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

SET 226  
Puerto Rico

LUIS HERNANDEZ CRUZ

"Exuberant color, reflecting the luminous color of the tropics, and inventive forms are combined in the work of Luis Hernández Cruz to create a symbolic and evocative world that is rich in visual possibilities. The forms are ordered within a cohesive structure, but there is a constant transformation as a result of their arrangement and of the frequently overlapping planes. Hernández Cruz is accomplished as both a painter and printmaker, and the consistently mature quality of his work allows him to be ranked as one of the most outstanding artists Puerto Rico has ever had."

José Gómez Sicre, 1978

Museum of Modern Art of Latin America, O.A.S.

Luis Hernández Cruz was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1936. He graduated from the University of Puerto Rico in 1958, where he studied with Cristóbal Ruiz, Fernández Granel and Damián Bayón who introduced him to abstract art. With a scholarship to continue his graduate studies in the United States, he enrolled in American University in Washington D.C. where he completed his Masters in Art.

Combining a thorough understanding of the New York school of abstract expressionism with his rich Latin American heritage, a unique and individual style emerged. It was characterized by the use of color and structure, ever-changing, flowing in forms of lyrical abstraction. As Hernández Cruz expressed it, "The color adapts itself to the forms which emerge from the painting." Choosing to follow no particular dogma or master, he was however, influenced by other Latin American artists, Tamayo, Obregón, and Szyszlo.

During the 60's an important development took place in his structural paintings; the incorporation of different materials, metal mesh, plastics and bonding compound, all adding texture to the surface of his compositions. In 1966, Hernández Cruz exhibited his first sculptures made from wood and in 1968, he caused a sensation exhibiting works of a new medium, fiber glass.

His abstract paintings and silkscreens capture a universe of color: flaming oranges, reds and vivid blues of the tropics create optical excitement as they are placed against the calm browns and subtle ochres. For the most part the energy of the work is concentrated in the center of the composition. Beginning in the 1980's a figurative image often appeared in the abstraction.

Throughout his artistic career, Hernández Cruz has been a teacher and also an administrator. By 1961, he was teaching humanities at the University of Puerto Rico, where in 1968, he became Associate Director of the Department of Fine Arts,

museum of modern art of latin america



and served as Director of the department from 1975 to 1978. He was also the Assistant Director of the Institute of Culture of Puerto Rico. In 1980, he took a sabbatical to study the techniques of stain glass work in Philadelphia and Milton, West Virginia, where he prepared the materials for the monumental stain glass windows "Forma y Tropico" in the Fine Arts Center in Santurce, Puerto Rico. In 1983, he traveled to New York to the factory of Edward Fields to prepare the tapestry for the Bank of Nova Scotia in Hato Rey. The following year, Hernández Cruz presided over the "First Congress of Abstract Artists of Puerto Rico".

Winning many honors, he has exhibited his works not only in Puerto Rico and the United States but also in Spain, Yugoslavia, Norway, Japan, Mexico, Brazil, England, Switzerland, and Finland.

Sources:

Gómez-Sicre, José. "Luis Hernández Cruz". Museum of Modern Art of Latin America, Organization of American States, Washington D.C. 1978.

Rodríguez, Myrna. "Luis Hernández Cruz". San Juan Star, November 26, 1978.

"Luis Hernández Cruz, Pinturas". Museo de Arte de Ponce, Chase Manhattan Bank Hato Rey, Puerto Rico. 1984 - 1985.

Slide Description:

The slides are taken from the 1984-85 exhibition of the work of Luis Hernández Cruz, presented by the Museum of Ponce and the Chase Manhattan Bank in Hato Rey, Puerto Rico. The works were completed between 1981 and 1984 and demonstrate the incredible stylistic unity and profound individuality of the artist.

- 226 A Sombra arqueológica Núm 7. 1982  
(Archeological Shadow Number 7)  
Acrylic on canvas  
129.5 x 154.5 cm.
- 226 B Paisaje de la costa I. 1983  
(Costal Landscape I)  
Acrylic on canvas  
132 x 202.5 cm.
- 226 C Paisaje Tropical III. 1982-1984  
(Tropical Landscape III)  
Acrylic on canvas  
124 x 164.75 cm.
- 226 D Desde arriba, desde abajo. 1983  
(From up, from down)  
Acrylic on canvas  
128 x 176 cm.
- 226 E Composición en blanco y verde. 1984  
(Composition in White and Green)  
Acrylic on canvas  
127 x 152 cm.

- 226 F Paisaje de la costa II. 1983  
(Costal Landscape II)  
Acrylic on Canvas  
150 x 175.5 cm.
- 226 G Paisaje figura III. 1983  
(Landscape Figure III)  
Acrylic on canvas  
152 x 169 cm.
- 226 H Dunas. 1981  
(Dunes)  
Acrylic on canvas  
129.5 x 157 cm.
- 226 I Paisaje transfigurado. 1982  
(Transfigured Landscape)  
Acrylic on canvas  
157.5 x 140 cm.
- 226 J Maga. 1982  
(Magician)  
Wood relief  
118 x 95 cm.

Text by Nicole Ober

Photographs by Angel Hurtado