



ORGANIZACION DE LOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS
ORGANIZAÇÃO DOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS
ORGANISATION DES ETATS AMERICAINS
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

AM
PER
01
SLIDE ?
C.01
SLIDE

17th Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20006

AUDIO VISUAL PROGRAM

Set No. 253

PERU: Fernando de Szyszlo

Fernando de Szyszlo was born in Lima, 1925, son of a Polish geographer and a Peruvian mother of Spanish-Indian descent.

Szyszlo belonged to that small group of artists who first did abstract art on the South American continent after World War II, and he was the first abstract painter in Peru at a time when abstract painting was not well regarded. He remembers his art being attacked by the newspapers and magazines, "the more common adjectives applied to my work then, were "decadent", "un-Peruvian", "immoral" and the like".

Szyszlo feels that Peru, with its incredible mountains, deserts, and colors and its fabulously rich cultural heritage, has been a basic stimulus to his painting. Speaking of the pre-Columbian heritage that surrounds him, he says, "I have never thought of taking anything directly out of that art. To be in contact with it is an important artistic experience, but you need to forget it and let it become a part of your blood."

In his absorption with the pre-Columbian, he sometimes visits the reconstructed Inca palace, Puruchuco, near Lima. "The thing I love most there," he says, "is the solid, perennial, earthy quality it has. The adobe has this strange quality. It seems that people, are made of it. It is tender, fragile, and yet time-and death-defeating."

Szyszlo's small, secret studio faces the sky and the sea. He paints undisturbed, to the music of Bach and Vivaldi and of moderns like Mahler, Schoenberg, and Berg. It takes him three weeks to complete a painting because he is working with transparent colors over opaque ones and must wait for the latter to dry. He works on several canvases at the same time.

The well known Peruvian writer, Mario Vargas Llosa, has described Szyszlo's painting as a process of stages. First, he makes an outlined drawing or skeleton of a spectral figure, then fleshing it in with bright colors. At this stage Llosa observes, "the painting constitutes an exhibitionistic display of form and color, ...keeping no secrets from the viewer". The next stage, dissimulation, the painting is covered with additional coats of pigment; covering and at the same time blending with the original colors. The composition acquires an elegance and reserve, dimming the precision and outline. This air of elusiveness, deliberately submerges the surface, producing a gap the viewer can never bridge. Szyszlo then, wipes these last layers until the painting's content is censored, adding the final constant in his art, according to Llosa, the mystery, which arouses our imagination.



Text taken from the Catalogue of the First Retrospective Exhibition in the United States, March 11 - March 29, 1985. Museum of Modern Art of Latin America, Organization of the American States and the government of Peru.

The material quoted from:

A reprint of The Emergent Decade: Latin American Painting in the 1960's. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1965.
Llosa, Mario Vargas, Szyszlo, translation by: Ralph Dimmick.

Photographs by Angel Hurtado.

- 253 A INKARRI 1968
Acrylic on wood
59 x 59
Collection of Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery
University of Texas at Austin
- 253 B EL INNOMBRABLE XLV 1980
That Which Cannot Be Named XLV
Acrylic on canvas
46 x 46
- 253 C EL INNOMBRABLE 1981
That Which Cannot Be Named
Acrylic on canvas
70 x 78
- 253 D VIENTO DE OTOÑO IX 1982
Autumn Wind IX
Acrylic on canvas
71 x 79
Collection of the Banco Nacional S.A. (of Brazil)
Miami, Florida
- 253 E PUNCHAO 1982
Acrylic on canvas
70 x 78
- 253 F ANABASE VIII 1982
(Through the quick-lime door one sees the things of the plains†
living things, oh fine things.....) (Grisaille)
Acrylic on canvas
58 x 58
- 253 G EL CANTO DE LA TIERRA II 1983
The Song of the Earth II
Acrylic on canvas
70 x 78

253 H DETAIL OF 253 G.

253 I ANABASE 1982
 ANABASIS
 (Those that know the sources are with us in this exile)
 Acrylic on canvas
 58 x 58

253 J EL CANTO DE LA NOCHE 1984
 The Song of the Night
 (Tryptic)
 Acrylic on canvas
 74 x 54, 74 x 54, 74 x 54.