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Modernism and the Search for Roots

THE RADICAL artistic developments that transformed the visual arts in Europe in the first decades of this century – Fauvism, Expressionism, Cubism, Dada, Purism, Constructivism – entered Latin America as part of a ‘vigorous current of renovation’ during the 1920s. These European movements did not, however, enter as intact or discrete styles, but were often adapted in individual, innovative and idiosyncratic ways by different artists. Almost all those who embraced Modernism did so from abroad. Some remained in Europe; some, like Barradas with his ‘vibrationism’, created a distinct modernist manner of their own [Pls 6.2,3,4,5], or, in the case of Rivera in relation to Cubism, and of Torres-García to Constructivism, themselves contributed at crucial moments to the development of these movements in Europe. The fact of being American, however, was registered in some form in the work of even the most convinced internationalists. Other artists returning to Latin America after a relatively brief period abroad set about creating in various ways specifically American forms of Modernism.

The relationship between radical art and revolutionary politics was perhaps an even more crucial issue in Latin America than it was in Europe at the time; and the response of writers, artists and intellectuals was marked by two events in particular: the Mexican Revolution and the Russian Revolution. The impact of the Mexican Revolution was immense, and the activities of the Mexican mural painters in interpreting and disseminating the ideals of the Revolution, in promoting the idea of an art for the people, and in helping to realize a cultural nationalism under revolutionary conditions were felt far beyond Mexico itself, and were important factors in contemporary cultural and artistic debates.

The different groups and movements which constituted the avant-garde announced themselves, as did their counterparts in Europe, through manifestos and reviews, exhibitions and lectures. Among the most significant of these reviews were *Klaxon* (1922) and the *Revista de Antropofagia* (1928) in São Paulo, *Actual* and *El Machete* (1924) in Mexico, *Martín Fierro* (1924) in Buenos Aires and *Amauta* (1926) in Peru.¹ The debates in these reviews and the pronouncements of the manifestos (many of them translated here in the Appendix for the first time) reveal a number of crucial oppositions and areas of difference. While several movements maintained the principle of the organic unity of revolution in art and in politics (*El Machete*, as the voice of the Syndicate of Technical Workers,

6.1 Detail of Pl. 6.37.



6.2 Rafael Barradas, *Study*, 1911, oil on cardboard, 46×54 cm., Museo Nacional de Artes Plásticas, Montevideo.

6.3 Rafael Barradas, *Composition*, 1917, watercolour on paper, 51×54 cm., Museo Nacional de Artes Plásticas, Montevideo.





6.4 Rafael Barradas, *Gacho*, 1927, oil on cardboard, 60×40 cm., Museo Nacional de Artes Plásticas, Montevideo.

6.5 Rafael Barradas, *The Adoration of Kings and Shepherds*, 1928, oil on canvas, 105×93 cm., Museo Nacional de Artes Plásticas, Montevideo.



Painters and Sculptors, for instance, and *Amauta*), others insisted on artistic autonomy. There was a considerable range of opinion here, as there was in the debates on other central socio-cultural, literary and artistic issues. The break with the past, though rarely expressed quite as brutally as in Futurism or Dada, was usually affirmed in some form; sometimes this was accompanied by a more or less straightforward celebration of modernity, but more often a re-assessment of tradition was involved, and a rejection of the colonial period and the Europeanized culture of the nineteenth century in favour of a deeper, Indian cultural tradition. (The attempt to identify with a native as opposed to a European present is examined in more detail in Chapter 9 on 'Indigenism'.) Nationalism as against internationalism, and the regional versus the central and cosmopolitan, in Brazil especially, were also central issues.

For most artists the initiation into modern art involved initially a complete rupture with their past and their training. Although Europe had long been the cultural Mecca for artists and writers, the contacts had largely remained within a conservative and academic tradition. There had been no movement in the visual arts between c. 1880 and 1910 to correspond to the literary revival baptized 'Modernismo' by its greatest activist, the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío. Darío, who lived in Chile, Argentina, Paris and Madrid, 'galvanized literary life', challenging traditionalists who wanted to keep to the purity of Spanish Castilian and to outdated literary values.² He read 'contemporary French poets whose styles and rhythms he was to incorporate brilliantly into Spanish', and, with others of his generation, in looking to the Paris avant-garde, began to create the conditions for a Latin-American literary vanguard.

