

SOCIAL HISTORY OF MUSIC AND ART IN GUATEMALA IN THE 20TH CENTURY

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Introduction

This research work is the critical outcome of the appreciation and study of the artistic phenomenon in Guatemalan society at a time when, due to socio-economic changes, it constantly acquires different ways of being valued.

The 19th century is a period crucial for the development of art¹, marking in Guatemalan urban society, specifically in Guatemala City, not only the differentiation and consolidation of social classes, but consequently, the adoption of their tastes.

This is evidenced by the organization of cultural associations², which are concerned with disseminating artistic-cultural ideas in the community, and which are not unfamiliar with a strong European influence. In the preferences of the dominant class, in music, there is talk of an Italian musical tradition that persisted for a long time and the French taste that characterized the 'belle epoque', becoming expressions identified with a class that sought to represent the nation itself. Starting from this state, the present research, in the absence of texts presenting the Guatemalan musical-artistic phenomenon in its socio-political context, has delved into it to achieve a clearer understanding and response to the problem of artistic production in our environment. In this endeavor, the teamwork with Miss Anabella Castro and Walda Judith Echeverría has been highly valuable. This has not only yielded invaluable information about the mentioned phenomenon but also an important archive of materials for future investigations on the subject. Additionally, the work has benefited greatly from the invaluable assistance of the scholar Celeste Palacios de Anleu, who selflessly helped with the laborious task of text compilation and correction.

This research opens up various paths that will need to be explored in the near future, given the importance that artistic aspects have acquired in Guatemalan society. We cannot cover it in its entirety, nor can we consider the topic exhausted.

There is still much left to be done, but due to the nature of this research, it has been limited to a relatively small number of topics. Nevertheless, we believe that the contribution in this relatively unexplored field will enrich the documentation on these two aspects of Guatemalan art.

The fact that the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, through the General Directorate of Research and CEFOL, sponsored and supported this work, speaks

¹ The liberal dictatorships decisively did not allow the development of art; their concern revolved around the economic interests of the coffee growers.

²The Society of Friends of the Country is one of the institutions formed since the mid-18th century, and its role in the history of Guatemala is of significant interest.

volumes about the interest that this academic institution maintains in the field of aesthetics and the history of our country.

The art in the 1944 – 54 stage

The revolution of October 20, 1944, analyzed from popular perspectives, brought evident changes to a nation experiencing demographic growth, inherent to new social and economic situations. Prior to it, the development of incipient capitalism, established during the liberal government of 1871, had achieved monopolies in the country. Large consortia obtained contracts for many years regarding the export-import rights of Guatemalan products like bananas, as well as in transportation. Therefore, the bourgeois revolution, as a result of social interests that found a temporary unity to defeat an old political structure, carried out notable transformations that represented a general change in the country's situation.

The assembly containing the representation of all social interests involved in this process highlights the primary role of university students elected as deputies, who in the constitution provided content oriented towards national economic liberation and in opposition to large-scale landownership.

Among the most important achievements of the regime is the allowance for the organization of unions as part of the struggle of the government political parties. Paths were opened for a new society: university students and professionals directing the administration, a unified army ensuring the process, and stimulating other economic forms.³

Davison refers to how in the various branches of enclave economy, workers and artisans emerged in the city, as this economy still punctuated the capitalist relations of the country. The organization of these groups, without clear direction, was led by government political parties that sponsored the development of the national bourgeoisie and the continuity of this process, culminating with the Labor Code "which granted and confirmed the rights of organization and judicial defense for workers; opposing interests would claim it was a fully communist government because the Code included clauses about compensation. The conservative opposition in Congress would manage to impose that unionism did not extend to rural areas, although it would only be for a few years."⁴

The establishment of Social Security was achieved (which did not face much opposition to be approved), and although there was resistance from existing oligarchic families and the United Fruit Company, medium-sized rural properties would gradually align with these changes.⁵ During the second government of the Revolution, among the most significant achievements for the benefit of the people were the "Jurum Marinalá"

³ Fernando González Davison. Guatemala 1500-1970. (Reflexiones sobre su desarrollo histórico). Editorial Universitaria, Guatemala 1987.

⁴ Idem

⁵ Idem

hydroelectric plant, the Atlantic highway, and most importantly, agrarian reform, which had political and social repercussions for society as a whole.

The contributions within the cultural sphere stemming from Guatemalan anthropological thought regarding ethnic reality were carried out alongside a national project that includes the incorporation of the rural population into national development and the creation of specific institutions dedicated to understanding the ethnic groups of Guatemala, recognizing Guatemalan society as multiethnic and multicultural.

After the events of '44, a period of relative calm and tranquility ensued, fostered by the new situation, which allowed for the development of the arts. Their directions were aimed at the search for new aesthetic formulas, incorporating themes that exalted nationalism symbolized by peasants, social struggles, land, workers, proletarians, and connections with popular legends that still survive in the magical-religious relationship, mixed in many ways with the destiny of the indigenous peasant. Similar struggles having taken place throughout America, the works of various artists such as Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, José Clemente Orozco, and Rufino Tamayo served as models to assess the social function of art in such a situation.

