

...means an authentically based art – real.

Not naturalist art (which is always subjective, based on personality and fleeting emotion), but art which is steadfastly *linked to the city*: commenting on or praising its life, emphasizing it, exhibiting it, and even guiding it perhaps.

If I said *decorative*, it was only to make things clearer, because in fact that kind of art is *monumental art, plane-ist and two-dimensional, schematic and synthetic*; art of grand rhythms and closely linked to architecture.

So, if we are to arrive at a *truth*, it will be an *absolute truth*, not a partial unilateral truth, because our own genuine style will always show through, so the *art of today* will necessarily be linked to the *art of yesterday*.

That, to my mind, would be the function of the Southern School which we want to create on this eastern shore of the

## 7.1

### Three Appeals for a Modern Direction To the New Generation of American Painters and Sculptors

#### 1. *Detrimental influences and new trends*

Our work is, in the main, extemporaneous. It develops erratically and produces next to nothing of lasting value to match the vitality of our great racial characteristics. Isolated from the new important trends, which to our detriment we receive with hostility and prejudice, we adopt only those *decadent influences* from Europe which poison our youth and prevent us from seeing *fundamental values*: the anaemia of Aubrey Beardsley; the preciosity of Aman Jean; the ill-fated archaism of Ignacio Zuloaga; Anglada Camarassa's fireworks and the sculptured confections of Bistolfi, Queralt, Benlliure, etc.; all that *marketable art nouveau*, dangerously camouflaged as art, which sells so splendidly here (especially if it is imported from Spain).

From the early nineteenth century onwards, Spanish art has shown a marked decadence. Recent group shows in Madrid,

With that aim in mind, then, and conscious of the magnitude of such art, either on a small canvas or a mural, I insist that this kind of art must enter into the rhythms – not only into the fixed eternal plastic laws, but also into the system of proportions whereby through *measure* you achieve unity, i.e. harmony. So, every artist (in visual arts or music), *independently yet united* with others by the *laws of harmony*, should give Uruguayan art a *unity* which, at the moment, it does not but should, like all great art throughout history everywhere, should have. That is: a *Style*. This, of course, demands a *true understanding of the problems of art*, and the *superior level* we should by now have reached.

JOAQUÍN TORRES-GARCÍA  
Uruguay, February 1935

which represented the very latest in contemporary Spanish art, make one's heart sink: traditional literary art; theatrical art in the folkloric *zarzuela* manner, a disease which we through racial affinity have caught. And yet many years ago, three Spaniards of genius, Spaniards of their time – Sunyer, Picasso and Juan Gris – avidly embraced Cézanne and obeyed the husky voice of Renoir.

Fortunately a new group of painters and sculptors is emerging in Spain who feel restless, want to experiment and investigate, and free themselves from the enormous weight of their great traditions and become more universal. Most of this group are from Catalonia.

We extend a rational welcome to every source of spiritual *renewal* born of Paul Cézanne: the invigorating substance of *Impressionism*; the purifying reductionism of *Cubism* in its diverse

modern machine which provokes unexpected contemporary aspects of our daily life under construction, the sober practical modern buildings, devoid of architectural mense towers of iron and cement stuck in able furniture and utensils (*plastic material*). Let us dress our *human invulnerability* in subjects', 'new aspects'. And let us, first, be convinced that, despite periods of nature, the art of the future must be forever high

#### 2. *Prevalence of the constructive spirit of the lyrical*

We draw silhouettes in pretty colours. We concentrate on superficial *arabesques* and forget important primary shapes – *cubes, cones, spheres* – which should provide the *skeleton* of all our work. Us, the painters, impose the *constructive* decorative. Colour and line are expressive in any order; the *fundamental essence*, the *basic* the *magnificent geometrical structure* of form, workings, and architectural materialization in perspective – which, by imposing 'limits', creates an atmosphere of '*volumes in space*'. Whether dynamic or static, let us first and foremost construct on our own personal emotional reality with scrupulous regard for the truth.