Impressionism and post-Impressionism, by contrast, had barely impinged on the visual arts. There were exceptions – the Mexican artist Clausell, for instance, who through his friend Dr Atl adopted Impressionism, the Colombian artist Andrés de Santa María, who developed a richly-coloured symbolist manner, and the exceptionally gifted Uruguayan painter Carlos Saez, who died in 1901 at the age of twenty-one. However, by the time Impressionism began to take root, artists were already coming in contact with more radical movements like Cubism and its variants, which provided them with a visual language they felt was better adapted to express the change in sensibility brought about by the rapidly modernizing and industrializing world. When Rivera returned to Mexico in 1921, already a post-Cubist painter and looking to a different form of visual expression, one adapted to a popular form of communication, he criticized the painters of the open-air academy at Coyoacán for still producing Impressionist pictures.³

The rupture for Latin American artists was greater than for, say, the cubists themselves, for, however radical Cubism was in the hands of Picasso and Braque, its relationship with previous art – especially with Cézanne – could easily be perceived. This avant-garde tradition stemming from Manet, and Cézanne, had no parallel in Latin America.

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Diego Rivera encountered Cubism from a quite different direction, and indeed his serious interest in Cézanne dated from after his period as a Cubist. His claim to have gone to Europe to study with Cézanne, together with other myths about his development as a painter – that Posada was his real master, and that he had returned to Mexico to fight alongside the guerrillas in the Revolution, have turned out to be simply untrue. He spent the whole period of the Revolution in Europe, and Posada was not to enter his horizon until some years after his return to Mexico. Rivera travelled to Spain, on a scholarship from the governor of Veracruz in 1907, a precocious young painter who had had a successful career under the guidance of Velasco and Santiago Rebull at the San Carlos Academy, and looked set for a distinguished official career. In Madrid, Rivera began to move in avant-garde circles, having met the writer and critic Ramón Gómez de la Serna,⁴ but his painting still fluctuated between a *costumbrista* realism influenced by the Spanish painter Zuloaga, and Symbolism. He became absorbed in El Greco, and under the influence of a fellow Mexican, Zárraga, began mildly to accentuate the angular planes of his Toledo landscapes and picturesque subjects [Pl. 6.6]. By 1912 he was settled in Paris, among a group of Mexican painters that included Zárraga, Gerardo Murillo (Dr Atl) [Pl. 6.7], Adolfo and Emma Best Maugard, Jorge Enciso and Roberto Montenegro. Zárraga and Rivera were the most daring stylistically, but it was Rivera who committed himself fully to Cubism.

What is remarkable about Rivera's painting over the next three years was the way in which he moved through second-hand cubist manners – none the less impressive for that, especially in the can-



6.6 Diego Rivera, *At the Fountain near Toledo*, 1913, oil on canvas, 65×80 cm., Collection Señora Dolores Olmedo.

6.7 Dr Atl (Gerardo Murillo), *The Volcanos*, 1950, oil on masonite, 137×260 cm., Instituto Cultural Cabañas, Patrimonio de Jalisco, Guadalajara.





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vases which show the influence of his neighbour Mondrian, and those based on the epic cubism of Gleizes or Delaunay [Pl. 6.9] – to the forefront of the ‘movement’. He took an active part in theoretical debates, and after the outbreak of war in 1914, and the dispersal of the French Cubists, many to the Front, he, Picasso, Gris and Severini continued to explore and invent. In 1915 he painted an undoubted cubist masterpiece. ‘I recall’, he later said, ‘that, at this time, I was working in order to bring into focus the inmost truth about myself. The clearest revelation came from a cubist canvas, *The Zapatistas* [sic], which I painted in 1916 [sic]. It showed a Mexican peasant hat hanging over a wooden box behind a rifle. Executed without any preliminary sketch in my Paris workshop, it is probably the most faithful expression of the Mexican mood that I have ever achieved.’⁵ *Zapatista Landscape – The Guerilla* [Pl. 6.8], like certain contemporary works by Picasso and Gris, sets a central image (still life) against a landscape, but rather than this being perceived framed through a window, it ‘floats’ in open space. The sky is doubled in an impossible deep blue reflection below the horizon; a mountain landscape with volcanic craters frames the hat above, while below, trees tip upside-down into the blue. Into the sophisticated cubist dialogue between representation and reality (the *trompe-l’œil* paper pinned to the canvas with a painted nail, devices like the negative-positive play of shapes derived from *papiers collés*, and the very recent introduction of decorative pointillism), Rivera introduces specifically Mexican objects – the hat and a brilliantly coloured *serape*. There seems no doubt that he was responding to recent news about the Revolution, brought by the new wave of Mexican refugees to Paris, and especially his friend Martín Luis Guzmán. Mexico was near to a state of anarchy and chaos;⁶ however, Rivera was perhaps moved by the vision of a Mexico aroused from its sleep, the land restored to the people. This was what the revolutionary leader Zapata, who had temporarily occupied Mexico City at the end of 1914, had promised in his ‘Manifesto to the Mexicans’ of August 1914.