The role assumed by this art first ties it to changes in artistic education and then to new expressions. These expressions, within an ideology reflecting the different social and political situations allowed in this new climate of freedom, also reflect concerns as the political process progresses toward artistic integration, a logical consequence of artists' reflections on the social function of their profession. In this sense, as the new order becomes established, it allows art the freedom of analysis and questioning its role in the new social formation.

Painters and sculptors produced work encouraged by the renewed vigor of the atmosphere injected into them. With the tranquility that followed the revolutionary movement, artists deepened their concerns towards "making the artistic object a problem", according to sculptor Dagoberto Vásquez. Painters and sculptors were sent to the United States, Chile, Mexico, Italy, and France. A group that worked according to the most advanced expressions included Miguel Alzamora, Roberto Ossaye, Arturo Martínez, Adalberto de León, with the most recent work among them being that of Dagoberto Vásquez, Roberto González Goyri, Rodolfo Galleoti Torres, Guillermo Grajeda Mena, Juan Antonio Franco, and Max Saravia Gual.

Some artists and intellectuals associated in the group Saker Ti (Amanecer), which advocated for a national democratic and realistic art, initiating the serious organization of cultural workers (artists and writers), who were supported by Mrs. María Milanova de Arbenz. It is important to note that at a certain point in the development of revolutionary art, attempts were made towards the functional integration of architecture, painting, and sculpture, "this creative and social enthusiasm engendered by the new political and social movement", in the opinion of sculptor Roberto González Goyri, led to the first attempts of "application" of painting and sculpture in some Federación Type Schools, works by

muralist painter Juan Antonio Franco and sculptor Rodolfo Galeotti Torres. González Goyri himself considered that these attempts only remained as such, in his words: "in mere application, in ornament, and the problem of 'organic collaboration', which is how integration should be understood, remained adrift."⁶

Similarly, the artist mentioned earlier evaluates murals executed later in the Congress of the Republic by painters Juan de Dios González, Víctor Manuel Aragón, and Ceballos Milián. These innovative attempts could only achieve fulfillment years later in works such as the Municipal Palace of Guatemala City (1954-58), which initiated a series of constructions resulting from the return to the homeland of the first architects who had trained abroad.

By the edge of the 1950s, artists were creating socio-political works; it was the moment for such expression. In the field of engraving, at the National School of Fine Arts, renamed from the "National Academy of Fine Arts", the Spanish artist Jesús Matamoros Llopis was appointed as the master of this branch, teaching within the realistic style immersed in social education that was practiced in Spain shortly before and during the civil war.

From Matamoros' teachings, artists such as Víctor Manuel Aragón, Juan de Dios González, Oscar Barrientos, Miguel Angel Ceballos Millián, and Roberto Ossaye were trained. Later, the engraver García Bustos was hired to organize an open workshop for printmaking at the School of Fine Arts; this engraver had trained in the Taller de Gráfica Popular in Mexico, where the Revolution provided ample themes of a political, social, and popular nature.

During this time, competitions were held and scholarships were offered for the creation of posters produced by the Graphic Workshop. The themes of these posters included "Agrarian Reform, the fight against foreign intervention, the progress of the road plan (the Atlantic Highway), the port of Santo Tomás, and the Marinalá Hydroelectric Plant." The production of the artists was magnificent. Víctor Manuel Aragón, Oscar Barrientos, Mario Barillas, Miguel Angel Ceballos Millián, Juan Guadalberto Cu Caal, Rina Lazo, Wilfreda López Flores, José López Maldonado, Arturo Martínez, José Rafael Mora, Fernando Oramas, Jacobo Rodríguez Padilla, Víctor Vásquez Kestler, and Luis Alfonso Saldívar were among those who participated in these teachings. Unfortunately, these prints led to the closure of the school by the new government of 1954, which argued that the school promoted communist teachings.

Among this group, although the technique of printmaking allowed some to express themselves in that field, they did not become enthusiastic about the thematic content, which was taking on propagandistic tones, closing the door to any tendency that deviated

⁶ Roberto González Goyri. Integración de las Artes Plásticas en el Siglo XX en Guatemala. Arte Contemporáneo. Imprenta Universitaria, 1969.

from the established prototype of realism, which served a poster function within proletarian groups.

After the initial years of the revolution and the exploitation of themes depicting athletic Indians representing the appreciated peasant in Galleotti's work and then "the mengalas, soldiers, and portraits by Grajeda Mena or Dagoberto Vásquez," modern tendencies from across the Atlantic began to be felt within the group. These tendencies gained international significance in New York; González Goyri and Roberto Ossaye became the new advocates in this expansive game.⁷

