

# PROCESS OF CHANGE: YOUNG COSTA RICAN PAINTERS

Selections from the III Lachner & Sáenz Biennial



Museum of Modern Art of Latin America  
Gallery at the Organization of American States Building  
October 27 - November 27, 1988

**ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES**

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**Curator of the exhibit:**  
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Director of the  
Costa Rican Museum of Art  
**Acquisitions Committee**  
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The following activities have been scheduled to complement the present exhibit:

**GALLERY TALK**

OAS Gallery, 17th Street and Constitution Ave., N.W.

6 p.m.  
Wednesday  
October 26

**Proceso de Cambio** (In Spanish)  
(Virginia Vargas, Director, Museo de Arte Costarricense and guest curator of the exhibit *Process of Change: Young Costa Rican Painters*. With the participation of Costa Rican artists included in the exhibit.

**LECTURE**

201 18th Street, N.W.

6 p.m.  
Thursday  
November 10

**Arte Moderno de Costa Rica**  
(In Spanish)  
Eduardo Faith, Director, Department of Museums, Central Bank of Costa Rica and Fulbright Fellow from Costa Rica presently visiting the United States.

**ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES  
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## THE ARTISTS:

### MARJORIE AVILA

Born in San José, March 14, 1950. Studied with the artists Manuel de la Cruz González and Roberto Cabrera in San José, and later at the College of Fine Arts of the Universidad Autónoma, and at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Universidad de Costa Rica both in San José. In 1973 graduated from the Law School of the Universidad de Costa Rica. Has presented two individual exhibits in San José (1984 and 1988). Has been included in several group exhibitions in Panamá, Valparaíso (Chile), and San José.

1—"Los Dioscuras" (*Castor y Polux*), mixed media on canvas, 1988, 140 x 155 cms.

### RODRIGO BRENES

Born in San José, April 10, 1954. Studied at the School of Fine Arts of the Universidad de Costa Rica. Has presented five individual exhibits in San José (1979, two in 1981, 1982, and 1986), and one in Tegucigalpa (Honduras, 1988). Has been included in several group exhibitions in San José. Has received several distinctions among them Silver Medal at the 1987 National Salon "Manuel de la Cruz González" organized by the National Gallery of Contemporary Art a branch of the Costa Rican Museum of Art.

2—"Arriero, de la Serie Ayer" (*Arriero, from the Yesterday Series*), oil on canvas, 1988, 163 x 121 cms.

### ISIDRO CON WONG

Born in Puntarenas, February 25, 1931. Has had two individual exhibits in San José (1979 and 1982), and one in the United States (1988). Has been included in several group exhibitions and participated in competitions held in Lyon, Nice (France), Monte Carlo (Monaco), Caracas, and San José. Received Honorable Mention at the XXIII International of Monte Carlo (1988).

3—"Un Día Lluvioso" (*A Rainy Day*), acrylic on canvas, 1988, 40 x 40 cms.

### LEONEL GONZALEZ

Born in Heredia, 1962. Studied at the Zúricof Academy of Art in Moscow. Has presented five individual exhibits in San José (1982, 1986, two in 1987, and 1988) and one at the Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow (1985). Has been included in several group exhibits in San José.

4—"Mujer" (*Woman*), acrylic on canvas, 1988, 115 x 110 cms.

### ROBERTO LIZANO

Born in Alajuela, April 18, 1951. Graduated from the School of Engineering of the Universidad de Costa Rica in 1977. Studied sculpture at the School of Fine Arts of the Universidad de Costa Rica (1978-1981). Spent several months in Tokyo (1982). Has had three individual exhibits in San José (1984, 1985, and 1987), one in Tokyo (1982) and one in Berlin (1988). Has been included in several group exhibitions in San José and New York. Received Honorable Mention at the III Lachner & Sáenz Biennial this year.

5—"Madre Naturaleza" (*Mother Nature*), drawing on board, 1987, 115 x 90 cms.

### ALBERTO MORENO

Born in San José, 1930. Has presented six individual exhibits in San José (1970, 1972, 1976, 1980, and two in 1983). Has participated in several group exhibitions in the United States, Cuba, and Costa Rica. Received the prize at the III Lachner & Sáenz Biennial this year.