Rivera rejected Cubism before his return to Mexico. In 1917 he embarked on a close study of Cézanne, having, like Picasso, previously begun to make a series of realistic still lifes and portraits. Unlike Picasso, however, who retained an alternative cubist style, Rivera abandoned Cubism completely by 1918, although his formidable capacity for spatial organization in the murals reveals his cubist training, and his first mural, *Creation* [Pl. 7.6], looks back directly to his earliest cubist pictures. ‘In his Ingresque drawings, Rivera briefly digressed from a cubist to a truly modern representational style, where complicated spatial constructions are disguised by overt realism. It was a prelude to a tendency he was to display consistently while working out the rudiments of a modernist-based social realist mural style.’⁷

The emergence of the muralists in Mexico after 1921 was an important factor in the debates of the 1920s and ’30s concerning art’s en-

6.8 Diego Rivera, *Zapatista Landscape – The Guerilla*, 1915, Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City (INBA).

6.9 Diego Rivera, *Still Life with Bonbon*, 1915, oil on canvas, 92×73 cm., Collection Jacques and Natasha Gelman.



agement in social and political issues. It was the idea of an art for the people, rather than the adoption of a 'social realist' style that, on the whole, mattered. Indeed, it would be incorrect to say that the creation of a 'social realist' style in any obvious sense was a central concern. There was considerable divergence, not to say opposition, among the mural painters, as is discussed in chapter 7, and Siqueiros especially pushed for the use of modern materials, experimental techniques and a dynamic expressionist style built partly on the principle of montage.

Amauta, edited by the writer José Mariátegui, who founded the Peruvian Socialist Party, was a review which explicitly linked the artistic and literary avant-garde to revolutionary politics. In the first editorial (Appendix, 6.7), he wrote: '*Amauta* is not an open forum for all currents of opinion. We who founded the magazine do not conceive of culture and art as agnostic. We are militant and polemical. We make no concession whatsoever to the generally fallacious criteria of intellectual tolerance.' The review was opened to all 'vanguardistas, socialistas, revolucionarios' committed to change. Mariátegui laid out his position clearly in 'Art, Revolution and Decadence', published in the third issue (November 1926):

We cannot accept as new art, art which merely contributes new techniques. That would be flirting with the most fallacious of current illusions. No aesthetic can reduce art to a question of technique.

The revolutionary nature of contemporary schools or trends does not lie in the creation of a new technique. Nor does it lie in the destruction of an old technique. It lies in the rejection, dismissal and ridicule of the bourgeois absolute.⁸

Mariátegui expressed particular admiration for the French Surrealist leaders André Breton and Louis Aragon (both of whom that year had joined the French Communist Party), and especially for Breton's *Les Pas perdus* (1924), the collection of his Dada and post-Dada texts. While *Amauta* did not adhere to Surrealism itself, it admired the Surrealists' and Dadaists' attack on bourgeois values and artistic conventions, welcomed the contacts established between the Surrealist review *La Révolution Surréaliste* and the leftist review *Clarté* under Marcel Fourier, and anticipated the joint founding of a new review, to be called 'La Guerre civile' (never in the end to be realized). Within this broad avant-garde and leftist internationalism, however, *Amauta* was fairly eclectic. Its contributors included César Vallejo, José Vasconcelos (the Mexican philosopher and Minister of Education who founded the mural programme), Dr Atl, Bela Uitz (writing on 'Bourgeois Art and Proletarian Art') and the British playwright George Bernard Shaw on the definition of Socialism, and, among artists, the Argentinian Pettoruti, José Sabogal, who painted indigenist subjects in a broadly modernist style, and George Grosz, whose lecture 'Art and Bourgeois Society' was especially translated for *Amauta*. It maintained, as its Dada and Surrealist counterparts in Europe had done

just after the First World War, a broad network of contacts among the little avant-garde magazines. The first issue advertised *Renovación* (Lima), *Futurismo* (Marinetti, Rome), *Valoraciones* (La Plata) and *Der Sturm* (Berlin), and the second, *Martín Fierro* (Buenos Aires), *Alfar* (La Coruña), *Sagitario* (La Plata), *Poliedro* (Lima), *Revista de Oriente* (Buenos Aires), *El Estudiante* (Madrid) and *Repertorio Americana* (San José de Costa Rica).