At these levels, Guatemalan art seeks to reconcile the norms of various imported movements (cubism, expressionism, surrealism, expansive abstract) with the "stereotyped products of divergent realism"⁸ seen in the works of Vásquez and Grajeda Mena. Following recent exhibitions by both artists (1968 at the National School of Fine Arts and National Library), Cabrera expresses a critical opinion about a certain stagnation found in national visual art, relating it to this exhibition where the persistent themes of the 1940s passion are evident: executed individuals, nudes, horsemen, and washerwomen in blocks descending from Rivera and Siqueiros, or Grajeda Mena's "indigenous women's heads" reminiscent of Japanese postcard sketches. This judgment extends to the constant repetition in their "paper sculptures," where the archaeological characteristics of their previous works are repeated, as well as the appreciation of Roberto González Goyri's work or what was interrupted by Ossaye's death. According to Cabrera's assessment, this reflects the subsequent manifestation of the younger generation around those years, who recognized the need for change: Marco Augusto Quiroa, Elmar Rojas, Roberto Cabrera, Gilberto Hernández, and the late Rafael Pereyra, among others, accepted this legacy and embarked on a more radical path of stylistic renewal. They broke the myth of the previous generation, boldly embracing and valuing what was different and contrary to established norms, demanding consideration. "...This group, defined by the 1960s, will pave the way that Rodolfo Abularach and Mishaan intensify from afar, so that Efraín Recinos, Enrique Anleu-Díaz, Margoth Fanjul, and Luis Díaz today embody that original international character, which escapes the intention of a nationalist chronology but seeks to integrate underlying elements inherent in our lived and natural biology." (From "De la Generación del 44 y Después" by Roberto Cabrera, *El Imparcial*, September 1968).

The art of the 60-70

The political, social, and economic situation of Guatemala in the 1960s and 1970s, amidst a series of events integral to the nation's overall landscape, shaped the role and function of art during these years in various directions. Ideological repression and the need to denounce or expose it, alongside a backdrop of changes foreshadowing an era where technology begins its dominance in society—a phenomenon that will soon prevail

⁷ Roberto Cabrera "De la Generación del 44 y Después" *El Imparcial*, septiembre de 1968.

⁸ Idem

along with the mass cultural and commercial phenomenon of "mass culture"—as well as various aspects of everyday life, will necessitate a review of the function of art and the artist's awareness of the era in response to all of this.

Within the events that occurred in the historical development of the country, and amidst a suffocating political situation that kept the nation in perpetual insecurity, a rebellion of twenty young army officers took place. This uprising on November 13, 1960, was a consequence of strong internal divisions within the Guatemalan army. These twenty officers thus initiated guerrilla warfare in the country, integrating into the revolutionary movement "13 de noviembre" (November 13). In 1961, the Bay of Pigs invasion (Cuba) took place, which, despite its failure, solidified the Castroist revolution that had triumphed in 1958. These were determining factors, along with profound social unrest and discontent following the governments after '54, which must be judged as components contributing to a broader context reflected in the patriotic events of March and April 1962: popular struggles where citizens poured into the streets; more than thirty days of daily demonstrations in Guatemala City, including armed encounters, strikes primarily involving the middle class, barricades, sabotage acts in various areas that paralyzed secondary and university education, and were joined by professional guilds.

Analyzing these upheavals, Edelberto Torres Rivas defines them as follows: "The call for a general strike was primarily responded to by the middle classes... It was like a massive, and therefore disorganized, expression of a collective feeling of irritation that did not find precise forms for its political formulation; undoubtedly, there were masses in the streets of neighborhoods, but when this opportunity came, it was only to move around uncertainly amid street disorder or around petty bourgeois demands."⁹

We will not delve into a political-social analysis of the directions that such actions should have taken; rather, it is about exposing the experiences and understanding of the situation during such popular euphoria. It is well known, however, how this situation impacted and affected urban life, especially in the development of student activities at all levels, commerce, industry, and cultural activities. This understanding of the situation is later expressed in historical and sociological evaluations "in retrospect," manifested through various interpretations in artistic expression.

Torres Rivas himself reviews the overview of the situation: "... The crisis of March-April was preceded by or accompanied by guerrilla actions. On the morning of February 6 of that year, 1962, the MR-13, led by Marco Antonio Yon Sosa, successfully attacked the military outposts of Mariscos and Bananera and those of the Morales Police, all in the Izabal region. On March 11, the 20 de Octubre column, led by Colonel Carlos Paz Tejada, the most prestigious former revolutionary officer, penetrated the Concuá region in Baja Verapaz, composed of militants and cadres from the Guatemalan Labor Party and its ally, the Revolutionary Unity Party. These acts of limited war in their strategic conception and

⁹ Edelberto Torres Rivas. Guatemala, Medio Siglo de Historia Política. En Alero, No. 24, 3a. Epoca, mayo-junio, 1977. pp. 184

with no practical outcome, except for the failure of the first and the defeat of the second, undoubtedly fueled the already ignited flame of insurrectional preparations. They added a conflictive element to the crisis. President Ydigoras managed to convince the military to take control of Guatemala City.¹⁰

It is well known to all the barbaric repression that was unleashed from that moment onward with a state of siege that, however, failed to stop or diminish street clashes "...indiscipline was becoming widespread day by day. In early April, as the crisis shifted to within the army, it took over the government, forming a cabinet exclusively composed of military personnel."¹¹

From the 1960s to the present day, the political and social situation in Guatemala has worsened with successive governments coming into power, along with an internal insurgency that disregards the lives of indigenous communities. The massacres of indigenous communities have intensified with the advance of the guerrilla movement. Gutiérrez Mendoza believes that we are entering another phase of anthropology of occupation, and this advance is experiencing a crisis as its principles are criticized. Several books have emerged attempting to understand the Guatemalan reality from a Marxist perspective.¹²

The emergence of a counterinsurgency, identified by Guzmán Bockler as beginning around 1971, is related to the interests of fundamentalist sects: "Protestantism, through some of its sects, has attempted to penetrate the indigenous population in order to disrupt their basic institutions and gain adherents for the God of the 'Christians of the capitalist industrial countries'. They try to achieve this by promoting individualism over the ancestral collective spirit and practices of the population, through limited distribution of objects and money."¹³

The usurpation of power by Ríos Montt marked the most serious situation that the country faced. It has been described as "the greatest state terrorist repression in the history of Guatemala, causing thousands of deaths, more than one hundred thousand

¹⁰ Idem. pp 184.

