

MERCEDES PARDO

[1921 - 2005, Venezuela]

Mercedes Pardo was one of the most important representatives of abstract art in Venezuela. Her work revolved mainly around painting but also extended to stained glass, enamel on metal, and graphics. Likewise, she created pieces involving architectural integration as well as theatrical sets and wardrobe. She taught and founded several creativity workshops. During her childhood, she studied painting with Danish professor Ingeborg Fostberg and, at age thirteen, she began taking courses at the Academy of Fine Arts, which she continued in 1941 and completed in 1944. In 1945, she married Marco Bontá, a stained glass and mural painting professor from Chile, divorcing him shortly thereafter. She traveled to Chile to attend the Escuela de Bellas Artes de Santiago in 1947, where she had her first solo show.

In 1949, she was awarded a fellowship by the Chilean Government (Ministry of Education) and then moved to Paris to enroll at the École du Louvre, where she studied art history under Cohe de la Ferti and Jean Cassou. During this period, she began producing collages and her first abstract works. In 1951, she married Alejandro Otero in London.

In 1952, she returned to Venezuela and participated in the International Exhibition of Abstract Art (Galería Cuatro Muros, Caracas). Abstractionism began to be recognized in Venezuela during the 1950s, and a climate of renewal for both artistic production and education was supported by the Universidad Central de Venezuela (UCV)'s implementation of an artistic integration project and by the return of a generation of artists educated in France. Around 1956, Pardo began producing pieces that could be categorized as pre-informalist given their use of a rich pictorial layer, though her work tended toward a formal exploration of color effects. In 1956, she began doing stage sets with Elizabeth Schön's Interval at the Teatro Nacional in Caracas. In 1960, she moved to Paris, where she painted abstract watercolors characterized by their lyrical brushstrokes, drips, and blotches that created a highly dynamic artistic space.

In 1962, she became a founding member of the San Antonio de Los Altos Cooperative School in the State of Miranda, Venezuela, known today as the Community School, and initiated its craft workshops where she also gave classes. Working in architecture integration, she produced a number of pieces, including a stained-glass window at the La Hoyada station of the Caracas subway (1983), a mosaic mural at the Hospital de Niños J.M. de Los Ríos (Caracas), and the ceiling of La Viña Shopping Center in Valencia (Carabobo State). In 1991, she held her most important anthological exhibition, *Moradas del color*, at the Galería de Arte Nacional (GAN) in Caracas. During her final years, she worked and lived in San Antonio de Los Altos (State of Miranda, Venezuela).

Pardo's works have been shown in many important selected exhibitions, including Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil (1959); *Graphic Work by Mercedes Pardo*, Consulate General

of Venezuela, New York City, New York, USA (1993); *Moradas del color*, Galería de Arte Nacional (GAN), Caracas, Venezuela (1991); *Mercedes Pardo: 1951–2000*, Museo Alejandro Otero (MAO), Caracas, Venezuela (2000); *Creadoras latinoamericanas*, Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas, Venezuela (2018); *Contesting Modernity: Informalism in Venezuela, 1955–1957*, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH), Texas, USA (2018); *Sites of Latin American Abstraction*, Museum of Latin American Art (MoLAA), Long Beach, California, USA (2009); and *Embracing Modernity: Venezuelan Geometric Abstraction*, Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum, Florida International University, Miami, Florida, USA (2010).

Pardo's works are represented in several major collections, including Banco de la República, Bogotá, Colombia; Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros (CPPC), Caracas, Venezuela and New York City, New York, USA; Fundación Banco Mercantil, Caracas, Venezuela; Galería de Arte Nacional (GAN), Caracas, Venezuela; and Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas, Venezuela.