CASTING NETS, CONSTRUCTING NETWORKS:

LEO MATIZ AND LATIN AMERICAN ARTISTIC EXCHANGE

1940-1960

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Table of Contents

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List of Figures

18. Matiz, Leo. *Centro Simón Bolívar*. Caracas, 1955. Colección Fundación para la Cultura Urbana.
19. Before and after: *barrios ranchos* (left) prior to the construction of the 23 de Enero *superbloques* (right) in 1956.
20. Avenida Bolívar, 1950s. Archivo de la Memoria Urbana, Caracas, Venezuela.
21. Matiz, Leo. Cover of *Lámpara*, No. 1, Vol. 1., 1952.
22. *Revista Shell* 5, no. 19, June 1956. Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango.
23. *Revista Shell* 5, no. 19, June 1956, pages 10-11. Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango.
24. Matiz, Leo. *Estructuras*, Venezuela, 1960. Colección Banco de la República.

Introduction

In Leo Matiz's 1939 black-and-white photograph, *La red, pavo real del mar,* a silhouetted arm gives way to an expansive net that ripples and shimmers against the bright sky of the Caribbean coast of Colombia (Figure 1). The standing figure has just thrown a large net into the sky, and the camera has captured the net fully unfurled in the air, about to fall into the water. The fisherman is not in the process of throwing the net into the air, as it may first seem, but has already performed the throw, standing still in that single moment. All of the motion from his body has been channeled into the net as spiraling ripples radiate out from its center. The central figure knows he is being watched by both his companion and the photographer, and most likely threw the net several times before and after this attempt. The fisherman's performance is not just one of beauty, but skill and agency.

I refer to this image in order to situate myself among the authors who have also written on Matiz. Where many have started and stopped with *La red*, I use the image to introduce the robust body of work that Matiz completed over twenty years. The 1939 photograph is the work most often associated with Matiz, and is one of the few of his works analyzed with any detail across most publications. Over eighty-four years of discourse, the net has frequently been compared to the magical realism of Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*, and deemed the first record of the "real Macondo" – the fictitious town in Márquez's novel.[1] Today, the photograph is an emblem of Colombian art and an iconic national image. Each narrative of *La red* generally follows the same schema: the net is first related to some mysterious, magical, haunting, or hypnotic symbol, and then drawn into a broader discussion of the Colombian coast as the birthplace of the most famous Latin American literary movement that Colombia has

[1] Álvaro Medina, *Poéticas Visuales Del Caribe Colombiano Al Promediar El Siglo XX: Leo Matiz, Enrique Grau, Alejandro Obregón, Cecilia Porras, Nereo, Orlando "Figurita" Rivera, Noé León,* 1. ed. (Bogotá: Publicaciones MV, Molinos Velásquez Editores, 2008), 20.

proudly contributed to the canon. Writings on *La red* occasionally mention Matiz's stroke of luck in perfectly capturing the moment in a single frame or the contrast between the sharp lines of the horizon and the swell of the net.[2]

In this paper I examine Matiz's photography from three different cities over the course of twenty years: Mexico City (1941 to 1947), Bogotá (1947 to 1952), and Caracas (1953 to 1960). Matiz's photographs frame the visual experimentation, cultural exchanges, and artistic debates that he encountered in each city, acting as markers of their historical moments and geographic specificity. Ultimately, I argue that Matiz contributed to a Latin American artistic network and that each photograph represents a site of exchange within this network. Because many of these photographs were published, I also trace the print contexts of the images I have selected as they circulated through Latin America. In addition to thinking about the aesthetic contribution to these networks, I also reveal the often unseen social and professional labor of Matiz, especially in entering new cultural circles. At the same time that artists in Bogotá were actively engaged in constant conversations about their national aesthetic in order to consolidate a distinctly Colombian modernism, the major artists of Mexican Muralism were launching their own campaigns in the press in order to redirect and divert the movement they helped create. In Caracas, Venezuelan artists grappled with the political consequences of integrating art and architecture under an authoritarian regime that imposed such an aesthetic as a shimmering illusion of utopic modernity. These art scenes were in states of constant formation and redirection, as groups of artists pulled away, ripped apart, and collided with one another.

I also begin with Matiz's *La red, pavo real del mar* to establish the central themes of Matiz's photography and of this paper. Geography is woven into the image both through its title

[2] Álvaro Medina, "On the Founders of Art in the Caribbean" in *Caribbean: Art At the Crossroads of the World*, (New York: Museo del Barrio, 2012), 156.

and its symbolic meaning. Taken in Santa Marta, less than a hundred miles from where the photographer was born, the photograph features la Ciénaga Grande de Santa Marta which is almost always included in the caption or title of the work. The Ciénaga Grande de Santa Marta is where the Magdalena River meets the Caribbean sea, a poetic merging of the two bodies of water, two salinities, two sediments, and two currents.[3] This space is not fixed, but constantly mixing and moving. Following this geographic reading, the net that is thrown into the air might be seen as a map: its outline indicating peninsulas and inlets. In its surface area, a topographic map can be read in the ridges and valleys as the net ripples in the air. Similarly, my thesis constructs a geography organized by Matiz's travels between 1940 and 1960, from Mexico City to Bogotá to Caracas.

Integral to any discussion of Matiz's work are his professional roles, which ranged from photojournalist to cinematographer to gallerist and campaign photographer, each role overlapping and ceasing from 1940 to 1960. Matiz's *La red, pavo real del mar* was taken on assignment for the Colombian magazine *La Estampa* to showcase the local fishing industry.[4] Stylistically, it is an early example of Matiz's frequent use of two formal elements: the use of *ángulos contrapicados* (angles from below) and *claroscuro* (the contrast between light and dark). I argue that Matiz's use of these formal techniques are maintained over the course of twenty years, but change in content and meaning as he joins different cultural circles and as his photographs become folded into the artistic output of those particular scenes. In addition to these formal attributes, Matiz also demonstrates a recurring interest in featuring figures in a field of abstraction (here, the intersecting lines of the net), which embeds the figure in their field of labor without abstracting that figure. Which is to say, the abstract fields featured in Matiz's

[3] Samuel E. Padilla-Llano, et. al., "Barrio El Prado: Un Museo Vivo Para La Ciudad de Barranquilla," *On The W@Terfront* 62, no 3: 7.
[4] Álvaro Medina, *Poéticas Visuales Del Caribe Colombiano Al Promediar El Siglo XX,* 19.

photographs reveal the social reality of those subjects instead of integrating them completely into a geometry.

La red fits neatly into the chronology and visual language of Colombian art. Matiz was born ten years before Gabriel García Marquez and in the same town. It is likely that the two men both grew up around the colonial architecture of coastal cities, the banana plantations further inland, looking out into the Caribbean sea on one side, and at the Pico Cristobal Colon on the other. This connection would manifest later in life for both men. In the 1960s, Matiz and García Márquez worked together as journalists in Caracas, Venezuela. Later, Matiz returned to Colombia to complete a series of photographs that sought to capture the "real Macondo" of *Cien años de soledad*, befitting a magical realist lens (Figure 2). However, accounts of Matiz's photographs that are confined to this understanding ignore the threads of connection between Matiz and earlier figures of the thirties and forties, especially within Colombian art history.

I situate Matiz's photographs taken between 1940 and 1960 in relation to an earlier generation of Colombian thinkers, rather than Gárcia Márquez, who were immersed in the key debates around to what extent a national aesthetic should reflect a social commitment. A reading that fuses abstraction and figuration challenges literature that pits these two tendencies against each other. This understanding allows for a more open approach to the debates and narratives in which the art of Mexico, Colombia, and Venezuela participated. My approach to Matiz's photography incorporates his formal tendencies, his rapt attention to the art being produced in each city in real time, and the social and political currents that Matiz joined as he entered different social spaces. Colombian intellectual Jorge Zalamea's theory of *arte testimonio* (testimonial art) as a third alternative to, and integration of, the imposed opposition between *arte comprometido* (committed art) and *arte puro* (pure art).

Zalamea (Bogotá, 1905-1969), a prominent Colombian public intellectual, was at various points the Minister of Education, an art critic, a journalist, and a translator of poetry. In his 1965 article in *Revista Eco*, Zalamea argues that all art is "arte testimonio" and that the *arte comprometido* and *arte puro* binary is insufficient for understanding what exactly art is and that it is created. By folding Zalamea's theory into Matiz's photographs, I align Matiz's narrative with a Colombian thinker who was active in his social and artistic circles and contemporary to his period. This allows for a higher level of precision for contextualizing Matiz's work. On the other hand, I also use Zalamea's explanation of *arte testimonio* to amplify Matiz's participation into a larger Latin American network. This better encompasses the political entanglements or disentanglements that enabled Matiz to conveniently move between nations and between personal friendships with other artists. Through *arte testimonio,* my readings affirm Matiz's photography as a witnessing of the artistic scenes that flourished in postwar Mexico, Colombia, and Venezuela. It is through *arte testimonio* that we can understand not only Matiz's photography, but also the art he was immersed in, without placing his work into oppositional camps that simplify the complex debates that were occurring in these cities.

The available sources on Matiz range widely in subject matter and quality.[5] However, recent texts, published in the last two years, show an uptick in interest in Matiz and in quality of scholarship.[6] For the purpose of showing how Matiz constructed his network across three cities, I have moved beyond these focused studies, relying on sources that do not even mention Matiz, in

[5] Miguel Ángel Góngora, curator, art historian, and Matiz's biographer, has contributed to the literature on Matiz through his various writings for exhibition catalogs and a useful interview with Matiz in the monograph *El tercer ojo* (1994) conducted a few years before the artist's death. Other monographs on Matiz include just a short biography with large reproductions of his photographs, many of which are not digitized yet.

[6] The exhibition catalog *Leo Matiz: Imaginario Colombiano* (2023), printed for an exhibition on Matiz's late 1960s and 70s photographs of the real "Macondo," offers a well developed overview of his career, integrating biographical events with discussions of his artistic production. Of my most valuable sources was the exhibition catalog *Leo Matiz: el reportazgo de la posrevolución* (2019), which folds Matiz into the contemporary context and longer histories of photojournalism in Mexico City.

some cases even when he was directly involved in the topic.[7] The literature on Matiz is also almost entirely in Spanish. I conducted most of my reading and interviews in Spanish for the writing of this paper, and all translations of quotes from my sources are my own. Together with my argument for Matiz's construction of a network, I write about Matiz's connection to these three cities in order to contribute to the availability of English language sources on the great breadth of Matiz's photography. Within the fields of Latin American studies, modernist studies, and Latin American art, my attention to these networks displaces the perception of Latin American art solely as a product of a two-way transatlantic or north-south exchange on the periphery, and challenges the idea of Latin American artists as arriving "late to modernism" or being fixed in a camp of either abstraction or figuration. Key works in the field focus on the movement and exchange of ideas between Mexico City and Paris or Caracas and Paris, but are oriented towards the social spaces of Paris and rely on the impacts of "contact" between Latin American and European thinkers, ultimately referring to these encounters as impetus for the success of movements like Surrealism.[8] While these connections across the Atlantic were dialogues that create transnational connections in Latin American art, centering the urban landscapes and social structures of Latin American cities, as opposed to European cities, in relation to one another, maps these conversations in multivalent terms. Texts that do this successfully have done the work of addressing modernist Latin American art within its own political and social context. For example, works like *Alfredo Boulton and His Contemporaries: Critical Dialogues In Venezuelan Art, 1912-1974*, edited by Ariel Jimenez, successfully incorporate studies of the integration of art and architecture in Caracas while identifying the

[7] For example, an excellent article by Chris Fulton on Siqueiros' mural *Cuauhtémoc Against the Myth* (1945), of which Matiz photographed both the models and the process of painting the work for Siqueiros, does not refer to the photographs that Siqueiros modeled his work on nor the process photographs that were published in the magazine *Hoy*.

[8] Michelle Greet, *Transatlantic Encounters: Latin American Artists In Paris Between the Wars,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

artists who worked against officially endorsed modes of modernism. My study continues this work by focusing on international networks within Latin America.

The structure of this thesis follows Matiz chronologically from city to city. Chapter One discusses Matiz's time in Mexico City, a period of intense activity as a photojournalist. His success in popular periodicals brought him in direct contact with the muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros, which launched a short but significant collaboration over three years. I argue that Matiz utilized photojournalism to access both the international circulation of a Socialist Realist style and Siqueiros' goals of redirecting Muralism locally through collectivity and photographic technology. In Chapter Two, I argue that Matiz's gaze upon his country and fellow artists in Bogotá from 1948 to 1953 is itself political, even if his subjects are not explicitly carrying a political message. As writers Susan Sontag and John Berger have argued, photography is an inherently social artistic practice, a "social rite" that bears witness to the deliberate choice to photograph and the conscious choice "that seeing this is worth recording."[9] The two photographs focused on in this chapter are markedly different, but both show the fleeting remains of political and artistic events in the historical fabric of Bogotá: first, riots that erupted in the city in 1948, and second, the part played by Galería Leo Matiz in the art scene of the city. Finally, Chapter Three follows Matiz's complicated years in Caracas, Venezuela from 1953 to 1960. I argue that Matiz darts between political ambivalence through abstraction and an emphasis on social reality throughout the shifting state of Venezuelan democracy over the course of the decade. I tie Matiz's photographs of the built environment into a discussion of the Nuevo Ideal Nacional, a drastic project of urban planning in Caracas. Throughout these chapters, each of which locate

[9] Here I refer to both Susan Sontag's *On Photography* (1977) and John Berger's *Understanding a Photograph* (1968).

Matiz in a their own distinct historical moment tied to a specific urban space, I weave Matiz's means of access into each artistic scene, and open each photograph up as a site of exchange.

Chapter I:
Mexico City, Mexico, 1941-1947

Leo Matiz's arrival in Mexico City was not serendipitous.[10] By the early forties, Mexico City was an established cultural center for artists across the world and a safe haven for political exiles. For a young artist experimenting with painting, photography, illustration, and film, the city promised mentorship, professional opportunities, and social connections. Simply *being* in Mexico was enough to tie himself into a dense network of artists and celebrities (and celebrity-artists) of Mexico City. Having been rejected from the Escuela de Bellas Artes several years before, Matiz made a living off of drawing caricatures for Colombian newspapers throughout his early twenties.[11] He arrived in Mexico with the intention of continuing his caricature work, but ended up becoming more and more attached to his camera. His transition to photography, he recollected in later interviews, was a purely economic decision, and he did not consider himself a photographer at this early point in his career.[12] Matiz's decision to pursue photography began in Mexico City, where it afforded him a wider range of opportunities than it had in Bogotá, from photojournalism to film stills to collaborations with major figures in twentieth century art.

Journalism had more responsibility than ever to witness and document reality. The United States and Mexico were in their final months of neutrality before entering the war, and as citizens

[10] Lily Kassner, "Leo Matiz." ArtNexus (Bogotá, Colombia), no. 107 (June- August 2006): 72-75.
[11] Miguel Ángel Florez Góngora, "Photography and caricature, the turning door" in *Leo Matiz: el reportazgo en la posrevolución.* Mexico City: Ediciones de lirio (2019), 64.
[12] Leo Matiz and Miguel Ángel Flórez Góngora, *Leo Matiz: La metáfora del ojo*. Santafé de Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura, 1998: 12.

called for either intervention or isolation, photojournalists were tasked with taking in a position of objectivity. The May 27, 1944 issue of the illustrated weekly *Nosotros* combines avantgarde practices specific to Mexico City with an international Socialist Realist style borrowed from print media (Figure 3). Matiz sought to legitimize his lens for international audiences in publications, and also appealed to a local avant-garde community through experimentation with photojournalism and documentary photography's perceived objectivity and transparency. Both of these strategies enabled him to successfully enter into social and professional networks in Mexico City.