At the same time, however, *Amauta* was specifically concerned with Peru: its title, a Quechua word meaning 'wise man' or 'teacher', 'expresses our adherence to the Indian race', and in 1927 *Amauta* began to include a supplement called 'Boletín de defensa indígena'. (Its involvement with *indigenismo* will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9.)

Martín Fierro, in Buenos Aires, on the other hand, elected for a cosmopolitan modernism, rejecting both the past and the 'absurd need to promote intellectual nationalism' (see Appendix, 6.5). Calling itself a 'periódico quincenal de arte y crítica libre', by contrast with the politically committed *Amauta*, it both asserted American independence and acknowledged the inevitability of European influence. '*Martín Fierro* believes in the importance of the intellectual contribution of the Americas, after taking scissors to each and every umbilical cord. But extending the independence movement, begun in language by Rubén Darío, to all intellectual manifestations does not mean we have to give up or, even less, pretend we don't see the Swedish toothpaste, French towels and English soap we use every morning. . . .' *Martín Fierro*, whose leading writer was Jorge Luis Borges, approached these issues with a certain amount of irony; its title was taken from the famous poem by José Fernández, an epic of the life and death of the individualist gaucho hero and loner Martín Fierro, with its roots in popular oral poetry, which became something like a national poem. *Martín Fierro* took freely from Dada and Futurism, and expressed its faith in a modern sensibility in terms virtually paraphrased from Marinetti's *Founding and Manifesto of Futurism* of 1909: '*Martín Fierro* is . . . more at home in a modern transatlantic liner than a Renaissance palace and believes that a nice Hispano-Suiza is a much more perfect WORK OF ART than a Louis XV chair.'

An even more aggressive and eclectic modernism marked the manifesto in the first issue of *Actual* (1921), which described itself as 'Hoja de vanguardia'. Manuel Maples Arce's 'comprimido estridentista' (Appendix, 6.1) adopted a highly provocative Dada-Futurist tone, attacking bourgeois consumer society, its servile and corrupt political systems, and its culture of publicity and advertisements. Maples Arce demanded a synthesis of all contemporary 'isms', quoted directly from Marinetti's *Manifesto* ('A racing car is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace'), and appended a list of names including pretty well every contemporary artist and writer, including Dadaists, Cubists, Constructivists, as well as Rivera, Siqueiros, and several Russian intellectuals and artists. The *Estridentistas* combined an extreme vanguard position



6.10 Anita Malfatti, *The Yellow Man*, 1915-16, charcoal and pastel on paper, 61×45.5 cm., Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo.

6.11 Vicente do Rêgo Monteiro, *Légendes, croyances et talismans des Indiens de l'Amazonie*, Paris, 1923, cover, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.



with political commitment, and 'hailed the Russian Revolution'. Maples Arce's poem 'Urbe' of 1924, dedicated to the workers of Mexico, declares

The lungs of Russia
breathe in our direction
the wind of social revolution.⁹

El Machete, founded by the Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters and Sculptors which became the official organ of the Mexican Communist Party ('Periódico obrero y campesino'), was closely linked to the mural movement, and contained many of the mural painters' first experiments with woodcuts.

