist exercise, but one that should be understood as the creator “transformational work” that tensions the postulates practiced by Kinetic and Op Art.

It is important to underscore that the interest in the book lies in the research performed by experts and the abundant visual material; in the compilation of manifestos, notes from catalogs and books, newspaper and magazine interviews, and an anthology of prologues and biographic chronology.

The general idea of this publication was proposed by Ana Espinosa, Manuel Espinosa’s niece. We can conclude that the initial concept was successfully developed into a fair assessment of the artist’s work; in which the information is carefully organized and catalogued and where the works are successfully restored and preserved through the pertinent use of the archival material available. The book represents a good example of the important role an artist’s family plays in the preservation and evaluation of an artist’s work.

Elena Oliveras