6—"78° 92' Longitud Oeste, 8° 18' Latitud Norte" (*78° 92' Western Latitude, 8° 18' Northern Latitude*), acrylic on wood, 1988, 100 x 540 cms.

### ALEJANDRO VILLALOBOS

Born in San José, May 12, 1962. Studied Fine Arts at the Universidad Autónoma de Centroamérica (1980-83), and Printmaking at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Universidad de Costa Rica both in San José. Has presented two individual exhibits in San José. Has been included in several group exhibitions in San Juan (Puerto Rico) and San José. Received Honorable Mention at the III Lachner & Sáenz Biennial this year.

14—"Fruto Mordido" (*Bitten Fruit*), mixed media on masonite, 1988, 80 x 120 cms.

### STELLA MORENO

Born in Cali (Colombia) in 1946. Studied at the School of Fine Arts of Cali (1974). Has presented one individual exhibit in San José (1986). Has been included in several group exhibitions in Valparaíso, Ancón (Perú), and San José.

7—"Mujer Azul" (*Blue Woman*), mixed media on paper mounted on canvas, 1988, 150 x 100 cms.

### GUILLERMO PORRAS ON

Born in Limón, May 27, 1958. Has presented three individual exhibits in San José (1981, 1983, and 1988), and one in Limón (1984). Has been included in several group exhibitions in San José and Miami. Has received several distinctions in Costa Rica among them Honorable Mention at the I Lachner & Sáenz Biennial (1984).

8—"El Anfitrión" (*The Host*), mixed media on canvas, 1988, 130 x 160 cms.

### JUAN RODRIGUEZ DEL PASO

Born in Tzucitlan (México) in 1961. Studied ceramics at the School of Fine Arts of the Universidad de Costa Rica (1983-1987). Has been included in several group exhibitions in San José.

9—"Día Nublado" (*Foggy Day*), oil on canvas, 1988, 140 x 130 cms.

### JOSE MIGUEL ROJAS GONZALEZ

Born in San José, May 24, 1959. Graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Universidad de Costa Rica. Has presented four individual exhibits in San José (1984, 1985, 1986, and 1987). Has been included in group exhibitions in Panamá, Havana, and San José. Has received several distinctions in San José among them Honorable Mention at the III Lachner & Sáenz Biennial this year.

10—"Silvia y Yo" (*Silvia and I*), acrylic on canvas, 1988, 156 x 100 cms.

### RODOLFO STANLEY

Born in San José, 1950. Has presented two individual exhibits in San José (1980 and 1986), and one in Caracas (1988). Has been included in several group exhibitions in Valparaíso, Caracas, Boston, Mexico City, and San José. Has received several distinctions in San Salvador, Miami, and the III Lachner & Sáenz Biennial in San José this year.

11—"Mal País ó Sinfonía Latinoamericana" (*Bad Country or Latin American Symphony*), acrylic on canvas, 1988, 120 x 100 cms.

### JORGE TAMAYO CABRERA

Born in Bolívar, Province of Carchi (Ecuador), in 1948. Has presented individual exhibits in Caracas (1972), Quito (1982), and San José (1980, 1983, and two in 1986). Has been included in several group exhibitions held in Caracas, San Salvador, Panamá City, and San José. Has received several distinctions in Quito and a Honorable Mention at the I Lachner & Sáenz Biennial in San José (1984).

12—"Jinete II" (*Rider II*), acrylic on canvas, 1988, 120 x 100 cms.

### FLORENCIA URBINA

Born in San José, 1964. Studied drawing at the Universidad Autónoma de Centroamérica in San José (1980-81), and later at the Arts Faculty of the University of Florida at Gainesville (1982-85). Has presented one individual exhibit and has been included in several group exhibitions all in San José.

13—"Manifiesto II" (*Manifesto II*), mixed media on wood, 1988, 136 x 122 cms.

## COSTA RICAN PAINTING OF THE YOUNG GENERATION

A small but significant group of works by young Costa Rican artists has been selected for presentation under the auspices of the Museum of Modern Art of Latin America by Dr. Bégica Rodríguez, the Director of that institution, and Angel Hurtado, Chief of its audio-visual Program. The two had served on the jury of the Third Lachner & Sáenz Biennial of Costa Rican Painting, and it was from the sixty artists participating in that event that fourteen were chosen for exhibition in Washington, D.C.