Illustrated magazines tended to place the photograph in a dominant position over the written word; these publications utilized legible photographic styles to ensure the rapid dissemination of information for broader audiences. Matiz was eager to gain access to artistic circles that included painters Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Frida Kahlo, and Jose Clemente Orozco, and photographers Tina Modotti, Manuel Alvarez Bravo, and Hector García Cobo. He was determined to be seen as a part of the Mexico City set — a group that, some considered, had already peaked in recognition internationally and was fractured by broken marriages, deaths, and political division. However, he also arrived at a time when some of these artists were engaged in fiery debates over the relationship between art and politics, embarking on projects to align Mexican art with collective activity, communist ideology, and group cohesion.[13]

From 1943 to 1945 Matiz worked for the Unión Cinematografía de Mexico as a stills photographer and a publicity photographer for Mexican film stars of the day. Although Matiz did not find great professional success working in the film industry, it did connect him with the Mexican cinematographer Gabriel Figueroa (1907-1997), whom he worked for alongside

[13] Jennifer Jolly, "Aesthetics of Conflict: Perspective and Anamorphosis in Siqueiros's Art of the 1930s," *The Art Bulletin* 103, no. 1 (2021): 133.

Mexican photographer Manuel Alvarez Bravo (1902-2002), at a time when the Mexican cinema was a booming industry at the height of its Golden Age.[14] From 1945 to 1947, Matiz embarked on a collaborative project with David Alfaro Siqueiros, photographing the models and scenes for Siqueiros' mural *Cuauhtémoc Against the Myth*.[15] Matiz solidified his signature style in Mexico City, consistently utilizing low angles (*contrapicados*) and high contrasts between light and dark (*claroscuro*). Matiz began his career as a photographer at the intersection of photojournalism and cinematography, heavily influenced by the political and artistic debates of artists in Mexico City.

Following the exhibition of *Nuestra Imagen Actual* at the Palacio de Bellas Artes in 1947, *Revista de America* published an article with the fiery headline "Matiz acusa a Siqueiros" ("Matiz Accuses Siqueiros") (Figure 4).[16] In the article, written by Díaz Ruanova, Matiz claims that his collaboration with Siqueiros on the series for *Nuestra Imagen Actual* (the article specifically notes that Matiz was not accusing Siqueiros for the *Cuauhtémoc* mural) went uncredited and unpaid. The author of the article also notes that the magazine, "believe[s] that enclosed in the friendship for their Colombian photographer and their admiration for the Mexican painter is an interesting problem of aesthetic, technique, and morality."[17] In the same magazine, almost exactly a month later, Siqueiros shot back with his defense under the statement "Es absurda la acusación de Matiz" ("Matiz's Accusation is Absurd").[18] In it, he claims that there was no collaboration at all between himself and Matiz, who had "no other merit…than the relative and mechanical one of having pressed the button on his camera." Siqueiros maintains

[14] Myriam Acevedo, "Un perseguidor de la belleza" in *Leo Matiz / Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá.* Bogotá: Unión Gráfica (1988), 4.
[15] Rebeca Monroy Nasr, "La búsqueda visual de Leo Matiz," in *Leo Matiz: el reportazgo en la posrevolución.* Mexico City: Ediciones de lirio, 187-188.
[16] Díaz Ruanova "Leo Matiz acusa a Siqueiros" en *Revista de América*, núm. 101, México, 29 de noviembre de 1947, p. 14-17.
[17] Ruanova, "Leo Matiz acusa a Siqueiros," 14.
[18] David Alfaro Siqueiros, "Es absurda la acusación de Matiz" in Revista de América, no. 102, México, 6 December 1947, p. 14.

that he "looked for the composition…indicated the model's posture and gesture…indicated the distance and angle…ordered the light and directed everything in its smallest details."[19] Matiz worked on two projects with Siqueiros; the first, in 1944, was the documentation of his process and the subsequent publication of an article on the mural *Cuauhtémoc Against the Myth*.

The second project was in preparation for Siqueiros' painting *Nuestra Imagen Actual* (*Our Present Image*). Matiz produced a large volume of photographs of Siqueiros' model, Víctor Arrevillaga, both in the studio and in an expansive field (Figure 5). Matiz, Arrevillaga, and Siqueiros took trips out of the city, sometimes with Matiz's fellow Colombian painter Ignacio Gómez Jaramillo, to test compositions. The large cachet of photographs is composed mostly of photographs of Arrevillaga in a variety of poses – draped against a dead tree, standing with his legs and arms outstretched, or lying face down in a brightly lit studio. I include this result of Siqueiros and Matiz's second collaboration not to make a claim as to who was in the right, nor to compare Matiz's photograph with Siqueiros' paintings. Earlier authors have used this case as an added curious fact about Matiz's time in Mexico, to attach Matiz's name to one of the most famous Mexican artists of the twentieth century in a concrete way. I agree with Rebeca Monroy Nasr in that "both were right, both were authors, both created the photographic image, and both were coauthors of this artistic role."[20] Yet, this collaboration is relevant for more than an equalizing collaboration. I use their feud to illustrate the importance of the popular press in not only Siqueiros' own art and Matiz's photographs, but also the larger art scene in Mexico City.

Beginning in the late 1930s, Siqueiros wanted to redirect and reassert unity within the muralist movement. The artist perceived a large amount of disorganization and lack of direction that needed to be reestablished following what he viewed as years of compromise with the

[19] Siqueiros, "Es absurda la acusación de Matiz," 14.
[20] Nasr, "La búsqueda visual de Leo Matiz," 187-188.

bourgeois patrons of the art world.[21] Throughout these years, his writings and lectures displayed a concern and confrontation with foreign influence on Mexican art, the rise of abstraction, and the importance given to European critical voices in Mexico.[22] Two currents of artistic practice run through both Siqueiros' ideas about art during this period and his artistic production: collectivity and technology. By opening art up to a public beyond an exclusive sector of society and by engaging leftist politics, Siqueiros sought to create a "total art" that would be rooted in its time and actively contribute to a struggle that would change all of society.[23] Siqueiros believed that art's attachment to its present moment would occur in practice through the use of modern technology and the application of theories related to film and photography.

In order to underscore the importance of collectivity and technology in Siqueiros' interpretation of muralism, and Matiz's roles in both of these, it is essential to discuss *Portrait of the Bourgeoisie* (1939) at the Mexican Electricians' Syndicate (Figure 6). Siqueiros assembled a team of Spanish and Mexican artists for the creation of the mural, in order to establish his process under communist ideology. The following year, Siqueiros was exiled from Mexico after his assassination attempt on Leon Trotsky, and Spanish painter Josep Renau took over leadership of the project.[24] A detailed analysis of the mural and its many connections to the political context of Mexico City goes beyond the scope of this paper, but the connection of the mural specifically to photography and the press is imperative to understanding the presence of Matiz, a

[21] Christopher Fulton,"Siqueiros Against the Myth: Paeans to Cuauhtemoc, Last of the Aztec Emperors." *Oxford Art Journal* 32, no. 1 (2009): 81.
[22] Jolly, "Aesthetics of Conflict: Perspective and Anamorphosis in Siqueiros's Art of the 1930s," 131.
[23] This was certainly not a new idea. Writers associated with the *Estridentismo* movement, namely the Guatemalan-Mexican writer Arqueles Vela, held in disdain artists who rejected their contemporary realities and alienated themselves from their own histories. Vela and his contemporaries believed that all art is derived from social collectivity. Jolly, "Aesthetics of Conflict: Perspective and Anamorphosis in Siqueiros's Art of the 1930s," 111-115.
[24] An in depth discussion of the mural can be found in Jennifer Jolly, "Art of the Collective: David Alfaro Siqueiros, Josep Renau and Their Collaboration at the Mexican Electricians' Syndicate." *Oxford Art Journal* 31, no. 1 (2007): 131-132.

photojournalist, in the painting of *Cuauhtemoc Against the Myth.* The importance of photojournalism to Siqueiros' mural for the Mexican Electrician's Syndicate is summed up in Mari Carmen Ramírez's statement that the work is a "matrix" or archive of the popular press because it assembles images (such as protests, tanks, and gas masks) circulated by magazines throughout the 1930s.[25]

After the Soviet Union made Socialist Realism an official style, communist artists working abroad had to evolve under this doctrine. Many artists maintained their use of agitprop techniques (montage and graphic design), especially those against fascism, including Siqueiros.[26] Social realism then became the preferred mode for artists who were committed to folding their artworks into the social reality. This embrace of realism for political reasons did not necessarily mean that art grounded in Social Realism could not display abstract tendencies. Jolly highlights the complexities of stylistic participation after 1934 in her article "Aesthetics of Conflict: Perspective and Anamorphosis in Siqueiros's Art of the 1930s:"[27]

> Surrealists, despite their overwhelming alignment with antifascism (with the infamous exception of Salvador Dalí), were a favorite target of critique and became increasingly marginalized within Popular Front circles. Operating within this context, Siqueiros's dialectical approach to producing realist art from abstract planned accidents represented a commitment both to history and to engaging the aesthetic debates at the center of Popular Front artistic culture.

Because of his ultimate goal of providing a solution to the Popular Front's desire to find a third way between abstraction and realism, Siqueiros approached *Portrait of the Bourgeoisie* through strategies of collectivity and the latest technology. He believed that collectivity would give the muralist movement the unity it needed to overcome the separation that he saw as its demise, and

[25] Jennifer Jolly, "Animating Internationalism: David Alfaro Siqueiros and Antifascist Art in the 1930s." *Art History* 45, no. 4 (2022): 799.
[26] Jolly, "Aesthetics of Conflict: Perspective and Anamorphosis in Siqueiros's Art of the 1930s," 112.
[27] Jolly, "Aesthetics of Conflict: Perspective and Anamorphosis in Siqueiros's Art of the 1930s," 127.

the use of technology (specifically photography) could extend the mural's reach to the working class and its participation in the "global consciousness."[28] In Siqueiros' work, the montage, an aesthetic taken from the printed context, takes on a reciprocal role. His aesthetic understanding of montage, which arose from the filmic montage of Sergei Eisenstein, is also derived from the technique's uses in publications and journals. On the other hand, the publications that the murals were published in, such as Matiz's photograph that appears in *Hoy* magazine, in and of its own becomes part of a montage of news clippings and circulation that ultimately could have a greater reach and social impact.

Opposite a full page of text under the blazing headline of *Hoy* "Cuauhtémoc contra el mito" ("Cuauhtémoc Against the Myth"), Matiz's photograph of Siqueiros' mural extends beyond the edges of the magazine's page (Figure 7). In a single photograph, Matiz shows the three aspects outlined in the text of the article: painting's integration into architecture, the use of new technology and artistic practices in the painting process, and Siqueiros' argument that all art should be representative of the social preoccupations of an era.[29] Matiz's documentation of the mural is representative of the archive of photographs and press clippings that compose Matiz's three year long collaboration with Siqueiros. This collaboration, viewed through Matiz's camera lens, is evidence of his participation in Siqueiros' calls for collectivity and technological experimentation within the Muralist movement. Ultimately, through exchanges in the press and behind the camera, Matiz was a part of the divisive discourse surrounding the relationship between art and political action.

The black and white photograph effectively captures the disorientating experience of looking up at the mural. Siqueiros' flowing streams and spirals in the sky are echoed by the

[28] Jolly, "Animating Internationalism: David Alfaro Siqueiros and Antifascist Art in the 1930s," 799.
[29] Horacio Quiñones, "Cuauhtémoc contra el Mito," in *Hoy*, México, núm. 383, 24 June 1944, 60-61.

rippling muscles of a horse's legs and chest. Two figures with arms raised stand on a geometric ledge, and their square jaws evoke the three dimensional sculptures where the wall meets the floor: one of a disembodied human head and the other of the feathered Aztec serpent god Quetzalcóatl.[30] The modularity of these sculptures is hard to see, which is perhaps why the anterior page includes a small photograph depicting sculptor Luis Arenal as he inspects the mural. A closer look at the image, however, reveals a thin metal banister parallel to a large painted wave that follows the tilted directions of a staircase, integrated into the composition of the mural. The mural depicts a dramatic scene of resistance against the Spanish siege of Tenochtitlan. On the left, the dominant figure that is part horse, part human, represents the Spanish conquistadors on horseback. On the right, Siqueiros has portrayed two Aztec emperors, Moctezuma II and Cuauhtémoc, with stark contrast.

One of Matiz's contributions to the process of *Cuauhtemoc Against the Myth* was documentation. Out of the twenty photographs of the mural's process, most show Siqueiros using an airbrush to paint the polychrome sculpture of Quetzalcoatl.[31] Arenal's sculptures sit on the floor in front of the mural, entering into our space and expanding the dramatic use of perspective in the work. In the photograph, Siqueiros uses industrial pyroxylin, a quick drying and durable paint used for automobiles (Figure 8).[32] In addition to using industrial tools in his process, Siqueiros frequently relied on photographs and slide projectors to guide the painting of his murals. For the artist, that the photographed model could "signal both oppression and reality mattered more than its actual historical referent," meaning that he believed that what is found in the photograph could be used in a variety of political contexts, transcending its moment in time.[33]

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[30] Fulton,"Siqueiros Against the Myth: Paeans to Cuauhtemoc, Last of the Aztec Emperors," 76.
[31] See the online archive of Leo Matiz's documentation of the process of *Cuauhtémoc Against the Myth* at leomatizenmexico.com, courtesy of LM Difusión Artistica and the National Foundation for Culture and the Arts.
[32] Fulton,"Siqueiros Against the Myth: Paeans to Cuauhtemoc, Last of the Aztec Emperors," 74.
[33] Jolly, "Aesthetics of Conflict: Perspective and Anamorphosis in Siqueiros's Art of the 1930s," 120.

This ties the technological aspects of his work with their political contents and the political context of Mexico City.

Concurrent to his collaborations with Siqueiros, Matiz had already played a part in the visual "matrix" of the Mexican popular press. The May 27, 1944 issue of *Nosotros* contains eighty-six photographs by Matiz (Figure 3). His images appear across eight articles in addition to the cover, each touching upon distinct topics using conflicting visual languages. The magazine is a special issue about the industry, agriculture, and cultural sites of Morelos, a landlocked state in the center of Mexico. *Nosotros* was also popular for its use of high quality black and white photographs, as opposed to the sepia tones of lower quality reproductions found in other illustrated weeklies. The magazine's roster of photography contributors also signal to its high standard, which included German-Mexicans Evelyn Hofer and Juan Guzmán and Hungarian-Mexican Kati Horna.[34]

In the photographic essays, large scale photographs and grids of smaller images dominate the page space over their accompanying articles. This ensures that reading the text is not necessary to understand the tone or the content of the images. The images are contextualized by captions explaining to the reader what the photograph depicts (Figure 9).[35] All of these elements are the results of choices that combine to create an environment of neutrality and objectivity.[36] In other words, the reader is convinced that each photograph, with its different view or subject, is capturing every facet of the real event. Although the cover of *Nosotros* is evocative of *Life* magazine, the interior pages are descended from a long history of published photography (Figure 3). During the Mexican Revolution (from 1910 to 1920), photographer Agustín Víctor Casasola founded the Agencia Mexicana de Información Gráfica (Mexican Agency of Graphic

[34] Nasr, "La búsqueda visual de Leo Matiz," 184.
[35] Fred Ritchin, "The Future of Photojournalism," *Aperture*, no. 100 (1985): 42.
[36] Ritchin, "The Future of Photojournalism," 47.

