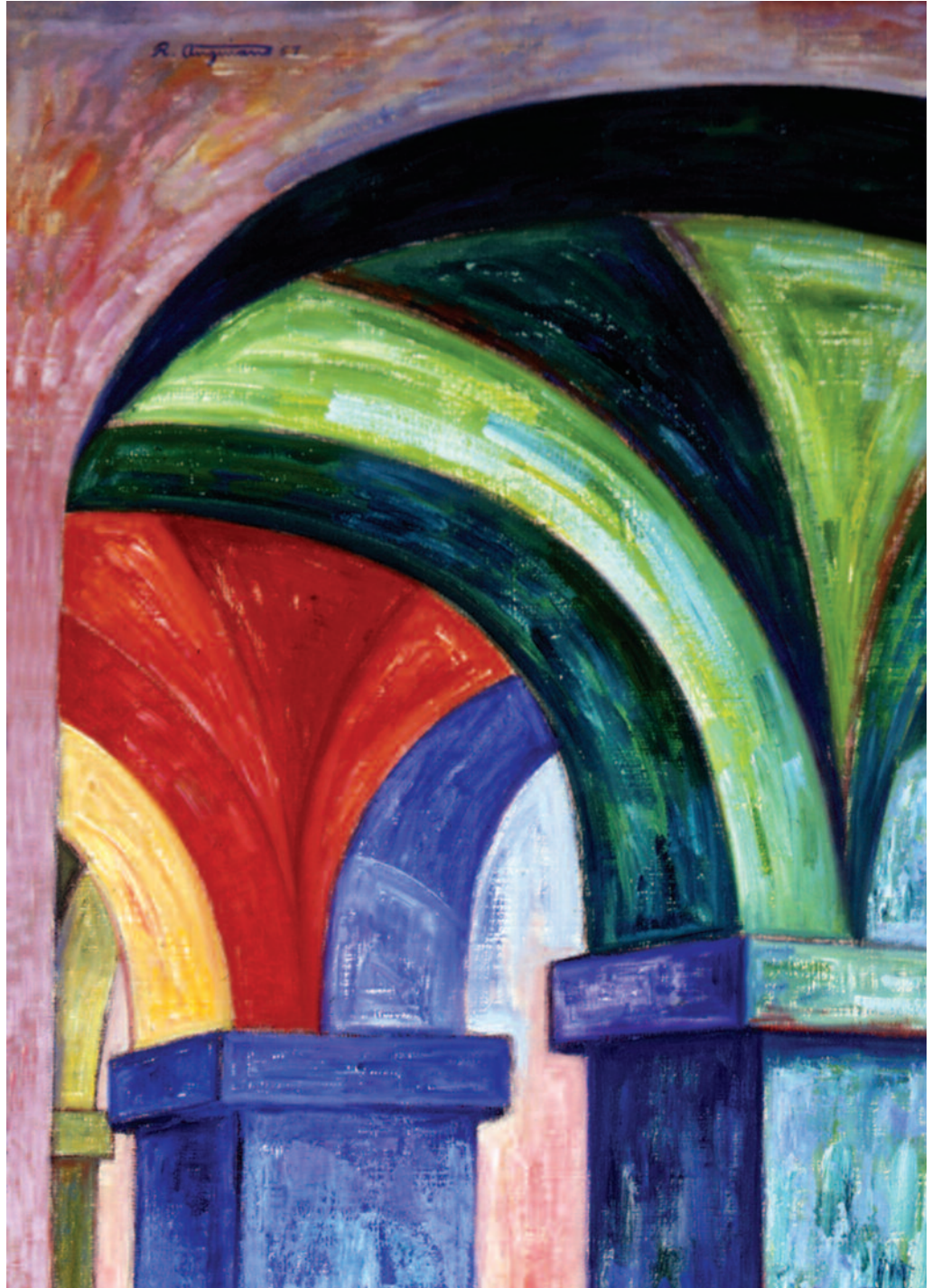


A Tribute to *Raúl Anguiano* (1915-2006)¹



Green Arch, 111 x 80 cm, 1957 (oil on canvas), Brigita Anguiano Collection.

The quality and diversity of Raúl Anguiano's work gives him a privileged place in Mexican art. A member of the so-called "third generation of muralists," his rigorous, disciplined training in the precepts of modern art covered not only painting, but also sketching, murals, ceramics, sculpting and engraving. His creations are identifiably original, merging the Mexican with motifs and influences of universal art. His great contribution to Mexican visual arts, his multifaceted genius and almost 80 years of work are just some of the reasons he has been honored both during his lifetime and after his death. The most recent homage, in Mexico City's Old San Ildefonso College from May to August 2006, dealt with his multifaceted artistic work. With a few brushstrokes, *Voices of Mexico* joins that homage.

CHILDHOOD

Raúl Anguiano was born in Guadalajara, Jalisco in 1915. His first drawings, done in about 1919, show his budding taste for depicting his surroundings. At the age of 12, aware of his interest in sketching, he entered the Free School of Painting and went to his first classes at the Guadalajara Regional Museum. Ixca Farías, a well-known Jalisco artist and researcher, was his first teacher. During this period, he broadened out his knowledge of European painting through art magazines and the cultural pages of different newspapers.

Later, Anguiano took art classes at the local high school under Professor José Vizcarra, with whom he learned to perfect his sketching and to experi-



Mural *The Battle of Mayan Warriors*, 154.5 x 400.6 cm, 1964 (oil on wood), National Council for Culture and the Arts, National Institute of Anthropology and History.



Worker's Head, 33 x 27 cm, 1935 (pencil on paper), Brigita Anguiano Collection.



The Maids, 90 x 70 cm, 1943 (oil on canvas), Brigita Anguiano Collection.

