

Xul Solar, *Pan Tree*, 1960. Watercolor, gouache and ink on paper, 20 7/16 x 12 in.

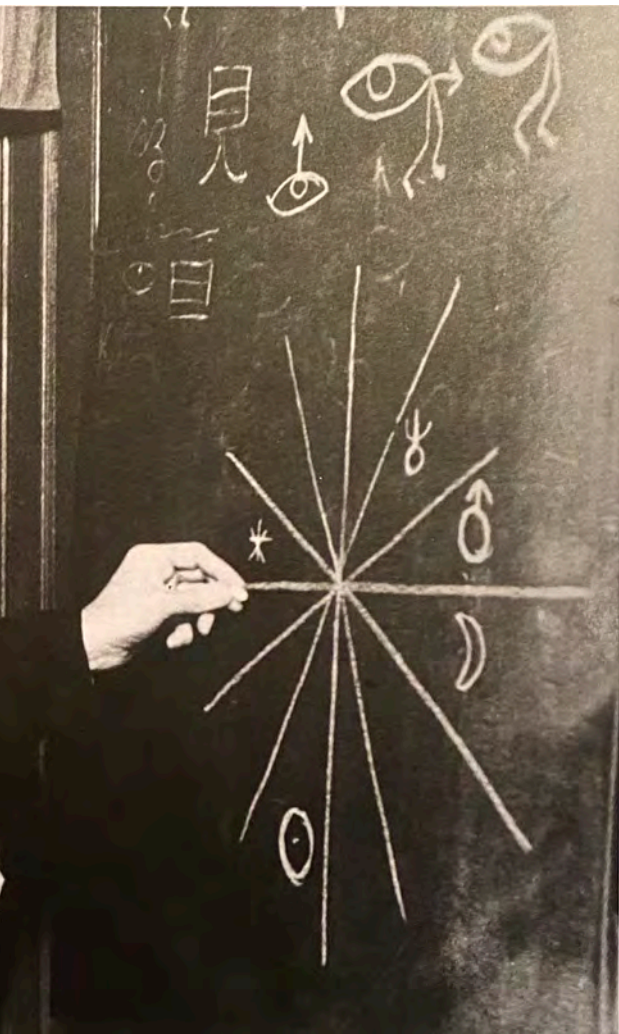
For the 2021 edition of The Art Show, Sicardi | Ayers | Bacino presents a solo exhibition dedicated to the work of the spiritual modernist Xul Solar, curated by the independent curator and writer based in New York, Gabriela Rangel.

Oscar Agustín Alejandro Schultz Solari (San Fernando, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina 1887-Buenos Aires, 1963) lived and traveled in Europe for twelve years. During his European sojourn he adopted the name Xul Solar as a lifetime artistic identity, created from a phonetic condensation of his paternal and maternal names, and a mystical pun (Xul is the word light in Latin reversed). Solar spent intermittent years in Italy where he participated in group shows organized by futurist artists in Milan and Turin, which brought him to the orbit of the influential poet and art critic Margherita Sarfatti. He also visited France and Germany, where he was exposed to Cubism and *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider). During World War I, Solar's European experience confronted him with moral and existential challenges of a new political order in which a lack of collective understanding was an integral part of the future. As a humanist concerned with the transformation of society through art, Xul Solar felt compelled to go back to South America in the search for a utopian world. Before embarking to Argentina, he saw the British magician and scholar Aleister Crowley, who encouraged him to devote his creative efforts to meditation



Xul Solar, *Adoramoste*, 1919. Watercolor on paper, 2 x 8 7/8 in.





Xul Solar teaching astrology, 1940



and the study of the occult. Since his last encounter with Crowley, Solar wrote profuse esoteric diaries in which he transcribed his astral journeys, which he named *San Signos*.

In 1924, Xul Solar arrived in Buenos Aires leaving behind the tragic experience of the old continent shattered by the devastating effects of the war and the Spanish Flu pandemic. His watercolors feature animals, fantastic landscapes, flags, and dreamlike men and women wandering in serpent-dwelling underworlds, with inscribed words (sometimes including Nahuatl) in which he distilled the study of non-Western philosophies and esoteric traditions as well as Pre-Columbian iconographies. Xul Solar also depicted extraordinary architectures, influenced by William Blake and medieval manuscripts that Solar researched at the British Museum.

A self-taught artist with an exceptional gift for languages, mathematics, and philosophy, he was keen to explore new radical directions opened by modern art. Nonetheless, Xul aimed to re-contextualize the European avant-garde aesthetic programs to the linguistic and cultural specificities of the original peoples of America. Notably, Solar invented two artificial languages: the *Neo Criollo*, which blended Iberian, English, German, and Pre-Columbian languages, and the *Pan Lingua*. He delved into the theory-practice of divination systems and astrology, on which he lectured and taught at his studio, assisted by his wife and disciple Micaela. He studied the *I Ching* and translated the book *La Voz del Silencio, fragmentos escogidos del Libro de los Preceptos Aúreos* by H.P Blavatsky.

Xul Solar also reinvented the rules for the chess game, which he renamed *Pan Ajedrez*, and explored alternative sound combinations for piano, which he modified to a twelve-tone system based on the astrological signs.

Settled in Buenos Aires, Argentina where he remained until his death, Xul Solar became an established member of the vibrant literary and artistic circles propelled by the *Martín Fierro* magazine, in which he often gathered with Oliverio Gironde, Leopoldo Marechal, Macedonio Fernández, Norah Lange, and his close friends Emilio Pettoruti and Norah and Jorge Luis Borges until the end of the nineteenth twenties. During this period, he participated in

events organized by the magazine's editor Evar Méndez, such as the conference delivered by futurist poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, and among other artistic and intellectual celebrities who traveled at the time to the austral capital. Solar often illustrated and translated articles from different languages for local magazines and books. Many of these collaborations were commissioned by Borges. His delicate watercolors, always painted in small formats, depicted imaginative cityscapes with connective bridges, stairways, and tunnels to different strata of reality, with flags and fantastic creatures or human beings floating or moving around with masks and words in *Neo Criollo*.

In 1939, Solar founded the *Pan Klub*, a universal club whose mission was to incorporate various metaphysical practices and creative activities that he was developing including the study of Guaraní and other indigenous languages. In the 1950s, he painted a series of *Pan Trees* based on the Kabbalah's Sephiroth or tree of life. Analogous to the Swedish pioneer of abstraction Hilma Af Klint, Xul Solar developed a

distinctive and personal form of spiritual modernism which granted him a unique place in art history. He dedicated his creative energies to producing a body of paintings and sculptures in which he merged a deep knowledge of ancient and modern languages, cosmological beliefs, and esoteric traditions that make visible the invisible underworlds of different mythologies and religions.

His works are represented in important public collections including The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, USA; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, New York, USA; The Museum of Modern Art, New York City, New York, USA; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain; Fundación Telefónica, Madrid, Spain; and Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires (MAMBA), Argentina; Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires (MALBA), Argentina; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, Argentina; and the Colección de Arte Amalia Lacroze de Fortabat, Buenos Aires, Argentina.



Xul Solar, *Untitled, [Catedral (Milán)]*, 1918. Watercolor on paper, 8 1/16 × 9 13/16 in.