In Costa Rica today, as indeed throughout Latin America, artists are engaged in experimentation of widely varied nature in both the formal and the conceptual areas: the desire to innovate is the driving force in this effervescence of creative activity.

The young people whose work is now being presented abroad form part of a numerous generation of painters whose origins go back to the 1930's and the break with academic tradition which took place at that time. Teodoro Quirós was the leader of a youthful bank which freed itself from the ancient bond of art as imitation of life. Its members had begun to perceive that color can serve not merely to reproduce things as seen by the eye but also to evoke the spirit they exude. Influenced by the outdoor painting of the Impressionists, with their attention to the effects of light on objects, their readily visible brushstrokes, their impastos, and the color they imparted to shadows, they made the discovery of the Costa Rican landscape.

In 1960 Manuel de la Cruz González returned home after visits to Cuba and Venezuela, during which he had come in contact with experimentation in abstraction based on study of the work of Cézanne and the Cubists. Manuel de la Cruz broke subjects into fragments and distorted and simplified form, all the while maintaining reference to visible reality. He also enriched his experimental effort by incorporating into his compositions elements of pre-Columbian design. The direction he took coincided with the lines of endeavor of the "Grupo Ocho," and in the normal course of events he came to be looked upon as the dominant figure among the progressive. All rejected the Impressionistic concept of landscape and took the path toward modernism, with a preference for geometric abstraction.

The consensus of the "Grupo Ocho" regarding the proper form of artistic expression was largely a reflection of international trends. These were in strong contrast to the Costa Rican cultural environment, rooted in the traditional and the conventional, and with no inclination to change. The birth of contemporary painting was therefore attended by difficulty. Today, however, artists are much concerned with being up to date: they try to keep themselves informed of activities abroad, and their work takes a variety of directions, dependent upon their vehicle of choice. One of the characteristics of present-day painting is precisely an endless proliferation of styles, types, and forms of expression. Variety is the order of the day, both in abstraction and in figuration.

Within the broad panorama of Costa Rican art of the young generation, Dr. Bégica Rodríguez has made a selection emphasizing the figurative and the narrative. Some works stress human drama, others alude with deep feeling to social injustice; all clearly represent reflections on mankind and life.

Figuration takes on a markedly aggressive character in the paintings on social themes. José Miguel Rojas expresses himself dramatically in thick brushstrokes and impastos and irregularly developed color fields, which reflect both his interest in the gestural manner and the aesthetic influence of Action Painting. Irrespective of the means to which he resorts, Rojas' work never fails to convey human drama most effectively. For his part, Leonel González makes use of unusually strident color in his Neo-expressionist compositions, which thereby gain in strength and audience-appeal. In the case of both Rojas and González, the technique adopted establishes a mysterious equivalence between thought and action, expressive of the artists' personalities.

Florencia Urbina's "Manifiesto II" attracts the viewer by its bold use of color and the mastery of drawing which it reveals. Remarkably effective from the viewpoint of composition is the world of comic strips—everyday images which catch the eye and fascinate the spectator. Joaquín Rodríguez del Paso, another virtuoso draftsman, likewise produces compositions linked to comic strips. Both he and Florencia Urbina show the continuing influence of Pop Art on the younger generation as a means of communicating with the masses and denouncing the turn taken by political, economic, and social events in Latin America.

The themes of works by Alberto Moreno, Rodolfo Stanley, and Alejandro Villalobos relate to Latin American reality in a more intimist and mysterious manner than the foregoing. These three artists deliberately resist claims to originality in their studies of form, experimenting instead with conceptualist composition imbued with Latin American feeling.

The work of Stella Moreno is human rather than violent, lyric rather than forceful. The artist shows great technical ability in translating mental images into plastic forms. Her delvings into the psychological content of art establish an intimate personal relationship between her and the spectator. A somewhat similar reaction is produced by the work of Marjorie Avila, who explores universal myths expressive of the intrinsic values of human being.

The art of Jorge Tamayo, Rodrigo Brenes, and Guillermo Porras is indicative of a search for roots on their part. The three began as landscapists, but each has developed along his own line, always in keeping with folk traditions. Today they incorporate into their landscapes symbolic elements retrieved from those traditions. They work along conceptual lines and they have succeeded in creating an art which is fully our own, moving with freedom upon the international scene.

