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**Taller Torres-García: a unified aesthetic.
Constructive Universalism with paintings,
sculpture, and drawings**

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Joaquín Torres-García, *Rue n° 2*. Alternate titles: *Paisaje Constructivista*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 28 ¾ x 36 ¼ in

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Sicardi | Ayers | Bacino, in collaboration with Cecilia de Torres Ltd., presents a selection of paintings, drawings, and sculpture by artists of the Taller Torres-García (TTG) that date from the 1920's to the early 1990s.

The TTG is well-represented in the galleries of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston's (MFAH) new Kinder building and is already known to the Houston art community. As exemplified by the superb works in the MFAH collection, the Taller artists designed their own furniture, ceramics, textiles, graphic art, jewelry, and toys. They also experimented with diverse techniques and materials. Many pieces in this exhibition are made of incised or assembled wood, carved gesso, sculpted stone, and chiseled cement mixed with epoxy. Torres-García wrote that the muse of the artist is the medium itself, leading artists to find a harmony between material and form.

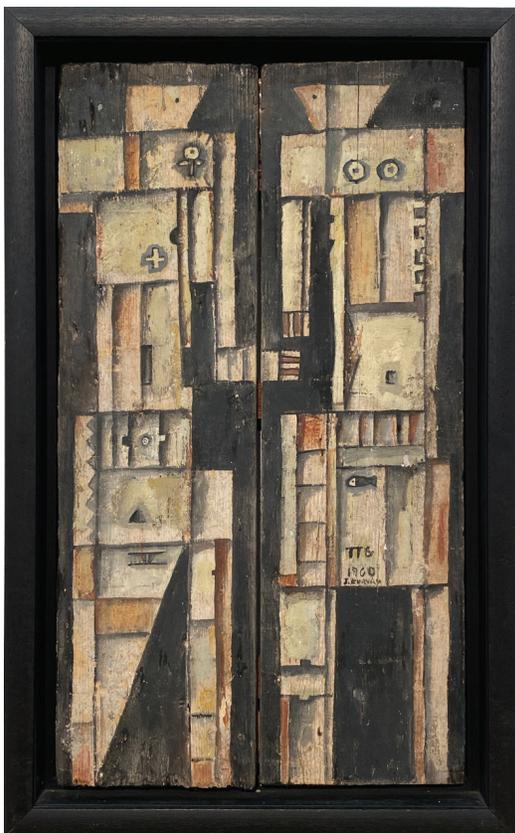
Julio Alpay's (1919-2009) 1960s wood compositions represent, in a new and symbolic manner, themes of nature's vital force, references to the earth

and to the subconscious, the telluric as connected to fertility, and life and death, as in *Creation I* (1964).

Gonzalo Fonseca's (1922-1997) 1974 stone sculpture, *Ventana*, is the culmination of a process that evolved from his carved cement reliefs of the early 1960s. These sculptures evoke ancient world architectures from regions the artist visited: Machu Picchu in 1946, Egypt and the Middle East in the 1950s, and India in 1978.

Born in Lithuania, **José Gurvich's** (1927-1974) family arrived in Uruguay in 1932. The fantastic floating figures and references to his stays at Kibbutz Ramot Menashe reflect the themes of the Jewish tradition in the style of the Northern European masters, Bosch and Breughel. The etching *Javer and Javera* (1974), whose title in Hebrew means man and woman, illustrates the universal theme of opposites, while incorporating images of Kibbutz life.

Francisco Matto (1911-1995) first became fascinated with Amerindian culture on his 1932 trip to the South of Argentina and Chile, where he encountered the Mapuche wood burial markers that inspired his *Totems*. These are three dimensional renderings of the signs he used in his constructive paintings and drawings.



José Gurvich, *Couple*, 1960. Mixed media on wood, 20 1/4 x 11 3/8 in



Lidya Buzio, *XV*, 2007. Painted earthenware, 10 3/4 x 7 in



Augusto Torres, *Still life perspective*, c. 1970. Oil on canvas, 23 ½ x 31 ½ in

Like Gurvich, **Manuel Pailós** (1918-2004) immigrated to Uruguay as a child. Born in Spain, he joined the Taller early on. His playful *Bottle* (1979), a wood assemblage; his 1958 *Untitled* composition which in fact is a deconstructed constructivist locomotive; and *Puerto* of 1954 are all painted in his favorite primary colors. The rustic wood relief, *North/South* (ca. 1960), illustrates a recurring theme in the Taller regarding their placement in the globe in relation to Europe.

Augusto Torres' (1913-1992) *Still Life Perspective* from the 1970s focuses on the objects and their structural relationship to one another. The overall feeling of this painting is of space expanding into the vastness through the open window on the right of the composition.

Lidya Buzio (1948-2014) studied with the Catalan ceramist José Collel, who, in the 1950s, along with fellow Taller artist Gonzalo Fonseca, developed a technique inspired by Nazca Pre-Columbian ceramics. Buzio's pieces are built from earthenware

slabs combining geometric shapes, applying color before firing, and then burnishing the surface.

When fired, the color fuses with the clay. Her bright and joyful colors are the result of intense trial experimentation, for she created her own hues by mixing pigments. The MFAH collection has two works by Buzio which it acquired when the Hispanic Art in the United States exhibition opened there in 1987.

Twenty-two years after the first exhibition of the TTG at the gallery, this unique group is regarded as one of the most advanced artistic movements of the 20th century. Torres-García's conception of the Taller was founded on the principles he expounded in his theoretical writings that came to be known as Constructive Universalism. This was the first systematic and coherent creation of an autonomous artistic tradition and cultural identity for Latin America.

Cecilia de Torres



Gonzalo Fonseca, *Ventana*, 1974. Sandstone, 44 ¹/₁₆ x 19 ¹/₂ x 12 ¹/₂ in