¹¹ Idem. pp 184.

¹² Idem. pp 184.

¹³ The same author refers to the continuity of the problem in cases such as the one that occurred between 1982 and 1983, when an enthusiastic member of a fundamentalist California sect, the military leader Efraín Ríos Montt, "while usurping the presidency, deployed his followers in the role of politico-religious commissioners to lead alongside the army in a holy war against the indigenous people." It is also mentioned that although their activities ceased with Ríos Montt's overthrow, "his important associates and advisors, the members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, continue to operate and contribute to repression in rural indigenous areas with the support of the 110 Protestant sects embedded in the country." (Pages 197-198). These same sects are involved in the case of IDEAH, which fell into the hands of their leaders; a meeting in 1987 for evangelical pastors had "anti-communist struggle" as its central theme, confirming among many things the contradiction and confusion in which these fundamentalist creeds live and linking them to the countless distortions of "Ideas" regarding the historical-artistic value of Guatemala's imagery, with blind and distorted fanaticism. (G. B.) Finally, faced with so many problems within the institution (IDEAH), leadership was fortunately entrusted to Lic. Miguel Alvarez, knowledgeable about Guatemala's imagery and artistic-religious tradition as a Catholic Christian nation.

refugees in Mexico and the United States, and the establishment of low-intensity warfare that continues to this day with various nuances."¹⁴

It is pointed out that "an important aspect is that this process of terror begins as a 'crusade of faith'... this time, using the fundamentalist and Pentecostal Protestant ideology generated in the southern United States as an ideological expression of the most conservative sectors of American society, and whose use had been recommended by Rockefeller, when in 1969 he reported that the Catholic Church had ceased to be an ally of Yankee imperialism, since in fact, after the Second Vatican Council and its application in Latin America at Medellín, it led the Catholic Church to accompany the popular struggle for the construction of a new society; the Christian-Catholic ideological framework then ceases to function as a propeller of social balance, insofar as it maintains the prevailing system."¹⁵

The aforementioned involves the most relevant elements that make up the contextual framework in which artistic expressions from the 1960s onwards will develop. To understand the artistic issues in Guatemala during those years, and their subsequent projection, the year 1957 is a fundamental starting point for assessing the poetics related to the adopted aesthetic positions.

An event that is involved and acts as a generating factor of this issue from that year is the closure of the National School of Fine Arts, as the government that came to power through a coup considered that "there were ideological intentions contrary to the new government in that institution, especially related to the printmaking workshop of the school." The government wanted the professors to resign from their positions, and when they did not comply, the government proceeded to shut it down.

The closure of the school lasted for six months, and during the subsequent years until 1957 when it was reorganized under the direction of sculptor Roberto González Goyri, there was still senseless persecution "based on supposed political charges," which prevented many achievements. Nevertheless, it was an important period during which the training of most of the artists who are now considered a significant foundation for the new values that emerged after the 1980s began.

We can trace the student artists of the school who began their artistic studies in the period from 1951 to 1959 in the printed catalogs commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of this institution (1920-1970). In this regard, two highly significant exhibitions were held at the Alianza Francesa de Guatemala and at the school's premises, which at that time was located on 8th Avenue between 12th and 13th Streets, adjacent to the old American Club. We gather from these exhibitions the following names recorded in the registration books of that school. In that decade, among the students, we find Rodolfo Abularach, Víctor Vásquez Kestler, José López Maldonado, Gilberto Hernández, Rafael

¹⁴ One of the most recent issues is the Atitlán problem in 1990.

¹⁵ Jorge 11 Zelaya Azurdia "La ladinización como objeto de estudio de la antropología de la ocupación en Guatemala Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala. pp. 82.

Pereyra, Ernesto Boesch Rizzo, Wilfreda López Flores, Mario Barillas, Julio Enrique Barillas, Luis Zaldívar, Marco Augusto Quiroa, Rafael Mora, Ricardo Martínez Blas, Carlos Humberto Morales, Oscar Barrientos, José Luis Lázaro, Homero Arsenio Valenzuela, Manolo Gallardo, Roberto Cabrera, Francisco Cifuentes, Enrique Velásquez Vásquez, Elmar René Rojas, Enrique Anleu Díaz, Miguel Angel Hernández, Francisco Delgado, Napoleón Ambrosio, César Izquierdo. To these names, we should also add Norma Nuila, Haroldo Robles, and from the same decade, Efraín Recinos.

This group will establish a connection with the work done by the artists of '44, as many of them were teachers at the School of Fine Arts, where the product of the changes brought about by the aforementioned revolution was in force.