The Brazilian 'modernists' were a specific group whose first public manifestation was the *Semana de Arte Moderna* (Modern Art Week) of 1922 in São Paulo, which included exhibitions, poetry readings, concerts and lectures. Graça Aranha spoke of the leading role taken by music and the visual arts: 'the music of Villa-Lobos, the sculpture of Brecheret, the painting of di Cavalcanti, Anita Malfatti, Vicente do Rêgo Monteiro, Zina Aita', as well as by the 'audacious' young poets.¹⁰ Indeed, the first stirrings of Brazilian modernism really date back to an exhibition of Anita Malfatti's paintings in 1917, which provoked considerable hostility among public and critics [Pl. 6.10]. One long article, for instance, used it as the occasion to attack modern art as a whole, especially Cubism, affirming what its author saw as, by contrast, the 'unchanging values' of 'true' modern artists like Rodin, Frank Brangwyn and Paul Chabas.¹¹ Oswald de Andrade, a poet and leader of the modernist group, defended Malfatti as having challenged the 'photographic naturalism' then in fashion with audacious and daring canvases. Malfatti's work was in fact modernist in a very general and eclectic sense, combining an angular distortion of the figures with a free and rather Fauvist use of complementary colours. It is interesting that de Andrade and Aranha both emphasize audacity for itself, rather than any specific new aesthetic or style; and it does seem as if modernist styles were valued primarily for their capacity to shock, the more extravagantly the better.

In the same year as the Modern Art Week, the Futurist-style *Klaxon*, 'monthly review of modern art' (São Paulo), was founded (see Appendix, 6.2). It emphasized an international, industrialized context for art: 'A new scale . . . advertisements producing letters taller than towers. And new forms of industry, transport, aviation. Pylons. Petrol stations. Rails.'

Tarsila do Amaral, who became the artist most closely linked to the *modernista* group, took the view, significantly, that Cubism was a destructive movement, but one through which they had to pass. The writings and manifestos, while lacking the scepticism of Dada and the theoretical riches of Futurism, display a simultaneous sense of rupture and excitement in their staccato assertions of the modern world. Oswald de Andrade's manifesto 'Pau-Brasil Poetry' (see Appendix, 6.3), however, contains a new element. Without re-



6.12 Tarsila do Amaral, *Anthropophagy*, 1929, oil on canvas, 126×142 cm., Fundação José e Paulina Nemirovsky.

jecting the internationalism of *Klaxon*, and while asserting clearly their lack of an aesthetic creed ('no formula for a contemporary expression of the world'), 'Pau-Brasil Poetry' turns back in a new way to Brazil, its mixed culture, the contrast of its tropical setting and modern industry, using the phrase 'the jungle and the school'. This marked an extraordinary change of consciousness in the group of wealthy, educated and highly Europeanized intellectuals, poets and artists who constituted the modernist group – a change not towards any simple version of nationalism, but towards a sense of the nature of colonization. This consciousness was 'pushed to its paroxysm in the "Anthropophagite Manifesto" by Oswald de Andrade of 1928 which exhorts us to devour our colonizer . . . in order to appro-



6.13 Tarsila do Amaral, *Calm Sea II*, 1929, oil on canvas, 75x93 cm., Acervo Artístico-Cultural dos Palácios do Governo do Estado de São Paulo.

priate his virtues and powers and transform the taboo into a totem'.¹² In this manifesto (Appendix, 6.4) de Andrade attempts to embrace the contradictions of their condition: modern/primitive, industry/indolence, centre/region, Europe/America. 'From the French Revolution to Romanticism, to the Bolshevik Revolution, to the surrealist revolution . . . we continue on our path. We were never catechized. We sustained ourselves by way of sleepy laws. We made Christ be born in Bahía. Or in Belém, in Pará. But we never let the concept of logic invade our midst.'

The 'Anthropophagite Manifesto' was published in the first issue of the *Revista de Antropofagia*, illustrated with a drawing by Tarsila of a naked figure with enormously enlarged foot, cactus and sun – an identical motif to that of her painting *Abaporu*, elaborated the following year in the painting *Anthropophagy* [Pl. 6.12]: Tarsila found the title in a dictionary of the Tupi-Guarani language: *Aba* meaning man, *poru*, who eats. Tarsila was settled in Paris in 1922-3, and the first traces of 'Pau-Brasil' themes occur then, when she was only just learning a basic analytical cubism. Beside the sober palette of her cubist pictures, the canvases in which some form of the 'jungle and school' idea appears have strong colours, and a simplified geometricized background which becomes, in the most remarkable of these works, *Black Woman* [Pl. 6.14], a completely abstract pattern. The seated woman and jungle plant of *Black Woman* already announce the *Abaporu/Anthropophagy* motif.

In Paris, Tarsila had studied with André Lhote, and frequented Léger's studio; her smooth, cylindrically-limbed figures and strong colours suggest that Léger was important for her, but her work remains idiosyncratic.