Both in concept and in use of materials, the work of Roberto Lizano bespeaks an authentically original personality. He thinks in terms of a fusion of painting and sculpture, in a bold endeavor to carry painting into the third dimension. In manner, means of expression, and aesthetic function, his creations constitute a hymn to free, spontaneous fantasy.

The young artists of Costa Rica are influenced by the great international art centers, but they are not passively obedient to them. On the contrary, ever since the 1960's our artists have partaken of styles, currents, movements, schools, and tendencies originating in great centers about with the firm intent of finding a means of expression which is truly our own.

Elizabeth Barquero  
Former Curator of the  
Costa Rican Museum of Art

The Museum of Modern Art of Latin America wishes to express the deepest appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the OAS Ambassador Guillermo Villalobos Arce and the Mission he represents for the cooperation given to this project.

The exhibition "Process of Change: Young Costa Rican Painters" has been made possible thanks to a generous grant from the Lachner & Sáenz Corporation of Costa Rica.

## PRESENTATION

*In May of this year I was honored with an invitation to serve on the jury of the Third Lachner & Sáenz Biennial in San José, Costa Rica. My colleagues on that occasion were Angel Hurtado, Chief of the Audio-Visual Program of the Museum of Modern Art of Latin America, and the distinguished Peruvian painter Fernando de Szyszlo.*

*We were all most favorably impressed with what we saw, and I conceived the idea of a show "Process of Change," which would present the gallery-going public in Washington with a sampling of the work which is currently being produced by Costa Rican painters of the younger generation. The patrons of the Biennial welcomed the proposal, and generously provided the funding which has made this exhibit possible. I take this opportunity to express to them my sincerest thanks for their support. My thanks go also to Virginia Vargas Mora, the director of the Museum of Costa Rican Art, for the collaboration she lent to the project, and to Elizabeth Barquero, who has provided the introductory essay which figures in this catalogue.*

*The Museum of Modern Art of Latin America has long striven to make known abroad the work of young artists on the rise in Latin America, and to provide a continuing view of developments in that area. The present exhibit therefore constitutes but a further step in an ongoing program.*

*The fourteen artists which I and Angel Hurtado selected for the current presentation in Washington are representative of the latest trends in their country. They are distinguished from the previous generation by the richness of their colors and the broad range of materials they employ. While overall their work constitutes what might be termed a re-evaluation of the figurative image, each of the artists has a personality and language peculiarly his or her own, divorced from the commonplace in criteria and trends.*

*Alberto Moreno, Roberto Lizano, José Miguel Rojas, Rodolfo Stanley, Alejandro Villalobos, Joaquín Rodríguez del Paso, Leonel González, Rodrigo Brenes, Marjorie Avila, Guillermo Porras, Stella Moreno, Isidro Con Wong, Florencia Urbina, Jorge Tamayo—these are but some of the names composing the Costa Rican Generation of the Eighties, the expression of their country's pictorial development at the present time.*

Bélgica Rodríguez  
Director  
Museum of Modern Art of Latin America



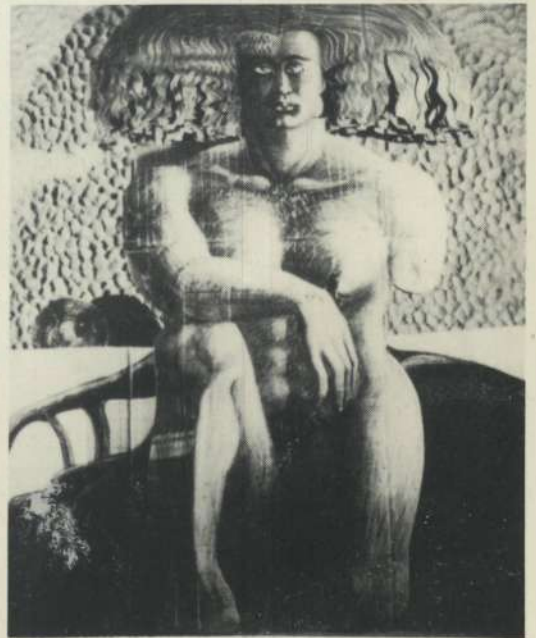
Leonel Gonzalez  
*"Woman"*



Florencia Urbina  
*"Manifesto II"*



Stella Moreno  
*"Blue Woman"*



Roberto Lizano  
*"Mother Nature"*