With a perspective that extends from the relationships between the aesthetic, study, and the political situation of the country, this generation experienced the natural impact of various situations and changes, which meant transformations in the mentality and behavior of the society of the time.

Before the 1950s and 60s, electronics made significant advances, which had an effect on ordinary people who were already directly or indirectly part of consumer society, transforming daily life primarily in the city. This meant changes in customs as a result of mass culture. Among these changes, black-and-white TV was introduced in 1956 and color TV followed a few years later. The transition from 78 rpm records to 33 rpm records was a significant leap. There were also revolutions in magnetic tape, soundtracks, cinematography, stereophonic sound, and "3D" technology. The first jet, a retro-propulsion airplane of Pan American Airways, arrived in Guatemala City, introducing a new dimension of speed and agitation to daily life. On June 21, 1969, the whole world, including Guatemala City and other places where television reached in the country, watched the live broadcast of the first man landing on the Moon, the ceremony of the first step, and images of the Moon's surface as never before imagined. All these situations caused transformations in the concepts of ordinary people, thinkers, and artists. From these technologies emerged a bombardment of information technology and computer-generated imagery used in space exploration surveys, leading to new conceptual frameworks surrounding images. This multiplication of interpretations and functions offered countless new possibilities for understanding and using images.

Parallel to these technological advancements are the inequalities and miseries of the Guatemalan population, political repression, and social problems, the lack of ideological freedom, the crisis in education, to name a few.

Thus, the "Generation of '60" emerges within the parameters of what was mentioned and is nourished by the issues from the 1950s, as was logical, by the perceptions of the environment, and by the teachings of the teachers from the previous generation (Generation of '40).

In this final phase of the process of change of the bourgeois revolution of '44, there was a new reassessment of "nationalism" based on popular tradition, customs, legends,

and in some ways a vision of the known Maya world, with everyday themes always related to the social aspect. Artistic production focused on these aspects, which represented an extension of this concept of nationalism.

Such a vision at the time is evident in the works presented in national competitions, and even in the solo exhibitions of Guatemalan artists. The predominance of this theme in the previous generation and in the early works of emerging artists who are trained at the National School of Plastic Arts, bridging the gap between the older masters and the younger generation, is noticeable in this case.

From the exhibition catalogs reviewed that cover dates before 1960, we see that participants channel their work into a diversity of expressive interests. From the Central American Science, Literature, and Fine Arts Contest of 1957, works like "Toros" and "Baile de Venados" by Rodolfo Abularach showcase new forays into the use of flat figures. Pieces like "Patojas de la Calle" and "Endomingada" by Gilberto Hernández, "Reflexión" and "La niñez" by Elmar Rojas, "Velorio," "Mujer peinándose," and "Mengalas" by Marco Augusto Quiroa, and "Tragedia" by Rafael Pereyra touch on social themes alongside the exploration of alternative techniques. The rest of the exhibit, except for works in similar terms by Víctor Aragón and Max Saravia Gual, revolves around landscapes and portraits.

By 1958, the student artists who comprise the Association of Fine Arts Students feel motivated and concerned about the role that the artist must play within the context of Guatemalan art. This idea begins to materialize through their consistent and dedicated participation in various events, as well as the individual advancement of its members and the school.

This was achieved not only through relationships and the exchange of concerns in the classrooms but also strengthened when they held leadership positions in the Student Association. Through this association, important festivals and competitions were organized. Let's hear from the members of the association themselves during those years. The painter Julio Barillas, who wrote in major newspapers of the city, referred to the student association in the following manner in one of his articles:

"The Association of Fine Arts Students has been characterized over the years since its founding as a serious and progressive entity, to the extent of being prominent in Guatemala's cultural and artistic circles, among the main groups of its kind due to its extensive activity in organizing exhibitions"... "all of this developed through the different work programs of the various boards that have led it since its inception in the lives of students at the National School of Fine Arts... something that has contributed to the enhancement of AEAP is that it has been led by valuable figures in national art such as Elmar Rojas, Rafael Pereyra, Marco A. Quiroa, Vásquez Kestler, Efraín Gudiel, and others who have completed the governing teams like Otto Ricart, Roberto Cabrera, Enrique Anleu Díaz, Alfonso Saldívar, Haroldo Robles, Enrique Velásquez Vásquez..." (La Hora, 1959).

In another commentary by Barillas titled "Pereyra exhibited outdoors," we become aware of the concerns of this generation, whose names are starting to become familiar in Guatemalan art. Barillas's description provides valuable information that reveals the environment in which the artistic production of these young artists was presented.

"... In the continuation of the successful art festival (1st Festival of the Association of Fine Arts Students), on Sunday the 1st of the current month, under the protective shade of one of the bougainvillea-covered pergolas in Centenario Park, the painter Rafael Pereyra Piedra Santa had an interesting painting exhibition from nine o'clock to sixteen o'clock on the same day, featuring twenty paintings, including oils and duco... The atmosphere that prevailed from the early hours of the outdoor exhibition was full of joy and emotions. Numerous figures from the art world gathered there from very early on, including Enrique Velásquez Vásquez, Marco Augusto Quiroa, Víctor Vásquez Kestler (Vaskestler), Ceballos Millán, Gualberto G. Caal, Roberto Cabrera, Enrique Anleu Díaz, Luis Saldívar, Otto Ricart, Norma Nuila, Haroldo Robles, the poet Julio Fausto Aguilera, the painter Pereyra, myself (Julio Enrique Barillas), and many others who arrived later..." (La Hora, 1960).