Let us be specific and unambiguous about

## 7.2

### *El Machete*: Newspaper of the Workers *Manifesto of the Union of Mexican Painters and Sculptors*

To the Indian race humiliated for centuries by the executioners by the praetorians; to

ramifications; the new emotive forces of *Futurism* (but not that which naïvely tries to crush the previous invulnerable process); the absolutely new *reappraisal* of 'classic voices' (Dada is still developing); truths which all flow into the main stream, the multiple psychological aspects of which we will easily find within ourselves; preparatory theories endowed with fundamental elements which have brought true plasticity back to painting and sculpture, enriching it with new admirable elements.

An essential part of strengthening our art is bringing back *lost values* into painting and sculpture and, at the same time, endowing them with *new values*! Like the classical masters, let us make our work conform to the inviolable laws of aesthetic balance and become as skilled craftsmen as they were. Let us look to the old masters for their constructive base, their great sincerity, but let us not use archaic 'motifs' which for us would be exotic. *Let us live our marvellous dynamic age!* Let us love the modern machine which provokes unexpected plastic emotions, the contemporary aspects of our daily lives, the life of our cities under construction, the sober practical *engineering* of our modern buildings, devoid of architectural complications (immense towers of iron and cement stuck in the ground), comfortable furniture and utensils (plastic materials of the first order). Let us dress our *human invulnerability in modern clothing*; 'new subjects', 'new aspects'. And let us, first and foremost, be firmly convinced that, despite periods of natural transitory decadence, the art of the future must be forever higher.

## 2. Prevalence of the constructive spirit over the decorative or analytical

We draw silhouettes in pretty colours. When we sculpt we concentrate on superficial arabesques and forget the concept of important primary shapes – cubes, cones, spheres, cylinders, pyramids – which should provide the skeleton of all artistic architecture. Let us, the painters, impose the constructive spirit on the merely decorative. Colour and line are expressive elements of a secondary order; the *fundamental essence*, the basis of the work of art, is the *magnificent geometrical structure of form* – the concept, inner workings, and architectural materialization of form and perspective – which, by imposing 'limits', creates the depth and atmosphere of 'volumes in space'. Whether our view be dynamic or static, let us first and foremost construct. Let us mould and build on our own personal emotional reactions to nature, with a scrupulous regard for the truth.

Let us be specific and unambiguous about the organic 'quality'

## 7.2

*El Machete: Newspaper of the Workers and Peasants*  
*Manifesto of the Union of Mexican Workers, Technicians, Painters and Sculptors*

To the Indian race humiliated for centuries; to soldiers made executioners by the praetorians; to workers and peasants

of the plastic 'elements' we work with; *creating* matter which is solid or fragile, rough or soft, opaque or transparent, etc., and determining its weight.

Understanding the wonderful human resources in 'black art', or 'primitive art' in general, has given the visual arts a clarity and depth lost four centuries ago along the dark path of error. Let us, for our part, go back to the work of the ancient inhabitants of our valleys, the Indian painters and sculptors (*Mayas, Aztecs, Incas*, etc.). Our climatic proximity to them will help us assimilate the constructive vitality of their work. They demonstrate a fundamental knowledge of nature which can serve as a point of departure for us. Let us absorb their synthetic energy, but avoid those lamentable archaeological reconstructions ('*Indianism*', '*Primitivism*', '*Americanism*') which are so in vogue here today but which are only short-lived fashions.

Our framework must be firm but, if necessary, we can use caricature in order to humanize. The theories of '*painting light*' ('*Luminism*', '*Pointillism*', '*Divisionism*'), that is, which simply copy or interpret luminosity analytically, lack any strong creative ideal, art's only real objectivity. They are discarded puerile theories which we have welcomed with frenzy in the Americas recently, sickly branches of the tree of '*Impressionism*' pruned by Paul Cézanne, the restorer of the essential art form. We must turn '*Impressionism*' into something which endures like museum art.

## 3. Let us abandon literary motifs. Let us devote ourselves to pure art!

Let us reject theories anchored in the relativity of '*national art*'. *We must become universal!* Our own racial and regional physiognomy will always show through in our work.

Our Free Schools are *open-air academies* (as dangerous as the official academies in which at least we learn about the classic masters); in them we have commercially oriented teachers and a type of criticism which stifles the individuality of aspiring artists.

Let us close our ears to the critical dictates of our poets. They produce beautiful pieces of literature totally divorced from the real value we seek in our work.

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scourged by the greed of the rich; to intellectuals uncorrupted by the bourgeoisie.