Through Léger she met the traveller-poet Blaise Cendrars, and a drawing of *Black Woman* was used on the cover of Cendrars's *Feuilles de Route* (1924). In 1924 she, Oswald de Andrade and Cendrars were back in São Paulo; there, Cendrars gave a talk on modern French poets¹³ and the group used it as the occasion to visit Minas Gerais and the country to the north which accelerated the 're-discovery' of Brazil's colonial past, and popular culture, in the smaller towns and villages. In a burst of activity this year, Tarsila produced a group of particularly successful paintings, with Cendrars's presence perhaps providing an added impetus. The paintings of c. 1924 cluster round two contrasting themes – the city, and the apparently more country-like *favelas*, or slums. The former have the flat façades of modern buildings, and no perspective, although space is constructed by overlapping and diminution of scale, faintly anthropomorphic petrol pumps but no people, and use a mixture of quite strong colours and the pastel colours of Purism [Pl. 6.15]. The cityscapes, railways, etc. suggest a kind of industrial primitivism. The 'favelas', by contrast, are full of life – people, animals, flags, vegetation, with intense oranges, reds and dark greens, still applied flat, and derived from the colours of Brazilian popular art.

Like Tarsila, Emilio di Cavalcanti painted local, picturesque scenes in a simplified, highly coloured style [Pl. 6.16].

6.14 Tarsila do Amaral, *Black Woman*, 1923, oil on canvas, 100x80 cm., Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo.





6.15 Tarsila do Amaral, *Central Railway of Brazil*, 1924, oil on canvas, 142×126.8 cm., Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo.



The Brazilian *modernistas* in the Twenties were an élite and privileged group, living a cosmopolitan life and travelling freely to Europe as well as in the provinces. A critic later remarked on the spectacle of Tarsila, returning from Paris with her Poiret dresses, to teach the people how to be Brazilian.¹⁴ However, although the group was not directly involved in the turbulent political events in Brazil in the Twenties, in the Thirties several became leftist sympathizers; Tarsila visited Moscow in 1931 and her work moved in the direction of social realism.

In opposition to this basically urban and cosmopolitan group of modernists, Gilberto Freyre agitated for a cultural, economic and social policy of regionalism, in his Programme of the Regionalist Centre of 1926. Recife and north-eastern Brazil have been flourishing centres of artistic activity, and popular art in Brazil has a wide regional base.¹⁵

Two groups were founded in 1932 to support modern art in Brazil: SPAM, the Sociedade Pro-Arte Moderna, and CAM – the Clube dos Artes Modernos; the latter was founded by the artist and architect Flavio de Carvalho, in a spirit of opposition to the élitism of SPAM. In 1951 the first São Paulo Bienal established Brazil as an international centre for contemporary art.

For those artists who wished to adopt a modern idiom, Cubism was almost invariably the gateway. Pettoruti had travelled to Europe on a scholarship in 1913, first making contact with the Futurists, and then, in 1924, with Cubism. He remained on the whole heavily indebted to Picasso, but some of his most interesting work is a flat, hard-edged adaptation of Purism, which became on occasion highly abstract [Pl. 6.17].

Amelia Peláez was one of the younger and less radical artists who exhibited at the exhibition organized by the *Revista de Avance* in 1927, a review founded in Havana by the 'grupo minorista' which included Jorge Mañach, and the novelist Alejo Carpentier (Appendix, 6.10). They were admirers of the Mexican muralists, and of José Vasconcelos, as well as of the Spanish poet García Lorca. Peláez was, however, one of the artists who best understood Cubism and who subsequently used it in a highly original way.

Peláez left Havana for Paris at the end of the Twenties and stayed there for seven years, making a prolonged study of Cubism and in particular of Picasso's and Braque's synthetic cubism of 1912-13, in works using pencil and collage. In thus going for a cubism where construction, the building up of a surface of almost abstract elements in combination with objects, was more important than the analysis of form, Peláez showed a consistency of approach, even if overall her work in these years was highly eclectic, as her comment underlines: 'The artists who most interest me are, from France, Ingres, Seurat, Cézanne, Picasso, Braque and Matisse.' Beside the synthetic cubist collages, Peláez worked in a curvilinear style, as in *Siesta* (1936), in which a monumental Picasso-like figure lies in a landscape of heavily outlined, flattened organic shapes recalling