We have intentionally made persistent mention of names to associate the activity carried out since these years and subsequently by the group of students from the National School of Fine Arts. Another article that is of interest due to the reactions from the public, which I consider valuable to transcribe verbatim, is the commentary by G. Martínez Nolasco titled "The First Outdoor Painting Exhibition at Centenario":

"In the outdoor exhibition, there are approximately fifty works on display. They belong to artists Rafael Pereyra, Enrique Anleu Díaz, Marco Augusto Quiroa, Max Saravia, Efraín Gudiel, Saldívar, Haroldo Robles, Roberto Cabrera, Señora de Coronado, and other artists." The fine arts students opened an exhibition of paintings outdoors. To set it up, they chose the southern pergola of Centenario Park, outside the sphere of influence of their teachers, who surely will not fail to celebrate the event nonetheless. The decision mirrors that followed in Paris and other great capitals by artists deemed "independent." Thus, before seeking the galleries, they seek the shady corners of promenades, of public gardens. Similar actions brought fame to artists of the stature of Picasso and others whose names are respectfully mentioned by futurists of every hue and texture within the famous aesthetic "isms."

The exhibition presented sections. One encompassed the paintings, mostly by these students, forming a semicircle in the center of the pergola. The other, more spacious and formed in a larger circle than the first, included the oils of Rafael Pereyra, a master of assured technique, according to experts, whose paintings range from impressionistic ones like his "Self-portrait" to dreamlike ones like "Nocturno," depicting a meditative owl on its nest.

It showed other expressions of renewed art. The same was noted in a canvas by Max Augusto Quiroa (Marco Augusto Quiroa) -¹⁶. Since we are not art critics, we refrain from judging these pictorial productions. We leave that to the knowledgeable individuals with their rich and varied dialectics. Our purpose is simply to note the importance of this event in the form of a festival, destined to have new episodes in the coming Sundays. These are manifestations of free art, outside of academic disciplines. However, to culminate this stage that the young exhibitors have reached, it is necessary for them to undertake anatomical studies within the norms of classicist realism. Yet, it will always be common to hear passersby say, "We could paint pictures like these with our eyes closed." Then, although these canvases do not surprise those familiar with contemporary painting, they do surprise those not initiated into the mysteries of color and brushes. They are in the stage beyond photography, that is, beyond daguerreotypes. The painter had to adhere servilely to naturalism. The highest praise an artist could hear was the following: "There is a complete resemblance between the portrait and the subject." However, after the universal triumph of color photography, methods changed. Painters need to be more daring...

Faced with these paintings, arbitrarily labeled by us as subrealist (surrealist)-¹⁷ many observers fall into regrettable confusions. They imagine that a combination of colors with geometric figures is a portrait of a real or fantastic person. None of that constitutes a decorative essay, a circumstance seen in one of Max Saravia's canvases. In his strokes, there is nothing to do with the representation of a person, neither dreams, nor nightmares, nor Dadaism, as we are unaware of the basis of this pictorial trend. But all of this is complicated." (La Hora)

Comments like the one above serve as a reference to gauge the level of appreciation that the public at various levels had for artistic expressions during these years. The position that artists assume in relation to this is one of deep concern about the object of art and its social role, a concern stemming from the consolidation of the national bourgeoisie and its various sectors following the revolution of '44.

Thus, artists begin to realize that within the environment, the function of artistic activity is restricted to minority groups¹⁸, not because the artists themselves intend or

¹⁶ Author's note

¹⁷ Author's note

¹⁸ Regarding the issue of art aimed at minority groups in society, and faced with the lack of understanding of its nature by sectors interested in associating "cultured art" with certain social classes, it becomes an extensive subject of study and analysis. An example of this is related to workers and official art institutions, for instance: the disgraceful waste of capital on a clearly useless Ministry of Culture and Sports, whose workers grouped in various unions, defend a "gold mine" from which they benefit without any benefit for art, arguing about "elitist art" referring to cultured art, hinting at the intention to relate it to social classes outside the "popular" sector. In this endeavor, they fail to recognize that the "elite" they refer to is not the same as the "snobs" found in certain groups. This "elite" has been formed at the level of intellectuals and artists from all social sectors, and it is evident that the most outstanding artistic creators and professional artists in this elite, as well as their audience, are 90% from popular backgrounds in the middle and lower-middle class. Contrary to what these "art workers" claim, their tastes align with mass culture at the level of identification with the commercial bourgeois class, agro-exporters, and the so-called

propose this, but because the receivers guide them in these directions. This is due to the little importance that the bourgeoisie, at all its levels, attributes to art as a means of communication and social expression, considering it merely as decoration, a consequence of their lack of familiarity with its symbolism and diverse purposes. The bourgeoisie at certain levels shows no interest in and is unaware of these values, thus disregarding art in daily life in favor of other material values that can be more tangibly felt.