Information) and assembled a massive archive of images. In 1921, he compiled his first visual history, or historia gráfica, titled *Albúm histórico*.[37] The Casasola family continued producing historias gráficas throughout the twentieth century, signaling the lasting importance of photography's narrative abilities. These volumes combined reproductions of thousands of images with an "almanac-like prose."[38] Visual histories also played a central role in the post-revolutionary era; they disseminated photographs of the *caudillos*, *adelitas,* and *bolas* that became synonymous with the Revolution itself and a subsequent national aesthetic.[39]

Later, avant-garde journals of the 1920s experimented with graphic design and revolutionary content, beginning with *Irradiador* (1923) (Figure 10). The magazine, a collaboration between Fermín Revueltas Sanchez and Manuel Maples Arce, was linked to the political avant-garde movement *Estridentismo* (Stridentism). *Irradiador* featured the aesthetic theories of Arce and Revueltas, as well as poetry, prose and works of art by contributors (such as muralist Diego Rivera), which activated discussions on the social roles of artists and intellectuals in Mexican society.[40] Matiz was published in illustrated weeklies that occupied a different sphere of the Mexican press than avant-garde journals.[41] These magazines were highly visual and featured a wide variety of content for larger audiences, from news coverage to celebrity interviews to special interest stories on different Mexican towns.[42] Matiz's first work in Mexico appeared in *Rotofoto,* which was also the first of these so-called "supergraphic" magazines to

[37] John Mraz, "Picturing Mexico's Past: Photography and 'Historia Gráfica.'" *South Central Review* 21, no. 3 (2004), 25.
[38] Mraz, "Picturing Mexico's Past: Photography and 'Historia Gráfica,'" 26.
[39] "*caudillos, adelitas,* and *bolas"* were the military leaders, female revolutionaries, and masses of moving people that feature in many of the photographs and prints from the Mexican Revolution. Tellechea, "El obturador documental en la prensa ilustrada mexicana," 115.
[40] Tatiana Flores, *Mexico's Revolutionary Avant-gardes: From Estridentismo to ¡30-30!*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013, 126-131.
[41] *Irradiador* was followed by *Ulises*, *Horizonte*, *Contemporaneos*, and *Forma* throughout the second half of the 1920s and into the 1930s; Julio César Merino Tellechea, "El obturador documental en la prensa ilustrada mexicana," in *Leo Matiz: el reportazgo en la posrevolución.* Mexico City: Ediciones de lirio (2019): 110.
[42] This was especially important in Mexico, where 44.8 percent of the population was literate in the early forties. See Greer, Thomas V. "An Analysis of Mexican Literacy." Journal of Inter-American Studies 11, no. 3 (1969): 467.

publish photos expressly about life in Mexico for a Mexican audience.[43] He also completed assignments for the popular magazines *Así, Hoy, Mañana, Norte,* and *Nosotros,* the latter of which he worked for from April 8, 1944 to March 8, 1945. In some cases, Matiz covered several photographic reports in a single issue of *Nosotros*, attesting to his reliability, versatility, and established reputation as a professional photographer by the mid-1940s.[44] Matiz's cover is tied to an international scene of photojournalism through its framing of its subject. The most immediate evidence of this is in the graphic design of the *Nosotros* magazine cover (Figure 3). While the font style is slightly different, each piece of information (the date, price, title of the essay, volume and number) is in the exact same position as its *Life* counterpart. The name of the magazine in the upper left corner is even tucked behind the hat of the worker, a technique frequently used in covers of *Life*. *Nosotros*' cover format changed after 1946 (volume 5), suggesting that in the magazine's early years, the editorial staff took part in a shared graphic language to tie their publication into the globally circulating group of news magazines (Figure 11).[45]

The cover of "Siembra en Morelos" ("Planting in Morelos") gives readers an immediate impression of the contents inside the magazine (Figure 9). The black and white photograph depicts a young man driving a plow. The point of view is situated directly below the man, and the viewer's gaze is directed upward, creating a dizzying verticality. The machine and the man occupy the majority of the composition at the center of the image, but the entire tractor is not shown. Instead, the seated man emerges from the surrounding metal pieces at the bottom of the image; his arms and legs are incorporated in the machinery. The overlap between human and

[43] Julio César Marino Tellechea, "El obturador documental en la prensa ilustrada mexicana" in *Leo Matiz: el reportazgo en la posrevolución.* Mexico City: Ediciones de lirio, 117.
[44] Nasr, "La búsqueda visual de Leo Matiz," 181.
[45] See the online archive of Leo Matiz's work for *Nosotros* and other magazines at leomatizenmexico.com, courtesy of LM Difusión Artistica and the National Foundation for Culture and the Arts.

machine decreases as the viewer moves up the image and the man's body. His shoulders and head cut across the empty sky. However, the man's body is not completely free from the tractor, equating man with machine through the repetition of curved lines from the wheel in the foreground, the steering wheel in the middle ground, and the brim of the man's hat at the highest point of the image. The subject's feet are lost in a tangle of metal parts, but to the right, a second person is silhouetted against the sky. He is anonymous; his face and hat are two-dimensionalized through the contrast between light and dark. The harsh sunlight casts shadows onto the face, hands, and clothing of the central figure. This contrast gives the man's face and hands the illusion of being abstracted, creating two dimensionality through these areas of shadow. This overlap between figuration and abstraction, through the contrast between light and dark, is the key formal element that Matiz goes on to develop.

Matiz moved fluidly between modes of representation and followed the broader artistic currents of Mexico City in the early 1940s. Additionally, his ability to inject the political scene of Mexico City into his documentary photography reveals the porosity of the medium of photojournalism. The cover of the Morelos issue and its photographs fit into the clear, albeit wide, category of Socialist Realism. The subtle differences between the examples within this issue attest to the looseness and openness of the style. The perspective on the farmer from below renders the subject larger than life, thereby monumentalizing the man, a member of the working class. Rather than highlighting the man as an individual out of the masses, the shadows that cover his eyes and give a painterly abstraction to his hands, conceal his identity, and convert him into a symbol. This does not denigrate him, but instead objectifies the body amidst the means of production. In the bottom third of the photograph, limbs, feet, and crisscrossing shadows are unintelligible from metal rods and handles. As noted above, the human figure never breaks free

of the machine, but grows seamlessly out of it. The body is entrenched within the system of curved patterns that link the two forms; he is reduced to a formal element. The human body is objectified through his labor in the service of communism.

Mexican Muralism was a loose collection of artists who sought state and private support for their artwork, oscillating between states of cohesion and division over the course of the twentieth century.[46] Throughout his time in Mexico, Matiz pursued both social and professional routes towards recognition, ultimately participating in both of Siquieros' proposals for a It is through these channels of access (professional, social, institutional, urban) that he was able to reach individuals who were key to each scene, and from there, the means of expression that represented each specific site. The feud between Siqueiros and Matiz ended when Siqueiros allegedly set fire to Matiz's studio, forcing Matiz to leave Mexico City until Siqueiros' death in 1974.[47] Rather than attempting to find out who was right or wrong in this conflict, I show that through exchanges in the press and behind the camera, Matiz was a part of the divisive discourse surrounding the relationship between art and political action.

Chapter II:
Bogotá, Colombia 1947-1953

> "Most photographs of the day capture one of two moments: the smoky horizon of rising flames, or the broken brick trail left in the riot's wake. Some, however, catch something between the two. People throwing themselves against the walls of buildings and houses, gutting the city with crowbars and hammers and bloody fingertips. As if there's forgiveness, gold, and a cure for madness buried in the concrete. As if the real city lay just beneath the shops and homes and liquor stores: colorful paper and ribbon and tape meant for ripping and tearing."
>
> – Lina M. Ferreira Cabeza-Vanegas

[46] Jolly, "Art of the Collective: David Alfaro Siqueiros, Josep Renau and Their Collaboration at the Mexican Electricians' Syndicate," 131.
[47] According to Alejandra Matiz.

In Bogotá, Matiz's subjects, both the anonymous public and the main players of the art scene of Colombia's capital city, are folded into their surroundings, drawing the viewer into a cultural and political moment that shaped *bogotanos*. The presence of the individual and group within each scene captures the dynamic changes that were at play in Bogotá before, during, and after a seven-year-long dictatorship. Visible in each photograph is the photographer's connection with his subject, as he kneels to the height of two young girls looking up at a painting (Figure 12), squeezes into a crowded space of laughing artists (Figure 13), and captures, as if in a hurry, a participant of the 1948 riots, keeping his distance from burning furniture and a man's quick movement out of the frame (Figure 14). Matiz's images of the citizens of Bogotá are infused with the trepidation of a nation on the cusp of a dictatorship during the era known as *La Violencia*, yet also point to the constant changes in the art institutions of the city.[48] The photographs Matiz made in Bogotá offer a gaze upon this period of transition of Colombian art and the consolidation of a national cultural identity that was still in progress and thus, stylistically unstable.

Bogotá's relationship with its own art scene was tumultuous, as cultural circles engaged in debates about national identity and internationalism through artistic expression. Thus, artistic activities in Bogotá during the late forties and early fifties were intertwined with the country's equally unstable political situation, which erupted into violence just as Matiz returned in 1947. Matiz's photography allowed him to gain access into Bogotá's art scene in a different way than it did in Mexico City. In Bogotá, Leo Matiz turned his camera lens towards a city that was undergoing urban modernization, opening and closing free expression and a democratization of culture, and fluctuating between local modernism and an international modernist language. His

[48] The original violence from which Colombia's ongoing conflict stems from. The peak of this period of violence, which was dispersed rather than diffused, ended around 1957, inspiring a new generation of artists like Beatriz Gonzalez and Lucy Tejada.

photographs of his fellow artists, the gallery-goers, and the city streets of Bogotá show an interest in the interactions between artworks and audiences, as well as artistic institutions and the public, rather than in the individual.

Matiz returned to Bogotá in 1948 after seven years in Mexico. His first major assignment upon his return was coverage of the IX Pan American Conference in Bogotá, where twenty one delegates from North and South American countries met to discuss the importation of loans from the United States and Communism from the Soviet Union. Those in attendance included U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall and Fidel Castro, the latter of whom Matiz was set to photograph later that afternoon. However, at 1:10 pm on April 9th, 1948, leader of the Liberal Party Jorge Elicier Gaítan was assassinated on the street. When rioters found the alleged perpetrator of Gaitan's murder, they dragged his body through the streets and left it on the steps of the Palacio Nariño, the seat of the Conservative Party. The assassination precipitated riots that continued in the city center of Bogotá for five days, as trams burned, the traditional colonial-style buildings lay in rubble, and federal buildings and residences were looted.[49]

The political aftermath of the riots resulted in ever-increasing tensions between the Liberal and Conservative parties in Colombia, and this conflict ultimately contributed to the breakdown of the democratic state that gave way to military coup.[50] While the riots were slowly calmed in the streets of Bogotá, the clash of political leaders triggered more violence that spread out into the rest of the country. These rural areas became the main stage for the larger conflict known as La Violencia, which left an estimated 200,000 people dead.[51] The events that occurred

[49] Evidence of the destruction of the *Bogotazo* can still be seen today on a walk through the center of Bogotá. Unevenly built facades of the now restaurants and apartments on city blocks are accompanied by plaques naming the dates of the most recent constructions; Unknown author, "Bloody riots upset Bogotá meeting," *Life Magazine*, April 26, 1948.
[50] Catherine C. LeGrand, "The Colombian Crisis in Historical Perspective," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Latino-Américaines et Caraïbes* 28, no. 55/56 (2003): 172.
[51] LeGrand, "The Colombian Crisis in Historical Perspective," 172-173.

within the city limits of Bogotá in 1948, called the Bogotazo, occurred during a period of Conservative control following the Liberal Republic from 1930 to 1946.[52] After 1946, the presidencies of conservative politicians Mariano Ospina Perez and Laureano Gómez tightened control over cultural institutions and individual artists and intellectuals.

In "The Politicization of the Aesthetic Gaze: Colombia, 1940-1952," Cristina Lleras argues that although the actual political reality of the conflict between Liberals and Conservatives was not reflected in the art of this time, the conflict "infiltrated the gaze of art." This appears not only in terms of the friction between the new and the traditional, but also as Lleras argues, through "leftist art, revolutionary art, and the relationship between art, order and Catholic morality, which refer to what is rejected for being dangerous and what is accepted for political convenience." Ultimately, Lleras opposes Colombian art historian Álvaro Medina by arguing that Colombian artists before the Rojas Pinilla dictatorship did not necessarily conform to the political landscape of Bogotá, nor did they include their own political ideologies in their works.[53] This interpretation of the relationship between artistic production and politics echoes Zalamea's positing of *arte testimonio* as a category that allows for the instability in the relationship between committed art and "pure" art or art for art's sake. Examples of *arte testimonio* allow us to view Colombian art of the late 1940s and early 1950s beyond polarities of new and traditional or Liberal and Conservative, and instead to look at them with more accuracy with regards to the political complexities of the moment, and especially in the context of *La Violencia*.

Initially, Matiz's return to Bogotá was temporary. He was hired to cover the Pan American Conference from the United States, and would depart again that May on his way to

[52] Cristina Lleras Figueroa, "Politización de la mirada estética. Colombia, 1940-1952" in *Arte, política y crítica,* Bogotá, Colombia (Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2005), 25.
[53] Lleras, "Politización de la mirada estética. Colombia, 1940-1952," 13-14.

cover the Israel-Palestine conflict for the United Nations.[54] He made his first return to Colombia as a photojournalist, rather than with the intention to establish himself in Bogotá permanently. Matiz's photographs of the aftermath of the Bogotazo are evidence of his effort to realize political events in Bogotá, while at the same time maintaining the distance of the neutral photojournalist. Four images by Matiz capture the chaos and destruction of the April 9th riots. All four are views down city streets in the historic center of Bogotá. The roads are crammed with people, mostly men of all ages, including young boys. In some, Matiz looks at the leaders of mobs head on, as they brandish machetes and carry large framed works of art, and in others, silhouetted figures run in the opposite direction of Matiz into the haze of smoke (Figures 15 and 16). The unique of the four, however, depicts just one man in an empty street, walking among burning furniture and the murky backdrop of building facades (Figure 14).

The lone subject of the black and white photograph is positioned just left of the center of the composition. He is in motion, as his hands and feet are blurred, and he is turned towards the left, indicating his movement towards the space beyond the frame of the image. His formal dress corresponds to the context, because the riots took place in the middle of the day at the seat of the federal power of Colombia. The majority of people present in this area would have been civil servants, bankers, and businessmen working in the concentration of government buildings and headquarters. Behind the man, newspapers and trash are strewn across the ground around burning heaps of wooden furniture. The flames in the photograph are quite high, indicating they are not on the verge of dying out, giving the viewer some sense of time. The blurred edges of the fires echo the lack of focus on man in the foreground. The areas of non-movement, the darkened parts of the photograph, are clear, crisp, and in sharp contrast to the hazy buildings behind the

[54] Enric Mira Pastor, "Imaginario Colombiano: Fotografías de Leo Matiz, 1940-1970" in *Leo Matiz: Imaginario Colombiano*, (Museo Universidad de Navarro, 2023), 21.

flames. The background is dulled by the thick smoke rising from the fires on the ground and the heavy clouds choking the sky. Due to the haze obscuring the details of the buildings, the facades of the colonial buildings are flattened, giving the photograph an almost cinematic appearance, as if the facades were a painted backdrop. A closer look to the left-most building reveals windows with panes of broken glass. No light comes from the buildings, and the darkness of the foreground contrasts with the bright sun that barely breaks through the smog above.

Through changes in contrast and focus, Matiz shifts plays with political legibility of visual representations of the Bogotazo. The event or its causes are not explicitly seen in the photograph, and the anonymity of the man, his urgency in moving out of the camera's frame, and the absence of any landmark, make it difficult to ascertain the motive of the subject or to organize the photograph amid the chaos of the riots. Liberals and Conservatives alike participated in the riots, making it impossible to stake a claim on any concrete ideology present in the photograph. However, Matiz's inclusion of the fires, the empty street, the destroyed colonial architecture, and the thick smoke are sensory elements in the actual experience of the *Bogotazo* that, linked together, point to the events that occur outside of the frame. The space included within the frame, which expands far beyond the blurry figure, intentionally pulls these elements into the composition, creating a specific scene rooted in Bogota's history – even if that event is not explicitly mentioned. Documentary photography is adept at capturing the physical changes brought on by violence, if not the actual violent actions or the underlying causes of that violence.[55] Even though there is visible movement in the figure and the flames behind him, the photograph evokes stillness and silence in the darkness of the windows and the relative emptiness of the street. For a moment, Matiz has turned his camera away from the pockets of violent action happening around him across the city to show what remains of the riots. Here,

[55] Fred Ritchin, "The Photography of Conflict," *Aperture*, no. 97 (1984): 24.