Anguiano made the portrait a classic because of the simplicity of the composition, the firm, pure brushstroke and the wise color application.



Duck Flower, 83 x 61 cm, 1942 (oil on masonite), Brigita Anguiano Collection.



Cain, 66 x 85 cm, 1943 (oil on canvas), Brigita Anguiano Collection.

ment with different techniques. His pieces as a teenager show simple, spontaneous artistic solutions with a feeling for form.

Around 1930, Anguiano joined the “Provinces Banner” association, created by distinguished Jalisco intellectuals, writers and painters, to talk about visual art and literature. Later, the group published a magazine by the same name. Thanks to this experience, Anguiano had greater access to information and opportunities in his field. In this period, from 1930 to 1933, his technique evolved and he did his first nudes and other depictions of the human form. The composition of his portraits is precise and harmonious.

THE TEACHINGS OF THE METROPOLIS

In 1934, he moved to the country’s capital. That year, he painted and studied fresco technique and building and using scaffolding. He was assistant to his muralist friends Jesús Guerrero Galván, Roberto Reyes Pérez, Máximo Pacheco and Juan Manuel Anaya.

A year later, he held his first exhibition together with Máximo Pacheco at the Palace of Fine Arts. His works dealt with the impact of capitalism on the working class: paintings with hieratic outlines that looked as though they were etched in metal, with convulsive lines and colors, and sculptural values. Anguiano would later leave behind these effects of solid figures.

In 1937, he joined the League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists (LEAR), created in 1934 by intellectuals and artists who wanted to oppose war, fascism and the exploitation of the working class through art. He participated with them in painting a mural. When LEAR began to disintegrate at the end of that

year, he joined other painters and engravers in founding the Popular Graphics Workshop, which had the same aim of supporting popular causes. It was in this period, in 1938 and 1939, that he did his humorous caricature lithographs.

Anguiano chronicled the consequences of industrialization on popular culture in Mexico's capital: scenes of daily life in low-class neighborhoods; tent shows as the setting for popular comedy; his series on marijuana smokers and on prostitutes. His palette expanded and his compositions became more luminous and dynamic.

PORTRAITS AS A METAPHOR FOR FORM

Raúl Anguiano is considered one of Mexico's masters of contemporary portrait painting. This genre is one of his best known; he made it a classic, both because of the simplicity of the composition and because of the firm, pure brushstroke and wise color application. Family portraits become a tribute and homage to affection. In the case of portraits of women, his classical refinement and the individualized character of the figures are the basis for his success. His female nudes are strong, independent, sensual figures.

His creations are identifiably original, merging the Mexican with motifs and influences of universal art.



Don't wrinkle up your old body. I want to use you to make a drum, 32 x 42 cm, 1939 (lithograph), Academy of the Arts Collection.



Don't break... it's the last tug! 44 x 31 cm, 1939 (lithograph), Academy of the Arts Collection.



Nude in a Fountain, 101 x 70 cm, 1933 (oil on canvas), Brigita Anguiano Collection.



The Call of Instinct, 70 x 90 cm, 1942 (oil on canvas), Brigita Anguiano Collection.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE AVANT-GARDE

Thanks to publications like *Los contemporáneos* (The Contemporaries) (1928-1931), Mexico would be kept abreast of the artistic avant-gardes appearing on the European scene in the twentieth century. Anguiano created several works linked to surrealism and other contemporary currents, characterized by expressing strongly rooted feelings like fear, terror and anxiety, manifested in cold colors and shades of blue. This period is considered a watershed in his work.

AN OUTSTANDING PLACE AS A MURALIST

Anguiano was part of the so-called “third generation” of muralists, that he himself defined as “unorthodox members of the Mexican School of Painting,” since they did not faithfully maintain continuity with it as an artistic movement either ideologically or aesthetically. This generation also included Jesús Guerrero Galván, Jorge González Camarena and Jesús Chávez Morado, and enriched painting with a style of its own. Anguiano’s visual art spirit, impregnated with revolutionary convictions and support for the working class since his arrival to Mexico City, is faithfully reflected in his murals.

He painted murals throughout his artistic career, not only in Mexico, but in other countries, notably the United States. The last mural he worked on, at the National Polytechnic Institute, was never finished.



Lacandons Roasting Sarahuato Monkeys, 75 x 108 cm, 1950 (oil on canvas),
Brigita Anguiano Collection.



Matapalo Tree, 160 x 121 cm, 1951 (oil on canvas),
Bank of Mexico Collection.

AN INTEREST IN THE LACANDON PEOPLE

After the Mayan city of Bonampak was found in the Lacandon Jungle in 1946, Anguiano did more than 60 drawings of the area and its inhabitants. He traveled there in 1949 as part of an expedition to document the area and its surroundings. He was very impressed with the physiognomy of the inhabitants and the colors of the area, which is reflected in his sketches, done *in situ* and transferred to canvas on his return to Mexico City. With great mastery of technique and colors, the painter captured the reality of daily life, the scenery and the ruins.

A LIFE STEEPED IN ART

Raúl Anguiano dedicated his long life to art. He died shortly before he turned 91. On the occasion of his ninetieth birthday, he was honored with exhibitions in several states throughout the country. When he died, he was preparing a huge retrospective in his honor at the Old San Ildefonso College. His art was deservedly renowned abroad. Throughout his life, he mounted many exhibitions in different countries of the Americas and Europe, and received prizes and honors both at home and abroad. His legacy is enormous. We present here a small sample of it in tribute to his dedication and commitment to art. **MM**

NOTES

¹ This article is an abridged version of the pamphlet *Anguiano 1915-2006* (Mexico City: Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, 2006), prepared for the exhibition dedicated to the artist at the Old San Ildefonso College between May and August 2006.

Photos courtesy of the Old San Ildefonso College.