This is one of the reasons why the channels of artistic communication are sought in the fields of philosophy or sociology, allowing purely aesthetic speculations regarding the value and significance of form, color, and texture.

On December 4, 1962, several art students united and driven by the desire to showcase their work and concerns within the art scene, founded the "Círculo Valenti." One of their concerns was the need to work with new currents in the field, proposing as an important task the dissemination of current Guatemalan art within and outside the country, and criticizing government entities that, in disregard of art, neglect their duty with a disdainful attitude. The manifesto with which they launched their artistic struggle expresses these concerns: "Against indifference, against inaction, against deafness, a group of artists surrounded by mummies - we are faced with the harsh sensation of living in a realm of things dead to art. Intellectuals cloaked in indifference, once active in important artistic roles, and bureaucratic institutions with their eternal song of rejection of culture."

In these terms, they present the problem that concerns them, and as a reproach, they add: "We are appreciated outside of Guatemala, but we are going to fight against that traditional way of being. They must recognize us here first, and when that happens, we will have fulfilled our desire and our deep patriotism."

At the inauguration and presentation of the work with which they begin their activities, held at "La Oficina Moderna" among machines and paintings, the group composed of painters and sculptors reveals great enthusiasm although the collective work takes many directions. There is a variety of trends using recent techniques and subtle allusions to social themes touched upon by some.¹⁹

Around the year 1969, the Valenti Circle disappeared. In the meantime, Roberto Cabrera maintained a studio for teaching and exhibiting his own work as well as that of other artists. Meetings were held attended by Marco Augusto Quiroa, Ramón Avila, Enrique Anleu Díaz, Elmar Rojas, and occasionally Rodolfo Abularach. In 1971, Roberto Cabrera himself founded an experimental workshop with the intention of creating new

upper class in Guatemala and other countries. It is enough to recall that throughout the history of universal art, creators and the musical germ do not emerge from the "upper class elite" but are products of the people in their lower to middle levels. The examples are countless.

¹⁹ The Valenti Circle was composed of the painters Rafael Pereyra, Gilberto Hernández, Norma Nuila, Magda Eunice Sánchez, Roberto Cabrera, Marco Augusto Quiroa, Elmar René Rojas, Enrique Velázquez Vásquez, Enrique Anleu Díaz, Efraín Recinos, Julio Barillas, Luis Saldivar, and the sculptors Haroldo Robles and Oscar Barrientos.

perspectives and possibilities for students. This workshop maintained the ideas that were already developing towards the currents of new realism and magical realism, which began to emerge in this generation. Part of the teaching staff in this workshop included Ramón Avila, Enrique Anleu Díaz, Ricardo Matta, Juan de Dios González, Hugo Calderón, Irma Lorenzana de Luján, and Jacinto Guas. Additionally, it became a place where they gathered and held discussions about art.

A group was organized that began to define itself around 1969, initially linked to a consciousness about the environment, deepening its artistic philosophy through readings and discussions on various topics of sociology, politics, and aesthetics. They read Marcuse, Worringer, Marx, Mao Zedong, Hauser, Guillermo de la Torre, works by Morley, Thompson, and even studied ancient writings such as the Popol Vuh, the Kabbalah, the Quran, the Zend-Avesta, the Hebrew Old Testament, and a variety of works by Guatemalan authors on politics and sociology. This was the preamble that marked the concerns that led to the intensification of the new realism emerging in the artistic expressions of the group. In this context, alongside active participation in competitions and exhibitions where several names stood out, the "Vértebra" Group was formed with painters Roberto Cabrera, Elmar René Rojas, and Marco Augusto Quiroa, along with the inauguration of an art gallery in a space at Plazuela España.

Roberto Cabrera outlines the principles of the group as follows:

"From 1960 to 1962, a group of young artists founded the Association of Fine Arts and published several issues of the monthly magazine *Color y Forma*. Some of these artists had participated as students in cultural politics and activities of artistic groups during the final phase of the Democratic Revolution process in the decade 1944-1954. They conducted artistic outreach activities with exhibitions in galleries, institutions, and outdoors, as well as retrospectives, lectures, and competitions. The participants included Rafael Pereyra, Marco Augusto Quiroa, Víctor Vásquez Kestler, Roberto Cabrera, Elmar Rojas, Gilberto Hernández, Oscar Barrientos, Luis Saldívar, Haroldo Robles, Enrique Velázquez Vásquez, and others. (Additional names such as Julio Barillas, Otto Ricart, Wilfreda de Coronado, Félix Ramírez, Norma Nuila, José López Maldonado, Enrique Anleu Díaz, Homero Arsenio Valenzuela, Francisco Cifuentes are also recorded within these activities, taken from the catalog of the annual exhibition of the Association of Fine Arts Students - September 3-20, 1958).

1963-1964: A group of artists associated as the Valenti Circle (in homage to the Guatemalan artist from the early 20th century, Carlos Valenti, a great draftsman and companion of Carlos Mérida during his first stay in Paris, who died prematurely), to promote and develop art in Guatemala. They emerged publicly from a collective exhibition at the exhibition hall²⁰ (Machinery and Equipment) sponsored by "La Oficina Moderna."