Matiz captures the *aftermath* of political violence. His photograph is the result of having been witness to the imprint of an unseen violence onto the visual landscape.

The assassination of Jorge Eliecer Gaitan was the spark that ignited years of rising tensions under Conservative president Mario Ospina Perez, and these fires continued burning across the rest of the country for decades. In late 1949, the Liberal and Conservative parties named their candidates for the next election, Dario Echandía and Laureano Gómez, respectively. Ospina proposed to extend his term by four years, and Congress, viewing this as a bid for an authoritarian regime, attempted to impeach Ospina Perez. In response, Ospina declared a state of siege, censored the press and radio, and disbanded Congress. The Liberal Party withdrew its participation in the presidential election in response to the Conservative Party's unwillingness to negotiate for the presidency, leaving the popular Conservative candidate, Laureano Gómez, to take control of the government.[56] From 1950 to 1953, Gómez's regime instituted strict ideologies of religious morality and civil order strongly opposed to popular mobilization, not unlike the regimes of Salazar in Portugal and Franco in Spain. Although the 1953 military coup hindered his aspirations, Gómez intended to restructure the Constitution and harkened back to the late nineteenth century period of "Regeneration," during which cultural institutions were used heavily by the government to "regenerate" Colombia's political and moral ideals.[57] The Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes was founded in this period and the set of ideals, which were the determinants of the official artistic landscape of Bogotá in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Against this backdrop, in 1950, Matiz opened the Galería y Estudio Leo Matiz in a space once occupied by the well-known Galerías del Arte. There, Matiz exhibited his own work in

[56] Marco Palacios, "In the Shadow of the Violencia" in *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. 142-146.
[57] Gina M. Vásquez, "The Female Body in the Works of Débora Arango and Ignacio Gómez Jaramillo: Colombian Modernism, Religion, and Politics, 1930s-1950s." *CUNY Academic Works* (2021), 2.

1950, followed by two exhibitions of Fernando Botero's paintings in 1951 and 1952, which also happened to be the painter's first solo show.[58] In a review of Matiz's self-organized solo exhibition in the literary magazine *Revista de las Americas*, Walter Engel writes, "this fact is doubly satisfying now that it links the renowned photographer permanently to the life of the capital and rescues at once the institution and the ambiance of the Galerías del Arte, which have been so closely related to the cultural progress in Bogotá in recent years."[59] The exhibition predominantly contained photographs of Matiz's time in Mexico and of portraits of *campesinos* – Colombia's rural social classes – and mothers with children. This is a rare review of a photography exhibition in a critical magazine devoted to the art, literature, and politics of the day. As Engel mentions, the space was formerly home to the Galerías del Arte, which hosted salón-style exhibitions throughout the twenties and thirties. Matiz also owned a studio above the exhibition space, which became a meeting place for photojournalists, painters, and poets in the first years of the fifties.

The number of galleries in Bogotá sharply increased after 1950, a sign of the growing art market and of an understanding of art making as a form of labor. Like Matiz, Colombian artists and intellectuals were carving out their own spaces outside of the institution of the Sálons.[60] The growth of galleries and art exhibitions into the private sector did not just come about for economic or personal gain. As Julian Serna writes, the Bogotazo "led to an almost absolute paralysis of official support for art, a fact that forced the rethinking of the way that artistic activity operated in Colombia…".[61] Thus, the boundaries between private and public art spaces in Bogotá were delineated by politics. The works of art that were framed and hung on the walls

[58] Julián Serna, "El valor del arte: historia de las primeras galerías de arte de colombia (1948-1957)," *Ensayos: Historia y teoría del arte,* 16.
[59] Walter Engel, "Leo Matiz, fotógrafo de la vida," *Revista de las Américas* (1951), 590.
[60] Serna, "El valor del arte: historia de las primeras galerías de arte de colombia (1948-1957)," 74.
[61] Serna, "El valor del arte: historia de las primeras galerías de arte de colombia (1948-1957)," 76.

of those spaces, if not political on the surface or in their appearance, were also inextricable from the tight grasp of the government on artistic expression. Just as Bogotá's art scene was regulated by Conservative control on the eve of a military dictatorship, it was also shaped by the events that slipped through the cracks of that control. In 1952, Matiz organized an exhibition, titled *La salón de los rechazados* (*The salón of the rejected*), for the participants of the IX Salón Nacional de Artistas Colombianos who had been refused exhibition for the competition due to conservative politics at play in the jury.[62] While the idea for the exhibition was not entirely his own, he assumed responsibility for putting the show on and took initiative after the exclusion of certain artists was highly criticized in the press by the intellectual community of Bogotá.[63] Engel called for an exhibition of the refused works in the newspaper *El Tiempo*, and Matiz answered with a diverse mix of artists (it appears that the organizers of the exhibition understood "rejected" in the open sense of the word) that included works by film actors as well as painters like Luis Alberto Acuña and Guillermo Wiedemann. After the exhibition took place, reviews from the Conservative camp of scholars, authors, and journalists decried the show as a misdirection of Colombian art that did not serve the national interest.[64]

Bogotá's culture critics of the forties and fifties were aware that this moment in Colombian art history was a period of transition: an ideal environment for the construction of a national identity.[65] In the period of the Liberal Republic from 1930 to 1946, Bogotá's art scene was increasingly dominated by the Salón Anual de Artistas Colombianos (Annual Salon of Colombian Artists), the first of which was held in 1940.[66] The Salón was the first space for

[62] A nod to the nineteenth century French *salón des refuses* in Paris.
[63]Andrés Arias, "Política y Vanguardia. La juventud colombiana en las artes plásticas de los años sesenta y setenta," *Boletín Cultural Y Bibliográfico* 51, no. 93 (2018): 40-55.
[64] Serna, "El valor del arte: historia de las primeras galerías de arte de colombia (1948-1957)," 18-20.
[65] Namely Walter Engel, Casimiro Eiger, Jorge Zalamea, Luis Vidales, and Javier Arango Ferrer.
[66] Carmen María Jaramillo Jiménez, "Una Mirada a Los orígenes Del Campo De La Crítica De Arte En Colombia," *Artes La Revista* 4, no. 7 (2015): 17-18.

Colombian painters and sculptors to exhibit their work on a national level, before a jury of writers, intellectuals, and artists. Luis Vidales, a poet and critic who served on the board of judges, published a review of the first Salón in the September 1940 issue of *Revista de las Indias.* In it, he notes two trends in a wide array of artworks by a roster of established artists that included Ignacio Gómez Jaramillo, Ramón Barba, Pedro Nel Gómez, and Carlos Correa. Vidales names these as "academic painting" and "post-impressionism," made evident by "irreconcilable differences." Vidales argues that although there were many visual languages present at the Salón, the event pointed to a forthcoming Colombian modernism, or "un arte nacional propio" ("a national art of Colombia's own").[67]

From its inception, the Salón was a direct effort by the Ministry of Education to create a centralized culture based in the capital city of Bogotá. An invitation to participate in the Salón was seen as a sign of legitimacy for Colombian artists and a gesture of inclusion into the art establishment, regardless of an artist's personal political views. The Salón, which began under Jorge Elicer Gaítan (then Minister of Education), was one of several initiatives to renovate, yet also nationalize, a Colombian aesthetic that was in touch with modern ideals. For example, in 1937, the Colombian government sent painter Ignacio Gómez Jaramillo to Mexico to study the murals of Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros, with the promise of a commission of two murals in Bogotá's National Capitol building when he returned.[68] The muralist style became popular in Colombia through artists like Gomez Jaramillo, who blended Social Realism with Expressionism in their murals and paintings. This style was divisive in the artistic scene of Bogotá, because it went against the traditional style of academic painting of the Escuela de Bellas Artes and infuriated prominent Conservative intellectuals and cultural critics,

[67] Luis Vidales Jaramillo, "El primer salón del arte colombiano." *Revista de las Indias* (Bogotá, Colombia), (September 1940): 245-246.
[68] Vásquez, "The Female Body in the Works of Débora Arango and Ignacio Gómez Jaramillo," 8.

including politician and writer Laureano Gómez.[69] Also in 1937, Gómez penned an article in the magazine *Revista Colombiana* titled "Expressionism as a Symptom of Laziness and Inability in Art," which railed against the Mexican muralists and the Colombian artists who embraced them.[70] After 1946, the Salóns became vehicles for the conservative administrations of Mario Ospina Perez and Laureano Gómez to exert further control over a strictly Colombian aesthetic and prevent what opposing critics saw as innovation in art.[71] Thus, there were only two editions of the Salón between 1946 and 1953 – in 1950 and again in 1952 – and the Salón did not continue until after the military dictatorship of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla from 1953 to 1957.[72]

For the five artists that crowded Matiz's *La salón de los rechazados* (1952) nothing about the art scene in Bogotá seems paralyzed. Corners of paintings bump against the drywall and elbows knock into banisters as the artists stumble down the steps, laden with heavy wooden frames and, in one case, a marble bust (Figure 13). The atmosphere is warm, as they gaze knowingly towards one another, laughing about some inside joke traded between student and teacher, between friend and colleague, just before the shutter clicks. In a narrow composition that stretches along the height of the tight staircase, Matiz records the chaos and the conviviality of the artists and artworks scorned by the jury of the IX Salón Nacional de Artistas Colombianas. Matiz's *La salón de los rechazados* places key figures of the Colombian art scene in prominent positions under a bright overhead light, their faces clearly visible. They are arranged in a clear group as they cluster in the stairwell, and emphasize their artworks by flashing their paintings and turning their sculptures towards the camera. At least two of the figures are recognizable;

[69] Vásquez, "The Female Body in the Works of Débora Arango and Ignacio Gómez Jaramillo," 4.
[70] Vásquez, "The Female Body in the Works of Débora Arango and Ignacio Gómez Jaramillo," 4.
[71] Lleras, "Politización de la mirada estética. Colombia, 1940-1952," 13-14.
[72] However, cultural magazines were still active. The removal of the Salón created a vacuum for hard edge abstractionists and points to the uneasy complicity of Colombian artists and the government. See Ivonne Pini and María Clara Bernal, "Arte abstracto en la década de 1950 en Bogotá: la mirada de los críticos a los artistas y los artistas como críticos." *Historia Crítica/Historia CríTica*, no. 84 (April 2022): 79–101.

Debora Arango, the only woman in the photograph, smiles widely and looks to her left. Directly above her, Pedro Nel Gómez follows her gaze to the lower right of the photograph, grinning and responding to the other jovial exchanges occurring between the other artists.[73]

La salón de los rechazados is a portrait of the very network that Matiz was a part of in Bogotá. Due to the increasingly conservative climate of the government's attitude towards Bogotá's cultural circles, the occurrence of Matiz's *Salón* was in and of itself a political statement. The photograph is cropped vertically and tightly, drawing the viewer into the space. The lower left hand corner of the stairs is the only indication of where the photograph has been taken, leaving the rest of the composition almost bursting with the interactions of the figures in it. The movement of the scene also brings the social into the viewer's space. While the photograph is not taken at a dramatic angle from below, the size of the bottom painting and artist in relation to the smaller artworks and figures in the background gives the impression that the crowd of artists coming down the stairs is pressing upon the people in the front. The intentional display of their paintings also places a documentary impulse upon Matiz to record the artistic production of the Colombian artists working in Bogotá at the time. The fact that the visual information of Matiz's image is made up mostly of their printed surfaces is a marker of the fact that those artworks not only existed, but were expelled from the government approved jury for the Salón Nacional. The artworks occupy space in a way that confirms their materiality and presence in the Colombian art scene. This is not exactly careful art handling – the artists clasp unframed canvases and seem to bump their edges against the wall or the steps. Both the artists and the paintings have been "rejected" from an exhibition, denying their visibility towards the

[73] Heliana Cardona Cabrera, a researcher with the International Center for the Arts of the Americas, helped me identify two of the artists in this photograph.

national art community, and thus, their inclusion into a state sponsored idea of what Colombian art should be.

With the social context in view, along with Matiz's choice to take the photograph, the photograph takes on a political dimension, even if these political messages are not immediately legible from the photograph itself. The stark contrast between Matiz's photograph of the destruction caused by the Bogotazo of 1948 and the buzzing scene of artists preparing for a counter establishment exhibition illustrates the contradictions and realities of Bogotá's art scene under Conservative governments. In both photographs, Matiz has captured the traces of two political realities (one extremely violent, the other the decrease of freedom of expression) by converting them into permanent markers of their occurrence through photography. While the bonfires in the streets of Bogotá eventually died down, the destruction caused to the urban fabric of the city was long lasting. The social act of the exhibition in the second photograph, as well as the social relationships displayed between the artists, also resists permanence. Matiz's witness of political events, resistance, and even brutal violence, fixes two visual realities of the period of *La Violencia*. Leaving behind the Rojas Pinilla dictatorship in Colombia, Matiz moved to Caracas in order to photograph the completion of the Universidad Central, a major architectural moment in Venezuelan history.[74] However, the flexibility of the content in his photographs and professional roles allowed him to navigate, and thrive, in another dictatorship even after leaving the other. Matiz's politically permeated gaze and his participation in social space is further disorganized by his insertion into the circulated images of an imposed facade of miraculous modernity, polished by the petroleum industry.

[74] According to Alejandra Matiz.

Chapter III:
Caracas, Venezuela 1953-1960

The nature of the artistic scene of Caracas, Venezuela, drew Matiz into the crisscrossing lines of urban development, consumerism, U.S. intervention, and the rise and fall of the Venezuelan dictatorship. It is fitting that his earliest work from Venezuela is documentation of the newly completed Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas, the prime example of dictator Marcos Pérez Jimenez's modernizing project, the New National Ideal.[75] I see more than documentation in this photograph, which I use as a jumping off point for this chapter on Matiz's time in Caracas. In his photograph of the University's Aula Magna (Figure 17), Alexander Calder's *Clouds* compose the upper half of the photograph. The suspension held by the open space of the cavernous hall and the suspended monochrome sculptural clouds seem to press down upon the curved rows of seats that slope down along the grade of the auditorium floor. Matiz's cropping of Calder's sculpture in the upper lefthand corner implies a continuation of the repeating patterns of both the seats and the sculptural clouds.

Matiz's *Aula Magna* is frequently included in exhibition catalogs as a reference photograph or as a supplementary illustration of many relevant themes that define this era in Venezuelan art, from North-South exchanges in abstraction to the integration of art and architecture. I contend that this is due to its low angle and inclusion of the seats, for example, and the other elements of the auditorium – the stage, the doorways, the overhead lights – accentuate the illusion that the viewer is being drawn into the space. A closely cropped photograph of only the overlapping sculptural clouds, perhaps, or the repetition of the seat backs in the lower left of the foreground, would result in an image that more directly evokes avant-garde formal techniques. Here, however, he has chosen to include the rows of seats with

[75] Devon Zimmerman, "Corroding Geometries: Elsa Gramcko, Automobility, and the Paradoxes of Venezuelan Modernity, 1955–1965." *Modernism/modernity* 30, no. 1 (2023): 154.

Calder's *Clouds*. Matiz not only *documents* the newly constructed public space as a product of progress in Caracas, but adopts the integration of art and architecture as a unified whole artwork. Matiz operates on the same basis as the Venezuelan artists working in Caracas after the war through his participation in the artistic space of Alejandro Otero, Jesús Rafael Soto, Mateo Manaure, and so on. His placement of the gaze – photography's specific form of artistic production (in lieu of painting or sculpture) – in the inherently social space of the university mimics the same social activation of the Venezuelan Op Artists, and shows his participation in not only the visual styles of the Caracas art scene, but also those formal elements within a specific practice. Many of Matiz's photographic subjects in Caracas consist of individual architectural sites with the potential for social interaction and movement within public space. However, Matiz cannot be extracted from the economic and political realities of the petroleum industry in Venezuela that funded the construction of these subjects.

