

ABSTRACT ART EXHIBITION

"The ideology of abstraction offers various remedies for our endemic artistic ailments: relinquishment of appearances, overcoming of sentimentalism, internalization, a new spirit to observe nature and the rational practice of essential elements". Juan Acha (1961)

If we discuss 20th century art history, we need to mention the notorious triumph, around 1950, of abstraction, a type of research from within and towards painting, specifically regarding the effort to define what painting is in itself. In Latin America, abstraction arose as an evident strategy of historical insertion. For many Latin American artists, it was a way of thinking themselves as citizens of a region that belonged to the universal history of art.

As Mirko Lauer says¹, the arrival of abstract art to Peru promised to solve the antagonism between localism and universalism, pure art and social art, urban and rural. Nevertheless, it would soon find its limits in the very social structure of the country. Hence, contrary to what happened in other realities, the factors that drove to the abandon of figurative painting were not present in Peru. The urbanization was precarious, which gave way to a new city very much connected to the rural world. The industrialization neither created jobs nor absorbed the whole migrant population. Moreover, the capacity to produce science and technology was not developed. Therefore, the reality that emerged didn't resemble the homogenous society promised in the first world manuals of development.

Then, it is not surprising that critical assessments of modernity have become constant in the work of many local artists. Few, nonetheless, have shown such sustained interest in the utopian visions of Peruvian modernity and the complexities that meant its implantation in a cultural context that necessarily transforms its initial proposal. *Abstract art exhibition* is embedded in these critical but at the same time nostalgic reflections about our modernity. Aramburu seems to understand history as a porous reality that combines facts and fiction; a situation in front of which he proposes to resume the language of abstraction to re-signify it.

The exhibition consists on two works that place themselves in the intersection between art and architecture, and explore subjects related with the legacy of the mid-century Peruvian modernist project:

Abstract art sculpture is a lattice wall 12 meters (40 ft) long consisting of a pattern that is a copy of a decorative brick marketed by a local Peruvian company during the sixties and seventies. In the context of the exhibition, the lattice —a distinctive element of colonial architecture that has been reinterpreted in modern architecture— is stripped from its original function and ceases to be a utilitarian object. This divorce between the object and its everyday functionality points towards a cosmetic or merely ornamental modernity; at the same time, it reveals its colonial substrate.

The second artwork is comprised by a series of drawings made with cement over paper, which propose the flattening and sterilization of volumes based on various graphic sources of the 1950's. Ranging from magazine covers and advertisements² to paintings of renowned local abstract artists³.

Abstract art exhibition works as a reflection about the precarious but perennial presence of the modernist tradition in Peruvian culture. Insisting on the resonances of modernity might seem anachronistic next to the emergence of contemporaneity, a period of enormous experimental productivity that has promised inclusion beyond traditional modernist confines. However, Aramburu seems to be conscious that in Peru modernity and its promises are far from being a finished chapter. It may be a truncated process, but never vanquished.

Florencia Portocarrero, 2014

¹ Mirko Lauer, *Introducción a la Pintura Peruana del Siglo XX*. (Lima: Mosca Azul, 1976), p. 176

² For example, *El Arquitecto Peruano*.

³ The complete series includes artists Piquerías, Rodríguez Larrain, Moncloa, Szyszlo, Santibañez, Grau, Lopez Paulet, among others.