His formal integration of art and architecture in these photographs shows that they cannot be extricated from their political contexts. It is necessary to discuss those photographs that show abstraction in public spaces, as parts of a dictatorial program to modernize the country, in publications of oil extraction by corporations, and as a style that became synonymous with these contexts. In continuing to think about what continues outside of the photographic frame, as I did in my reading of Matiz's photographs in Bogotá, one can consider what is excluded from abstract repetitions when we widen the frame. Just as Zalamea argues for an *arte testimonio*, Matiz's photographs act as markers of witness to the integration of art with architecture. As exemplified in *Aula Magna*, these images demonstrate Matiz's intention to depict artworks within architectural space in order to invite the viewer into that built environment – a formal technique that applies to the works of Venezuelan painters Otero, Soto or Manaure. Venezuelan architect

Carlos Raúl Villanueva, alongside the sculptors and painters who worked on the Ciudad Universitaria, ultimately wanted to experiment with the idea of the body activated by intersecting parallel lines and floating shapes, whether it was static and seated below *Clouds* or actively walking alongside a mural by Otero. By immersing the viewer amid the ordered repetition of the seats below and the weight of the balcony and suspended sculpture above, Matiz successfully places the viewer in the space that exists between the replicated utilitarian object and the supremacy of the work of art.

In Matiz's *Centro Simón Bolívar* (Figure 18), the built environment towers over a vehicle, both a utilitarian object and a sought after commodity. This relationship is similar to *Aula Magna* in the uneven balance between the suspended *Clouds*, the art object, and the utilitarian seats, which are metaphorically also sought after objects as sites within the University space. In this image, the eye is drawn to the familiar, recognizable car in the lower right hand corner, overwhelmed by overlapping structures that seem to insert themselves into our space. The car is then reduced by the effort it takes for the viewer to make sense of the intersecting lines and planes, patterns that recede into the background and continue off of the frame, and distance obscured by shadow. Looking at the whole image then reveals the minimization of the car and the absolute monumentality of the building. In this work, Matiz turns his camera to the exterior spaces of the urban fabric of the Nuevo Ideal Nacional. His characteristic style is entangled within the intensely politicized visual environment of the center of Caracas in the middle of the 1950s. His images not only contain evidence of the political agenda behind this urban-planning project, but were produced because of that agenda, having been brought about by his indirect professional connections to the economic policies of the military dictatorship.

The urban landscape of Caracas was drastically changed by the dictatorship of Marco Perez Jimenez. Buildings in the early fifties rose higher and higher under Perez Jimenez, and quickly, fueled by the investments of petroleum corporations like Standard Oil and Shell in the oil deposits on the coast of Venezuela. The profits that the government raked in from petroleum companies were poured into construction projects, including the Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas. The authoritarian nature of the regime opened the way for the state's tight grip to directly resolve what it considered the cause of Caracas' social ills at this moment: urban poverty.[76] In the 1940s, the population of Caracas doubled in size. By diverting government funds towards the building of housing, the government rehoused 60,000 people from 1955 to 1958 into the new *super-bloques*, 38 complexes that comprised 9,000 apartment units, and were designed by Carlos Raúl Villanueva.[77] In order to make room for these construction projects, the state razed traditional neighborhoods in Caracas (Figure 19).[78] Older neighborhoods perceived as dirty and outdated were exchanged for modern buildings to achieve a utopian ideal of cleanliness. Oil made possible the widespread appearance of the regime's affinity for a universalist modern style. By giving support to abstract, Op, and Kinetic styles, the regime propped up visual culture as a stylistic facade to push out the urban poor. These architectural facades helped present an official version of Venezuelan modernity that the dictatorship claimed was a miraculous "exception" among countries outside of Europe.[79] Artists returning to Caracas from Paris in the early 1950s, including Otero, Soto, and Manaure, formed the group Los

[76] Lisa Blackmore, *Spectacular Modernity: Dictatorship, Space, and Visuality in Venezuela, 1948-1958*. University of Pittsburgh Press (2017): 6.
[77] Ariel Jimenez notes that the integration of art and architecture was not completely separate from its social reality. While ultimately insufficient to address the needs of the city, some redevelopment projects in the early 1950s began with the intention of improving livelihood.
[78] Justin McGuirk, "Caracas: The City is Frozen Politics," in *Radical Cities: Across Latin America In Search of a New Architecture*. London: Verso, 2014: 151.
[79] María Cristina Rossi, "Redes Latinoamericanas De Arte Constructivo." *Cuadernos Del Centro De Estudios De Diseño Y Comunicación*, n.º 60 (October 2019), 110.

Disidentes. The group's manifesto, titled "Manifesto No," rejected painting genres, like landscapes, that they found to be unfashionable and unmodern.[80] These same artists formed the key group that contributed to the Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas, representing art's synthesis with architecture. The Perez Jimenez regime was able to roll out projects with intense speed due to unobstructed nonpartisan military rule and booming oil production.[81] However, this wave of urbanization in Caracas was not simply an accumulated series of individual projects that happened to ascribe to fashionable modern architecture. Rather, Perez Jimenez embarked on a wide reaching project to modernize the public spaces of the city through a visual language that aimed to present Venezuela as a utopia.

My analysis of *Centro Simón Bolívar* hinges on three of the elements mentioned above: the presence of the automobile, the contrast caused by direct sunlight, and the spatial dominance of architecture. The two towers of the Centro Simon Bolivar stand just northwest of the Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas, bridging either side of the major road, Avenida Bolívar (Figure 20). The towers were another project of the Pérez-Jimenez regime, and were completed in 1954 by the architect Cipriano Dominguez.[82] Matiz's *Centro Simón Bolívar* encompasses this site in a black and white rectangular photograph. The photograph is level with the street, and the foreground is divided in two parts. On the left, the road curves to the right while two cars approach the camera. On the right, a two story deck casts shadows on the pillars and beams that hold them up. The upper half of the image, set farther back and higher up in space, is composed of the facades of at least two buildings. These facades are made up of gridded windows and parallel balcony railings. The only portion of sky that can be discerned from the ordered chaos of

[80] Blackmore, "Introduction: Rethinking Politics and Aesthetics of Modernity" in *Spectacular Modernity*, 15.
[81] McGuirk, "Caracas: The City is Frozen Politics," in *Radical Cities,* 151.
[82] The construction of these towers was a later addition to a longer process of urbanization in the *El Silencio* neighborhood beginning in 1942 by Carlos Raul Villanueva. Blackmore, "Introduction: Rethinking Politics and Aesthetics of Modernity" in *Spectacular Modernity*, 12.

rectangles and lines is a small trapezoid shaped slice. The lack of color and the lack of textural variation makes it indistinguishable from the concrete surfaces that frame it. The strong natural light from the sun casts clear, dark shadows, most evident in the lower right hand area beneath the deck and the upper right hand corner. The brightest areas of sunlight are emphasized in the facade of the rightmost building contrasted with the slightly darker gray left building. The cars have sharp shadows, and the left portion of the front car is almost the whitest area of the photograph. Even the concrete of the ceilings of the decks have a reflective quality. Together, the built environment, the natural environment (light), and the man-operated machine refer to the social realities of Caracas that are not visible when simply considering a consolidation of art, architecture, and urban space. By putting the parts of the photograph that exist outside of the two-dimensional grids of the building facades into focus, we look obliquely at the presence of these grids and the geometric abstraction utilized in architecture and the photographs of that architecture. The relationships between these three elements also correspond to the interwoven complexities of consumerism, petroleum, and urbanization of 1950s Caracas.

The two cars in the lower left hand corner of the photograph anchor the image to its time and place. In addition to the car as an immediately recognizable symbol of the consumer culture of the 1950s, its presence signals the importance of speed and technology in the modernizing project of the dictatorship. In his speech to the nation upon the year anniversary of his seizure of power, Perez Jimenez proclaimed:

> …a *rhythm of speed* has been impressed upon the works in terms of their deadlines for execution, without diminishing their own quality, as witnessed, to cite some cases of the capital, the Aula Magna of the Ciudad Universitaria, constructed in just one year, when similar works in countries with highly specialized techniques have needed various years…[83]

[83] Gustavo Guerrero, "Modernidad y aceleración: tiempo e imagen en la Caracas de los años cincuenta," *Trópico Absoluto* (2019)*,* 15.

By including the cars in the composition of this photograph, Matiz has inextricably linked his own view of Caracas to this program of acceleration and modernization. Although the car is in focus, it is positioned in the very center of the road. The slight curve of the street towards the position of the photographer also gives the subtle impression of the car's advance towards the camera. Acceleration is reflected in the rapid rise of car culture in Venezuela at this time. In 1955, the Venezuelan economy peaked.[84] Not only did cars become more accessible in the mid-fifties, but the higher variation in models and appearances made them a status symbol. The purchase of a car was an act of participation in two ideals of modernity: mobility through technological advancement, and autonomy through agency of movement. Under a dictatorial regime, the car was one way for Venezuelans to participate in the representation of their country or city as distinctly "modern" through the sleek appearance and cutting edge technology of the car.[85] This is unsurprising for the early phase of the dictatorship in which the photograph *Centro Simón Bólivar* was taken, which is situated opposite the violent reality. Venezuelan society experienced widespread repression, from imprisonment of political dissenters to censorship to police violence.[86] In his article "Corroding Geometries," Devon Zimmerman notes that these cars were also seen as luxury commodities if they were foreign imports; the styles, if not the actual products, of U.S. companies like Buick, Ford, and Chevrolet were extremely popular.[87] This consumerism can be seen through the doubling of the cars in Matiz's photograph, which are similar in their construction and the implication of their continuation further back on the road.

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[84] Zimmerman, "Corroding Geometries: Elsa Gramcko, Automobility, and the Paradoxes of Venezuelan Modernity, 1955–1965," 158.
[85] Zimmerman, "Corroding Geometries: Elsa Gramcko, Automobility, and the Paradoxes of Venezuelan Modernity, 1955–1965," 155.
[86] Elias Pino Iturrieta, "An Appraisal of Contemporary Venezuela," in *Alfredo Boulton and His Contemporaries: Critical Dialogues In Venezuelan Art, 1912-1974*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008, 40-41.
[87]Zimmerman, "Corroding Geometries: Elsa Gramcko, Automobility, and the Paradoxes of Venezuelan Modernity, 1955–1965," 155.

Even in black and white, their metal grills and polished hoods glitter in the sunlight. The glossy, seductive modernity depicted in Matiz's photographs evoke what anthropologist Fernando Coronil termed the "Magical State," fueled by the exportation of 'black gold': petroleum.[88] The velocity of car consumption and of the urbanization of Caracas, was ultimately rooted in the production and exportation of Venezuelan oil.

The low angle of the camera monumentalizes the buildings. Their weight dominates the composition, making the cars in the corner seem much smaller in comparison. As in *Aula Magna*, the built space weighs over the car, as an unfilled space manipulated by the human, which we cannot see. Like the unfilled seats in Matiz's *Aula Magna*, the lack of an identifiable human figure in the car reduces the human presence of the entire photograph. The dominance of the gridded buildings, in the continuation of patterns and their size, negate the human presence, even though the viewer knows that there is someone driving the car. The process of construction, in addition to speed, was a common metaphor in Perez Jimenez's speeches on his own government. In a 1953 speech, he referred to the dictatorship as "an extraordinary work" and "multiple plans that have been accelerated with vast scales."[89] The priority that Matiz gives the architecture of the photograph, which takes over from the cars in importance when looking at the whole image, is an example of what Lisa Blackmore has termed "spectacular modernity." Blackmore draws from Guy Debord's theory of spectacle and Coronil's "Magical State" to present images from the Perez Jimenez dictatorship and their gazes upon the urban landscape of Caracas. These images make up the archive of the dictatorship, and were printed in magazines and used to advertise tourism. A frequent type in this group of images is one that shows people

[88] Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela*. University of Chicago Press (1997).
[89] José Olivar, "La construcción de la modernidad: metáfora y política en dos discursos de Marcos Pérez Jiménez (1953-1957)," *Letras* 52 (2010), 169.

from behind, looking up at a new apartment complex on a hill. Blackmore writes that "monumental buildings and the constant circulation of images of them encouraged subjects to waive the possibility of political autonomy."[90] The experience of looking up to the newly constructed, modernist architecture that appeared with staggering frequency and speed essentially dazzled citizens with progress.[91] Here, Matiz has assumed this gaze and inserted his own point of view into the same circulation and archive of images produced by the Perez Jimenez regime.

Matiz's professional activities in Caracas until 1958 (under Perez Jimenez's dictatorship) were assignments from at least two magazines sponsored by the oil companies Shell and Esso (Exxon), titled *Revista Shell* and *Lámpara*, respectively. Both of these magazines had headquarters in Caracas, and represented the companies' interests and investments in "helping" the culture of countries like Colombia and Venezuela to flourish. The magazines both had dedicated sections for art, including artistic photography, and contributions were made by intellectuals, poets, and artists. According to Venezuelan photographer Alfredo Boulton, who contributed to the magazine in the sixties, the Perez Jimenez regime was generally tolerant of the magazines' publishing activities, and did not apply the same strict censorship as it did to other publications.[92] Matiz worked for *Lámpara* under Álvaro Mutis, a Colombian poet who served as the director of the magazine in its early years after 1952. Mutis was also the chief of public relations for Esso's Caracas office. Through Mutis and other intellectuals working in Bogotá and Caracas, Esso supported distinctly avant-garde artists in order to cement the presence of foreign

[90] Blackmore, *Spectacular Modernity: Dictatorship, Space, and Visuality in Venezuela, 1948-1958*, 104, 20.
[91] Blackmore also notes the widespread criticism of many writers and intellectuals towards the "veneer" of modernity. The images she writes about were circulated in specific contexts to fulfill a specific program, and did not necessarily represent a collective gaze of all Venezuelans nor a reflection of the resistance that other artists and thinkers had to Perez Jimenez's regime.
[92] Alfredo Boulton (1990), 50. Cited in Ana María Lara and Paulimar Rodríguez. "Archivo Fotográfico Shell: Selección de Retratos en una Publicación Interactiva." Thesis (2005), 28.

oil companies as generative patrons of art in Latin America. This was not uncontroversial; in Bogotá, one newspaper article declared that "if we were to put a name to the current culture, we should call it "Cultura Esso", something that should make those that are in charge of this country blush."[93]

Matiz's photographs appeared on both the covers and the inside pages of *Revista Shell* and *Lámpara*. The first issue of *Lámpara*, from 1952, contains a black and white photograph of an oil tower by Matiz.[94] The photograph is cut in an organic, curved shape against a background of bright yellow, with the word "lampara" (sic), and the number and issue of the magazine. The photograph and title of the magazine (an oil lamp) are direct references to the context of the magazine as a product of Esso. Yet if one did not know the connection between the company and the publication, these references would be missed. The cover of *Lámpara* contrasts with the illustrated weeklies and monthlies that Matiz had worked for previously, such as *Nosotros* (Figure 21). The graphic design of the cover is also intentionally ambiguous, designed to evoke the look of the avant-garde magazines that circulated in Latin America at the time, which had their own important role in artistic exchange. Inside Number 19 of *Revista Shell*'s fifth volume in 1956, Matiz was featured in the magazine's "Arte fotografico" section (Figure 22). Only four portraits of Mexican, Colombian, and Venezuelan men and children occupy the glossy pages of this section. In the next issue, an article on Venezuelan painter Mateo Manaure is framed by five of his brightly colored abstract paintings (Figure 23). It was in this context that Matiz's work was published in Venezuela, rubbing shoulders with writers like Álvaro Mutis and in close proximity

[93] A. Torres García "El intercambio cultural superará el subdesarrollo del país." *El Tiempo,* March 12, 1961. Cited in Christian Javier Padilla Peñuela, "La revista Lámpara y la "Cultura Esso" en Colombia: estrategias para pacificar el arte desde Washington." *Redes y circulaciones en la Guerra Fría: diálogos y prácticas interculturales en el sur global (1957-1991),* Vol. 5 Núm. 1 (2018), 258.
[94] Peñuela, "La revista Lámpara y la Cultura Esso" en Colombia: estrategias para pacificar el arte desde Washington.," 248.

to magazine issues that contained the work of artists who took part in the construction of spaces like the Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas.

Matiz left little indication of his personal political beliefs in general, let alone in any interviews or writings from his time in Venezuela. This uncertainty can be read in the comparison of his photographs from the early-to-mid 1950s and later in the decade into the 1960s. His professional status partly accounts for the fact that a fixed political objective cannot be read into his photographs from this period or his entire career. Where he pushed the limits of his position as a photojournalist by integrating his styles into recognizable international language, he assumed a more neutral or ambivalent role in Venezuela. This permitted him to work under a dictatorial regime and for the oil industry, maintaining professional recognition and the political neutrality of the photojournalist. Documenting the urbanization of Caracas and contributing to the circulation of images that held those urbanization projects in a dazzling light allowed Matiz to remain in Caracas and find professional stability. However, when the dictatorship ended, Matiz became even more directly linked to the state of Venezuela and to politics. Matiz became the official photographer of the first democratically elected president after the dictatorship, Romulo Betancourt. Throughout the sixties, Matiz's photographs from Caracas are mostly of political events, state funerals, and Betancourt's campaign trail. His documentary photography, some examples of which can be found at the Library of Congress today, captures street protests against the visit of the then Vice President of the United States, Richard Nixon, in 1958, and the visits of President John F. Kennedy and Jackie Kennedy to Caracas in 1961. As mentioned earlier, beyond his photography for the Miraflores Palace, Matiz's subjects reflect a distancing from the fields of repeated geometric abstraction and modernist architecture that was associated with the dictatorship. I venture that the contradiction in political tones and possible

readings in his photography from Venezuela is due to his awareness that his audience had changed alongside his professional role.

Conclusion

Towards the end of the fifties, the Venezuelan economy experienced a rapid downturn. Running parallel to this was the rapid popular mobilization against Perez Jimenez, who was removed from power following a coup d'etat on January 23, 1958.[95] After civilian and military cooperation in the insurrection that ended the dictatorship, Venezuela returned to a democratic government, and a year later, Rómulo Betancourt was elected president.[96] Leo Matiz's role in the decline of the dictatorship was predominantly documentary. On assignment with the magazine *Momentos*, his photographs illustrated a report on the coup d'etat by Gabriel García Márquez, and in 1959, the magazine published his photographs of Fidel Castro's visit to Caracas following the Cuban Revolution. In 1961, Matiz became the official photographer of Betancourt through the Palacio de Miraflores, the official residency of the Venezuelan president.[97] Concurrent with Matiz's shift in professional focus, the Venezuelan art scene erupted with the long-held disillusionment with the geometric abstraction that was starting to be associated with the dictatorship of the decade before.[98] Works like the canvases of Elsa Gramcko became grittier, with corroded iron, sand, and scrap wood.[99] New literary and visual art groups like El Techo de la Ballena (1960-1968) put on controversial exhibitions that not only went against the grain of universally abstract modern language, but rejected the binary between abstraction and figuration in the first place. At the 1960 exhibition "Lived Spaces," Venezuelan artists argued for an

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[95] Iturrieta, "An Appraisal of Contemporary Venezuela," 41.
[96] Zimmerman, "Corroding Geometries: Elsa Gramcko, Automobility, and the Paradoxes of Venezuelan Modernity, 1955–1965," 58.
[97] Mira, "Imaginario Colombiano: Fotografías de Leo Matiz, 1940-1970," 23.
[98] Rossi,"Redes Latinoamericanas De Arte Constructivo," 121.
[99] Zimmerman, "Corroding Geometries: Elsa Gramcko, Automobility, and the Paradoxes of Venezuelan Modernity, 1955–1965," 163.

approach to abstraction that "proposed viewing abstraction as an existentialist meditation on the amorphous without positing a division between figurative art as an inclusive form, legible by the common person, and abstraction as a falsely universal, elitist and hence reactionary language."[100] Like Jorge Zalamea's proposal of an *arte testimonio*, the Venezuelan Informalists argue for a restructuring of how critics – and artists – consider the artistic expression that was happening around them in real time. Indeed, it is likely that Zalamea's writing on *arte testimonio* came about because of works, performances, and writings like the Lived Spaces event in 1960, as his article on the topic was published in the mid-sixties. This perspective, which came to the forefront (out of the "nooks") of the Venezuelan art scene in the early 1960s, is the context within which to read Matiz's *Estructuras (Structures), Venezuela* (1960) (Figure 24).

In *Estructuras*, Matiz's two characteristic formal elements are exaggerated to their limits. The black and white photograph is composed of only two tones: gray and black. The sky behind the geometric lines of the structure and the silhouettes of the figures is untextured. Matiz's camera is positioned almost directly below the figures; the sharp angle has warped the proportions of the figures, made even more ambiguous by the lack of detail on their bodies. The beams of the construction are almost perfectly symmetrical, but the human figures disrupt this order by intersecting with the parallel lines created by the beams that they stand on. The image is imbued with a sense of potential energy, as the men are suspended from above by the skeletal structure. By standing freely and untethered upon the beams, they are constantly at risk of falling, hovering in between safety and a free fall. However, their encounter seems friendly. The right-most figure steps forward and is facing the man to the left, suggesting that they are engaged

[100] Gabriela Rangel, "An Art of Nooks: Notes on Non-Objectual Experiences in Venezuela," in *Emisfera*, Vol. 8 No. 1, 2011.

in conversation, and not concentrating hard on the position of their feet or the distribution of their weight. This makes their balancing act a feat of skill and practiced expertise.

The presence of the human figure, although anonymous within a field of abstraction, allows for a wider understanding of how established dichotomies of figuration and abstraction, upheld and fought over in the 1950s, can be fused, meshed together, or all together discarded. Here, ideas of the constructed space as monumental and the spectacle are twisted to account for the labor space as a social one. The left-most man even appears to be sitting as he talks to the figure on the right, with his legs outstretched and his hands gripping the beams. The image of construction that Matiz has chosen to capture differs from the glossy, completed, and seemingly empty scene of the *Centro Simón Bolívar.* The angles of the construction that point up and out into space, and the relationship between the human figures and the beams prevent the composition from becoming *too* flat. Silhouettes are designed to pronounce flatness, outline, and profile, but in *Estructuras,* the human figures and their interaction anchor the image in the social and the real. In looking, the viewer makes the decision to take into account or ignore the human figure's visual relationship with the structure. Looking at the whole composition, it is possible to distinguish between line and figure and imagine a scene that explains the subject's positions or locations. On the other hand, it is also possible to focus on just the sitting figure as one with the two lines that frame him, creating an uncategorizable, amorphous shape. *Estructuras* is not a resolution or perfect coexistence between figure and abstraction. Instead, it offers a display of oscillations between both the human figure and geometry.

To conclude, I return my attention to *La red, pavo real del mar* (1939) (Figure 1). As one of the earliest of Matiz's photographs, it displays formal and thematic elements that can be traced throughout his artistic production in Mexico City, Bogotá, and Caracas. As I said in the

introduction, Matiz's attention to the figure within a field of intersecting lines and two-dimensional silhouettes incorporates both figuration and abstraction, which are frequently situated as opposite poles in histories of Latin American art by both critics of the time and scholars today. In addition to showing how the human figure and the constructed field of abstraction coalesce into the social reality of that practiced and performed labor, the figures of Matiz's photographs *La red* and *Estructuras* (1961) disrupt the intersecting lines of the fishing net and the construction beams from two pivotal art historical moments, almost twenty years apart (Figure 25). Thus, following these narratives of messy friendships, contradictory politics, and unfixed aesthetic tendencies along Matiz's movement between cities likewise disorders the imposed oppositions often placed onto the art scenes of Mexico City, Bogotá, and Caracas. Each of these photographs locates Matiz in its own distinct historical moment tied to a specific urban space. Returning to this metaphor of the net, my project weaves Matiz's channels of access into each artistic scene, and unravels each photograph for both cohesion, disruption, and disorder.

Figures

Figure 1

Matiz, Leo. *La red, el pavo real del mar* (1939). Silver gelatin print.

Figure 2

Matiz, Leo. Cartagena, Colombia, 1970.

Figure 3

Matiz, Leo. “Especial de Morelos: Siembra en Morelos,” cover. *Nosotros*, no. 6, 1944.

ESTA ES LA FOTOGRAFIA DE MATIZ

ESTE, EL CUADRO DE SIQUEIROS

Un apasionante problema plantea la acusación del fotógrafo Leo Matiz, contra Siqueiros: ¿hasta qué punto es válida la utilización de fotografías por parte de un pintor? Por lo pronto, de una serie de casos que presenta Matiz, aquí está este. Por un lado, la fotografía; por otro el cuadro del pintor, que se exhibe actualmente en la exposición de Bellas Artes. No hay duda alguna de la similitud.

LEO MATIZ ACUSA A SIQUEIROS

EL FOTOGRAFO COLOMBIANO SOSTIENE QUE EL PINTOR APROVECHO INDEBIDAMENTE FOTOGRAFIAS SUYAS PARA COPIARLAS EN CUADROS Y NO EN MURALES

Por DIAZ RUANOVA

El jueves de la semana pasada, a mediodía, mientras el teniente Felipe Mountbatten tomaba por esposa a la Princesa Isabel de Inglaterra, en la Abadía de Westminster y mientras descansaban en sus hoteles los distinguidos delegados de la Unesco, una controversia de orden intelectual dividía a los Magos del café París, llegaba a los salones literarios de Coyoacán y San Angel, agitaba las redacciones de los diarios, subía a los *pent houses y roof agrdens* del Paseo de la Reforma; y en el Palacio de Bellas Artes, ante la escultura sagrada de Xochipilli, diosa de las Flores, de la Danza y de la Poesía Lírica, artistas e intelectuales se detenían para comentar:

—Siempre lo dijimos: Alfaro no es un artista; sus cuadros no pasan de carteles políticos, y ahora nos resulta un plagiario.

...tros, por lo contrario, exclama-... indignación: ...in darse cuenta, es-... norte-

Leo Matiz, fotógrafo que maduró su inteligencia, su sensibilidad y su arte ante el paisaje mexicano, lo que le valió, después de trabajar varios años en nuestro periodismo gráfico, un contrato con "Selecciones del Readers Digest" para viajar por América, acaba de regresar a México, país que le atrae y que ama apasionadamente. Apenas llegado, Matiz, periodista de emoción, plantea un problema que habrá de apasionar a todos los mexicanos: acusa al pintor David Alfaro Siqueiros de haber aprovechado indebidamente sus fotografías, las de Matiz, para varios de sus cuadros. ¿Tiene razón Matiz? ¿La tiene Alfaro Siqueiros? Cuestiones son estas las que habrán de responder los estudiosos, y a las que damos cabida, por encima de nuestra amistad para el fotógrafo colombiano, por encima de nuestra admiración para el pintor mexicano, porque creemos que encierran un interesante problema de estética, técnica y moral. Que hablen los enterados.—NOTA DE LA REDACCION.

LEO MATIZ

diletantes, esnobs y demás caterva, se hacían lenguas sobre la actitud que adoptaría el conocido Leo Matiz, acusado días antes, en "El Nacional", de calumniar a Alfaro Siqueiros y pretender chantagearlo. Una semana antes, Benjamín Ortega había publicado, en "El Universal Gráfico", que el coronelazo iba a ser acusado de plagio por el errabundo y célebre fotógrafo. Y muchas personas se preguntaban aún si el escándalo que ahora aclaramos no redundaría en perjuicio de Alfaro Siqueiros, a quien al consenso de los críticos sitúa en un lugar de privilegio dentro de la moderna pintura mexicana, al lado de Diego Rivera y José Clemente Orozco.

Y tres son también los personajes que provocaron esta controversia. De Alfaro Siqueiros, pintor genial, artista extraordinario, hombre de una integridad absoluta en sus ideas políticas y sociales, sería obvio hacer aquí la semblanza que el público conoce; y la actual Exposición de Bellas Artes lo ha llevado al momento más feliz de su carrera. Del cronista de arte el "El Nacional" tampoco haremos el elogio, porque no se suponga que su amistad nos ciega y apasiona. Y por

Figure 4

Ruanova, Díaz. "Leo Matiz acusa a Siqueiros" en Revista de América, núm. 101, México, 29 de noviembre de 1947, p. 14-17.

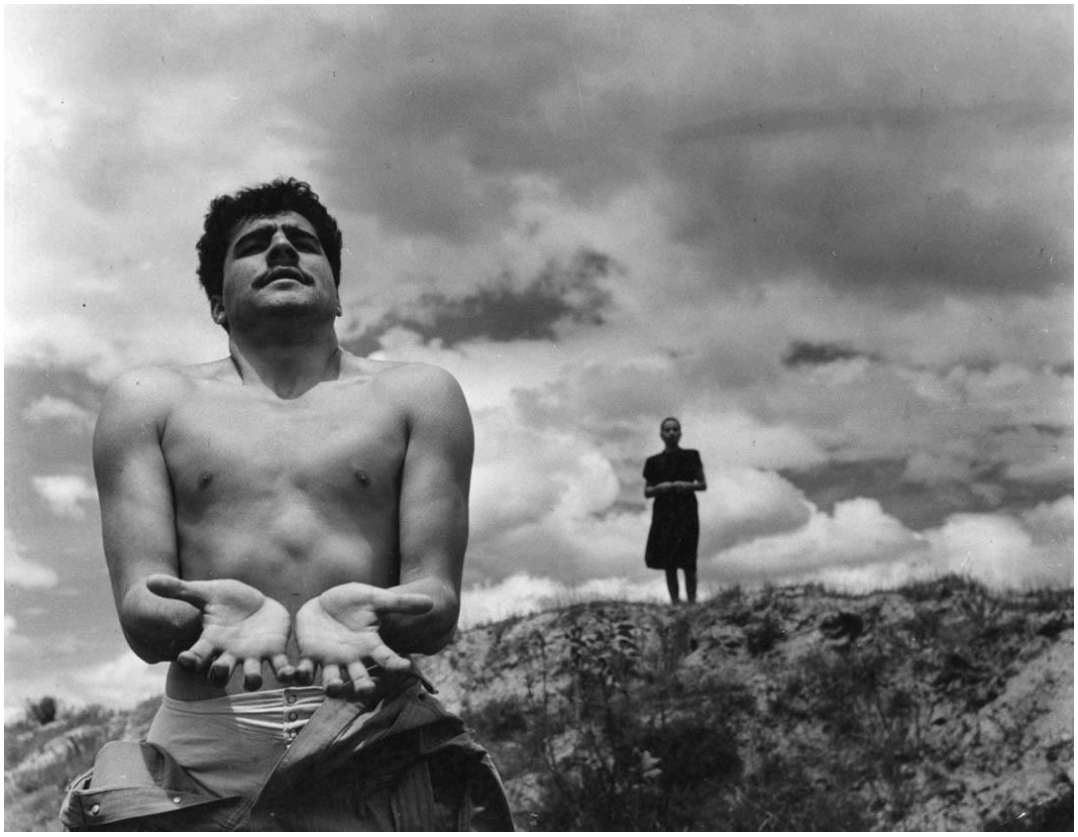


Figure 5

Matiz, Leo. Study for *Nuestra Imagen Actual*, 1945.

Figure 6

Siqueiros, David Alfaro, Josep Renau, and the International Team of Plastic Artists. *Portrait of the Bourgeoisie*, view from top of stairs.

CUAUHTEMOC CONTRA EL MITO

SIQUEIROS REINICIA SUS TRABAJOS EN MEXICO CON LA EXHIBICION DE UN MURAL EN EL QUE DA EXPRESION CONCRETA A SUS TESIS ARTISTICAS

Por HORACIO QUIÑONES
Redactor de HOY.

La iniciación de los trabajos del Centro de Arte Realista en México, fundado por David Alfaro Siqueiros, pero en el que participan figuras tan notables en la pintura mexicana como la del gran José Clemente Orozco, se efectuó con la exhibición semi-privada del último mural del pintor revolucionario: "Cuauhtémoc Contra el Mito".

Este mural se encuentra en el edificio número 9 de las calles de Sonora —local del Centro—, en el muro sur del segundo piso, a cuya izquierda sube una escalera. La escalera, el muro y el mural, forman una sola unidad arquitectónica, complementada todavía más con dos esculturas de Arenal que, debajo de la escalinata, contribuyen a integrar un todo armónico y equilibrado a la sensibilidad del espectador, pues el tema de las esculturas es el mismo del de la pintura, y llenan el espacio que se encuentra en la parte inferior derecha del conjunto, tal como se puede ver en la fotografía que se publica en estas planas.

De este mural se pueden desprender innumerables consecuencias, y sin pretender apoturias todas, apuntaremos las que creemos que son más importantes.

PRIMERA TESIS

La primera tesis sostenida por este mural, no es nueva ni desconocida: simplemente está frecuentemente olvidada por los pintores de murales. Orozco es una excepción, desde luego; sus trabajos generalmente están precisamente ajustados a la norma siguiente: **un mural debe ser parte integrante del conjunto arquitectónico.**

La pintura mexicana, al provocar el renacimiento del mural, y en su primera explosión de entusiasmo, olvidó con frecuencia esta necesidad lógica de la pintura de este género. En otras ocasiones, la ciencia del pintor no fué suficiente para vencer las dificultades técnicas que se originaban en la falta de un entendimiento previo entre el arquitecto y el pintor. Esta discrepancia es frecuente en estos tiempos que a veces se asombra más revueltos que revolucionarios; en otras épocas los arquitectos estaban imbuídos del mismo espíritu que los pintores, y con un ningún entendimiento previo, coincidían en sus conceptos más generales.

En el cuadro mural de Siqueiros se observará, a la simple vista, cómo todo integra una unidad, hasta las esculturas y la escalinata, que podrían poseer parte de la misma pintura, la escalinata como una barrera que el caballo del conquistador se apresta a saltar; barrera en la que se apoya Cuauhtémoc, las esculturas como símbolos del imperio derrumbado.

SEGUNDA TESIS

La segunda tesis expuesta en el mural de Siqueiros se refiere al empleo de materiales y métodos modernos en la pintura.

Las resinas sintéticas, producto típico de la industria contemporánea y de las investigaciones químicas del momento, forman parte importante de los materiales; el empleo de estas resinas tiende al logro de la transparencia y del volumen, tal como lo ha ajustado ya el notable crítico y pintor norteamericano Robert Mallary, en su inédito ensayo sobre el uso de materiales modernos en la pintura contemporánea. (Este ensayo de Robert Mallary, que puede ser un clásico de la crítica moderna, será posiblemente editado por el Centro de Arte Realista en México, con anotaciones de David Alfaro Siqueiros).

El problema, esquemáticamente expuesto, es el siguiente: la pintura pretende representar en el plano de una superficie, la ilusión de las tres dimensiones de la Naturaleza. Los pintores clásicos al óleo, sogroman más que ninguna otra esta representación, porque emplearon la transparencia del aceite en delgadas y sucesivas capas, para lograr la ilusión de un espacio, por medio de la filtración de la luz a través de una gama de barnices transparentes y opacos distribuídos convenientemente sobre la tela. Esta minuciosa técnica al óleo de los grandes maestros, se ha perdido ya.

Los pintores modernos no pueden, y no deben, aspirar al retorno de tales métodos tan lentos, alimentosos y pacientes, puesto que ya tienen otros medios más adecuados para lograr estos mismos efectos. Tales el empleo de las resinas sintéticas y el uso adecuado de los planos mismos del muro en que se pinta.

El mural de Siqueiros es, por ejemplo, cóncavo, lo que es más, se extiende la pintura a la pared de la izquierda que se halla a 90 grados respecto de la del fondo, y lo mismo al techo, al mismo ángulo. Sin embargo, la impresión visual no advierte claramente este quiebre de la superficie del muro (como se puede advertir en las fotografías), sino que, al contrario, la impresión concreta es la de que la pintura tiene tres dimensiones, con todas las distorsiones peculiares a un objeto corpóreo cuando se le ve desde distintos ángulos.

Para advertirlo más claramente, las patas izquierdas del caballo (según el espectador), están contenidas ya en el muro lateral, casi que no se advierte en la fotografía, sino que al estar ante el cuadro, parecen salir de éste, creando la ilusión clara de una tercera dimensión. La Cruz-Patoli del Mito está pintado sobre el techo; en la fotografía no se advierte, sino que parece la continuación hacia arriba del muro frontal; en cambio para el espectador, el arma espiritual y material parece, por estar pintada en el techo, estar suspendida sobre su mismo cabeza.

La utilización de las resinas sintéticas, de los accidentes del muro, y, en general, de la concepción de Siqueiros sobre la pintura moderna, conducirán a la creación de la pintura de tres dimensiones. (Robert Mallary).

TERCERA TESIS

No puede dejar de advertirse el contenido de la obra de Siqueiros, que entraña el análisis del sentido espiritual de la conquista de América.

En un próximo artículo procuraremos analizar este aspecto concreto del mural, no sólo por su importancia como la última obra de uno de nuestros más discutidos pintores, sino porque está llamada a ejercer una gran influencia renovadora en nuestro medio.

Desde un punto de vista general, la tercera tesis importante que presenta el mural, es la de que toda obra seria debe estar fundamentada en una preocupación épica de la época, para decirlo con más claridad, en una preocupación social del momento.

Esta es también una tesis no desconocida ni nueva, sino sólo olvidada. Nunca hubo gran artista que no la aplicara.

Ahora que se debate el problema de las culturas y de las razas; ahora que el hispanismo es bandera que se arrebatan los revolucionarios y los fascistas, cada cual a su modo; ahora que la integración propia de las nacionalidades en el continente americano es el evento social y político de más importancia en nuestra era, el mural de Siqueiros responde a la necesidad de dar expresión plástica a esa inquietud contemporánea.

Estas tres tesis son de lo más importante que se concluye de la obra de Siqueiros:

Primera: el mural debe ser parte integrante de la arquitectura.

Segunda: la pintura contemporánea debe utilizar medios contemporáneos.

Tercera: toda obra artística debe ser la representación de una preocupación social de la época.

No son todas ellas tesis nuevas ni desconocidas, pero son por el momento la bandera más justa para un renacimiento de las artes plásticas en México.

Luis Arenal, autor de las esculturas que complementan el nuevo mural de Siqueiros, contempla la obra desde el pasillo superior.

El mural último de David Alfaro Siqueiros, que se encuentra en exhibición en Sonora 9 —local del Centro de Arte Realista en México—, es la realización concreta de la tesis revolucionaria que sobre pintura ha venido sosteniendo este pintor mexicano. La obra es cóncava, y se extiende a las muros laterales y al techo; esto no se advierte en la fotografía; para el espectador le da la sensación de ver una pintura de tres dimensiones.

Figure 7

Quiñones, Horacio and Leo Matiz. “Cuauhtémoc contra el Mito”, in Hoy, México, no. 383, 24 June 1944, 60-61.

Figure 8

Matiz, Leo. David Alfaro Siqueiros painting a sculpture for *Cuauhtémoc Against the Myth*, 1944.

MADRE TIERRA: ENCORVADO SOBRE EL PANTANO DEL QUE EL ARROZ Y EL MISMO SE NUTREN, EL CAMPESINO MORELENSE MINCA LAS MATAS EN EL FANGO

ARROZ

Morelos, segundo productor de arroz en la República y orgulloso de la fama de Jojutla

A las diversas regiones geográficas no les ha sido dado el poder seleccionar a cuál renglón de la producción ván a dedicarse. Los Estados industriales, o agrícolas, o mineros, lo son por imperativos del clima, del subsuelo o de sus accidentes orohidrográficos.

Por ello, el Estado de Morelos ha sido y es fundamentalmente agrícola, aun cuando no deja de tener brillantes perspectivas en la industria (por razón de su proximidad al centro económico de la nación, de sus corrientes fluviales todavía hoy no debidamente aprovechadas y por la misma exuberancia de su tierra, que brinda gran variedad de productos vegetales susceptibles de industrialización en gran escala) y en la minería, pues posee valiosos yacimientos de yeso, cal y zafiro; de plata, plomo y cobre en Tlalquitenango, de manganeso en Ixtla, y de azogue en Miacatlán.

Morelos cuenta solamente con poco más de veinticuatro mil hectáreas de tierras de riego, contra 81,575 de temporal, 108,000 de pastales y muy cerca de 900,000 de monte. Sin embargo, la fertilidad de aquellas es tal que, no obstante lo exiguo de la superficie utilizable, en algunos renglones de la producción nacional —arroz y caña de azúcar, por ejemplo— alcanza cifras tan altas que son de gran importancia para el Estado de Morelos y que superan los totales que arrojan otros Estados con mayores superficies cultivadas y que cuentan entre las más altas del país.

EL ARROZ

Lógicamente, la Revolución trajo consigo una baja vertical en la producción agrícola de Morelos, pero ahora está definitivamente

El grano nutricio surgirá de esta tierna mata que una mano rudosa entierra en el cieno.

Raíz entre raíces, las futuras espigas parecen parásitos en las manos pétreas del indio.

La riqueza del mundo es nada más que tierra, agua, una hierba y unas manos que la cuiden.

Figure 9

Matiz, Leo. “Arroz,” p. 27, in *Nosotros,* México, no. 6, 27 May 1944.

Figure 9 (Detail)

Leo Matiz, “Arroz” (detail), p. 27, in *Nosotros,* México, no. 6, 27 May 1944.

Figure 9 (Detail)

Leo Matiz, “Arroz” (detail), p. 27, in *Nosotros,* México, no. 6, 27 May 1944.

Figure 10

Arce, Manuel Maples and Fermín Revueltas. "Irradiador N. 1: Revista de vanguardia," front and back cover, 1923.

Figure 11

"Airmen's homecoming," cover, in *Life*, New York City, no. 18, 1 May 1944.

Figure 12

Matiz, Leo. *First Exhibition of Fernando Botero*, 1952.

Figure 13

Matiz, Leo. *Los rechazados del salón,* 1952. Museo Miguel Urrutia, Bogotá.

Figure 14

Matiz, Leo. *Untitled*, 1948. Bogotá, Colombia. Archivo de Bogotá.

Figure 15

Matiz, Leo. *Untitled,* 1948. Bogotá, Colombia. Archivo de Bogotá.

Figure 16

Matiz, Leo. *Untitled*, 1948. Bogotá, Colombia. Archivo de Bogotá.

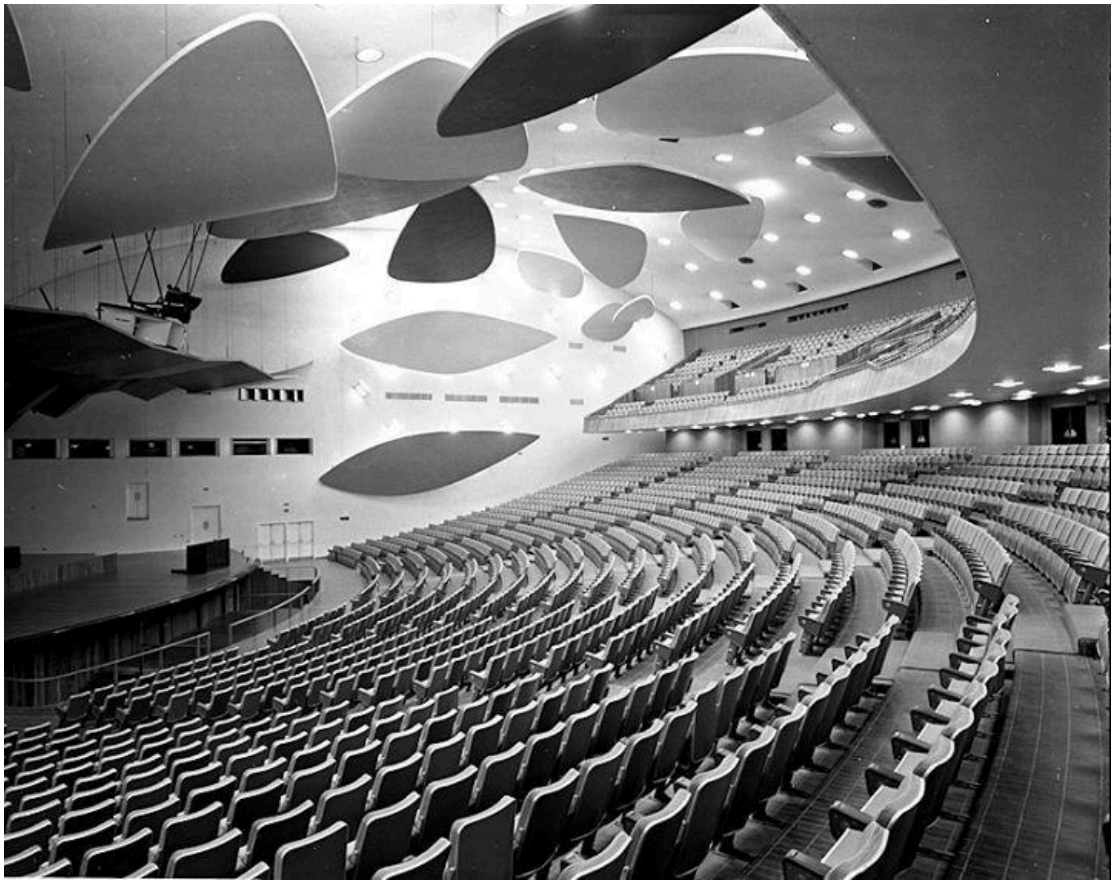


Figure 17

Matiz, Leo. *Aula Magna*, 1952-53.

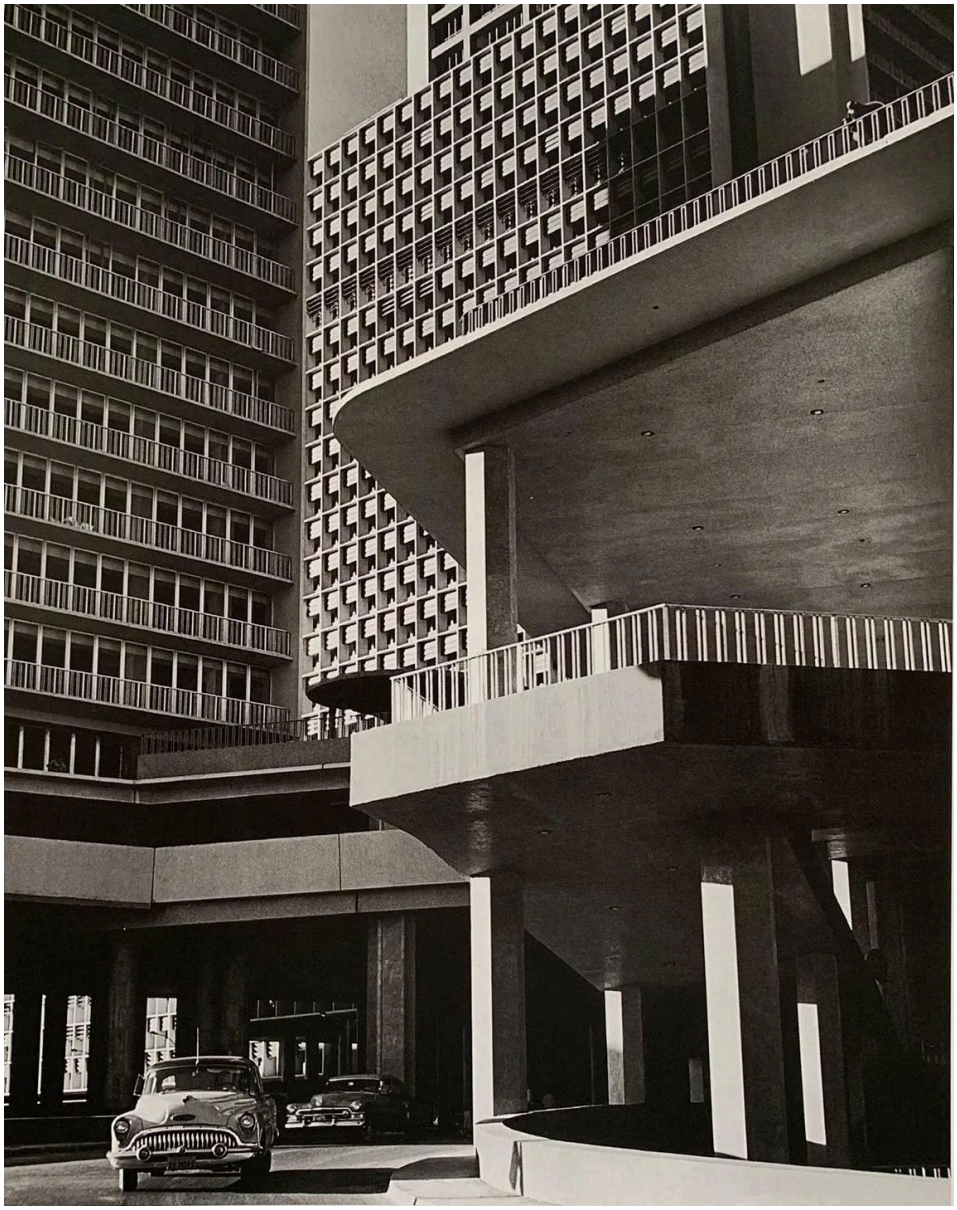


Figure 18

Matiz, Leo. *Centro Simón Bolívar.* Caracas, 1955. Colección Fundación para la Cultura Urbana.

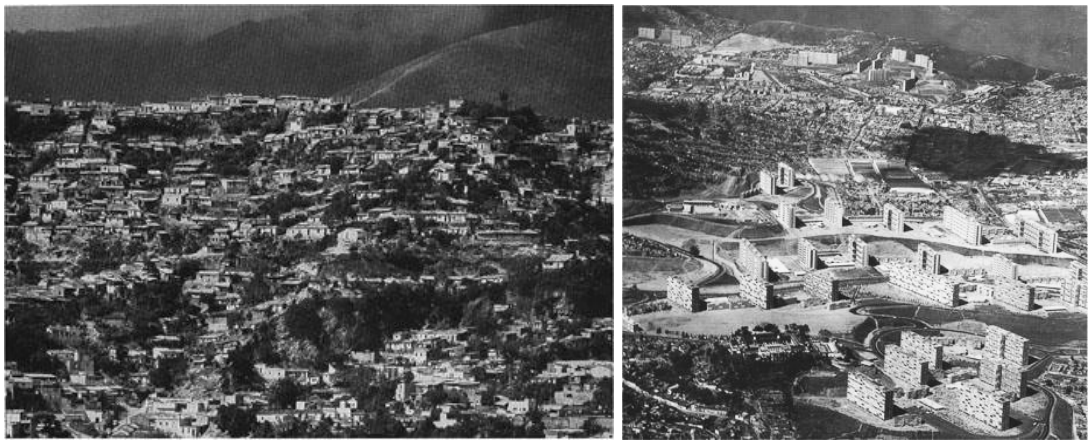


Figure 19

Before and after: *barrios ranchos* (left)
prior to the construction of the 23 de Enero *superbloques* (right) in 1956.

Figure 20

Avenida Bolívar, 1950s. Archivo de la Memoria Urbana, Caracas, Venezuela.

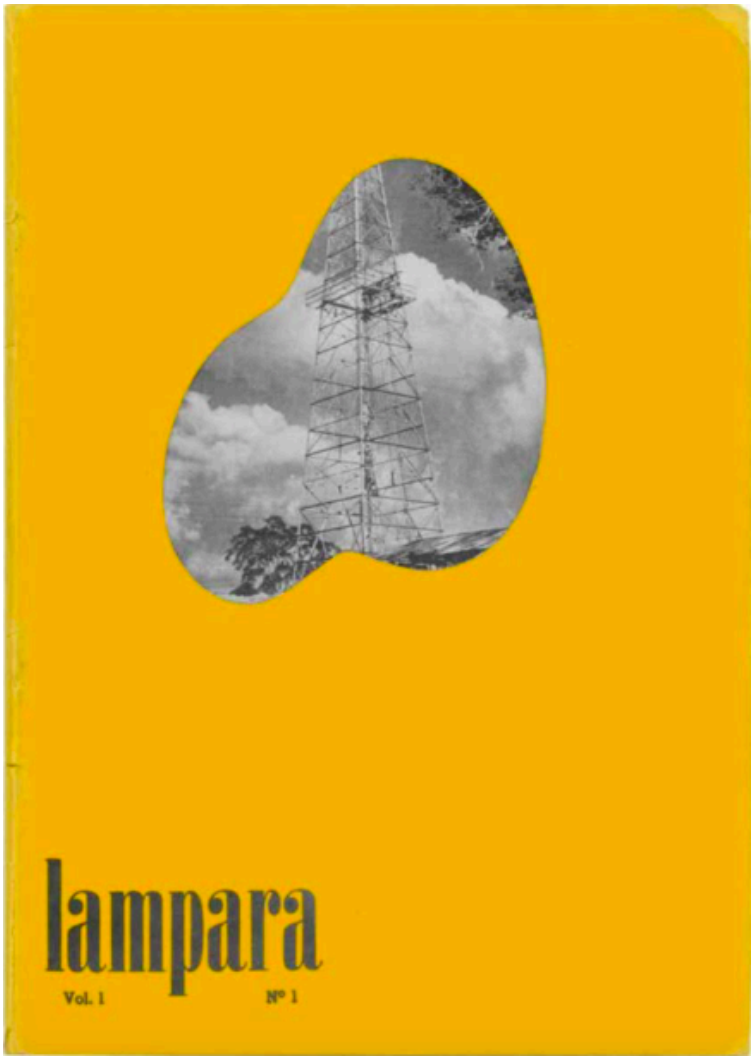
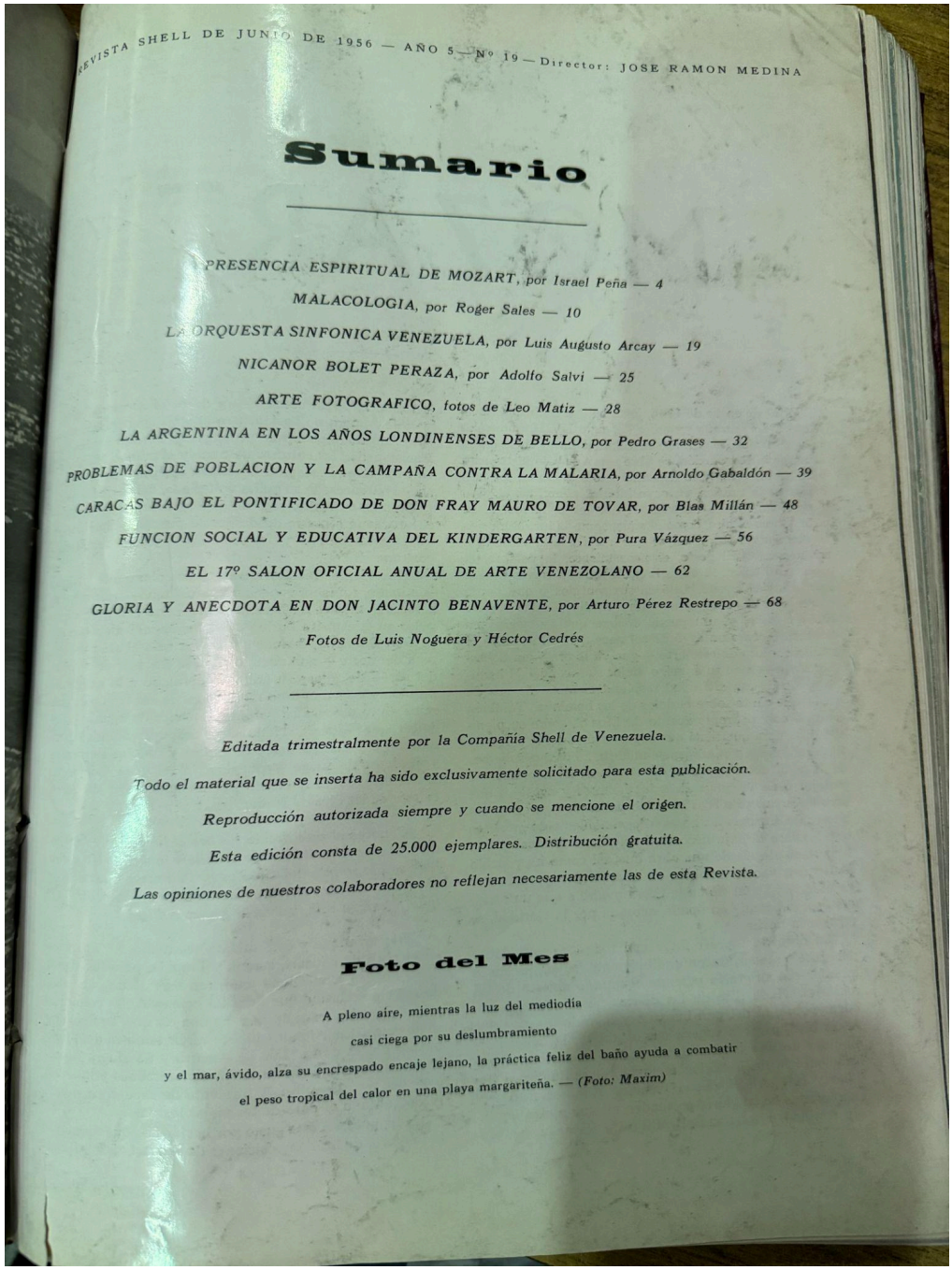


Figure 21

Matiz, Leo. Cover of *Lámpara*, No. 1, Vol. 1., 1952.



REVISTA SHELL DE JUNIO DE 1956 — AÑO 5 — Nº 19 — Director: JOSE RAMON MEDINA

Sumario

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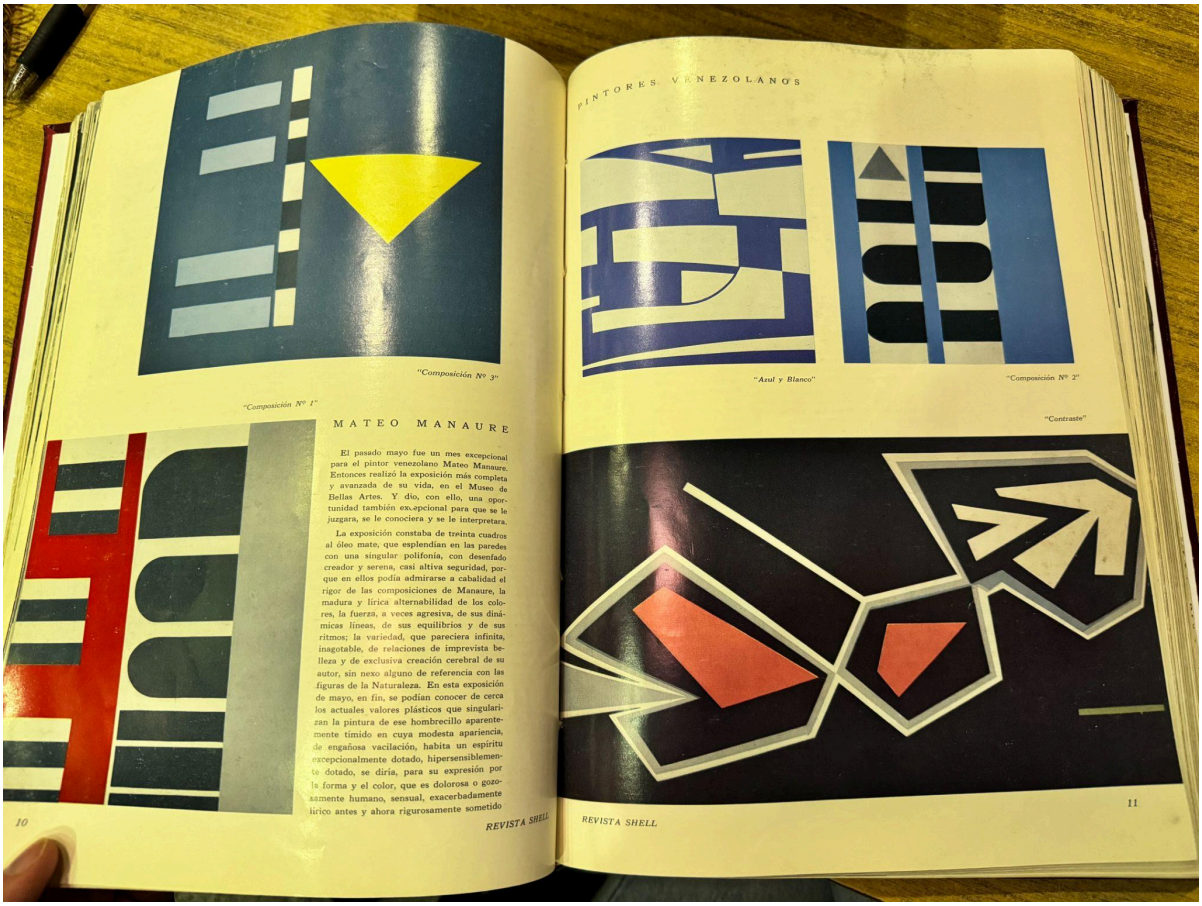
Foto del Mes

A pleno aire, mientras la luz del mediodía
casi ciega por su deslumbramiento
y el mar, ávido, alza su encrespado encaje lejano, la práctica feliz del baño ayuda a combatir
el peso tropical del calor en una playa margariteña. — *(Foto: Maxim)*

Figure 22

Revista Shell 5, no. 19, June 1956. Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango.



"Composición Nº 3"

"Composición Nº 1"

MATEO MANAURE

El pasado mayo fue un mes excepcional para el pintor venezolano Mateo Manaure. Entonces realizó la exposición más completa y avanzada de su vida, en el Museo de Bellas Artes. Y dio, con ello, una oportunidad también excepcional para que se le juzgara, se le conociera y se le interpretara.

La exposición constaba de treinta cuadros al óleo mate, que esplendían en las paredes con una singular polifonía, con desenfado creador y serena, casi altiva seguridad, porque en ellos podía admirarse a cabalidad el rigor de las composiciones de Manaure, la madura y lírica alternabilidad de los colores, la fuerza, a veces agresiva, de sus dinámicas líneas, de sus equilibrios y de sus ritmos; la variedad, que pareciera infinita, inagotable, de relaciones de imprevista belleza y de exclusiva creación cerebral de su autor, sin nexo alguno de referencia con las figuras de la Naturaleza. En esta exposición de mayo, en fin, se podían conocer de cerca los actuales valores plásticos que singularizan la pintura de ese hombrecillo aparentemente tímido en cuya modesta apariencia, de engañosa vacilación, habita un espíritu excepcionalmente dotado, hipersensiblemente dotado, se diría, para su expresión por la forma y el color, que es dolorosa o gozosamente humano, sensual, exacerbadamente lírico antes y ahora rigurosamente sometido

10

REVISTA SHELL

PINTORES VENEZOLANOS

"Azul y Blanco"

"Composición Nº 2"

"Contraste"

REVISTA SHELL

11

Figure 23

Revista Shell 5, no. 19, June 1956, pages 10-11. Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango.

Figure 24

Leo Matiz, *Estructuras,* Venezuela, 1960. Colección Banco de la República.

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