²⁰ Julio Barillas, Otto Ricart, Wilfreda de Coronado, Félix Ramírez, Enrique Anleu Díaz, Homero Arsenio Valenzuela, Norma Nuila, José López Maldonado, whose activity is already recorded in 1957 as members of the Association of Fine Arts Students.

Participating painters and sculptors included Rafael Pereyra, Elmar Rojas, Roberto Cabrera, Marco Augusto Quiroa, Efraín Recinos, Gilberto Hernández, Oscar Barrientos, Magda Sánchez, Enrique Anleu Díaz, and others.

1964-1969: Artists Luis Díaz and Daniel Schaffer founded the DS Gallery, undertaking extensive work to promote art in the country with exhibitions featuring Marco Augusto Quiroa, Elmar Rojas, Efraín Recinos, Roberto Cabrera, Luis Díaz, Carlos Mérida, Rodolfo Abularach, Rodolfo Mishaan, Enrique Anleu Díaz, Margoth Fanjul, and other national and foreign artists, including exhibitions of the Panamanian artist Julio Zachrisson and the Argentine artist Jesús Marcus.

These years mark significant development of Guatemalan art within the context of rapid modernization and historical updating experienced by the country. Various contrasting forms of artistic expression emerge, and the personalities of some artists become defined. These are also years of major social movements and popular struggle amid military repression and the guerrilla action that emerged in the 1960s.

1969-1971: In March 1969, the Vértebra group emerged, publicly announcing their intention through a manifesto in various social media outlets. The original members were Roberto Cabrera, Marco Augusto Quiroa, and Elmar Rojas.

They exhibited for the first time as a group at the DS Gallery from March 6 to 15, 1969. On August 7 of the same year, they inaugurated the Vértebra Gallery with the exhibition "Painting and Sculpture of Today's Guatemala." Enrique Anleu Díaz, Oscar Barrientos, Manolo Gallardo, Rodolfo Galeotti Torres, Juan de Dios González, Roberto González Goyri, Gilberto Hernández, Haroldo Robles, Magda Sánchez, Dagoberto Vásquez, and Enrique Velásquez Vásquez were the invited artists. The Spanish artist and publicist residing in Guatemala, Ramón Avila, acted as a promoter and representative.

This period already shows a break with all formalistic art and a critical recovery of Guatemalan art with a social tendency, in a socio-economic context of great political violence, between the counterinsurgency of successive military governments and the guerrilla movement spread throughout much of the national territory.

In the Vértebra Gallery, in addition to the core group, other artists exhibited including Rodolfo Aburalach, Ramón Avila, Manolo Gallardo, Enrique Anleu Díaz, Gilberto Hernández, Magda Sánchez, Roberto González Goyri, Erwin Guillermo, Isabel Ruiz, César Izquierdo, and among others, the Spanish sculptor based in El Salvador, Benjamin Saúl, and the Nicaraguan artist based in the United States, Dino Aranda.

During its existence, the group established contacts and engaged in activities with other Latin American artists, especially those from Central America. They even attempted, and partly succeeded, in extending their reach beyond Vértebra, collaborating with Salvadoran artists such as Carlos Cañas, Benjamín Cañas, Víctor Manuel Rodríguez Preza, and others. They also connected with painters from the Praxis group in Nicaragua (Alejandro Aróstegui, Leoncio Saenz, Orlando Sobalbarro, César Izquierdo, and others),

as well as artists from Costa Rica's Grupo Ocho and Grupo Taller, including Felo García, Néstor Zeledón, and Rafa Fernández.

In 1970, Vértebra expanded its activities within Guatemala: Ramón Avila, Enrique Anleu Díaz, and Luis Ortiz joined the group, and they organized other national artists and intellectuals, including writers from the Nuevo Signo Group such as Roberto Obregón, Luis Arango, Julio Fausto Aguilera, José Luis Villatoro, Francisco Morales Santos, Delia Quiñónez, and Antonio Brañas.

Vértebra emerged in opposition and contrast to all artistic expressions during those years that were heading towards the path of pure geometric abstraction, reflecting a dependence on what had already been done in industrialized central countries (such as kinetic art, minimalism, optical art, computer art, and some conceptualizations close to industrial design). Margoth Fanjul, Luis Díaz, and Joyce were primarily the artists at that time who were creating a geometric-decorative style of art.²¹

The foundation of Galería D.S., which sponsored exhibitions of various artists of the moment, promoted trends in American art that were in opposition to the new realism movement. It was at this moment that a practical differentiation and controversy began between realistic art represented by the aforementioned artists and the trends of kinetic, optical, and industrial design art.

Then, on February 11, 1972, Marco Augusto Quiroa and Enrique Anleu Díaz opened a gallery on the 20th floor of the new Centro Comercial in Zone 4, which was still under construction, called Galería Equis. They presented for the first time 12 paintings and 10 drawings created by the two painters in the same space. Their intention, as they expressed it, was to demystify the use and abuse of artistic individuality and any supposed pathology of art.

When considering the problem from an aesthetic point of view, its dynamic nature leads it to develop in various directions, including innovations in the medium such as "series" for the thematic unity of a subject. The problem of social content expressed through new realism as a vehicle is evident in series like "El Muro," "Génesis," "La Limonada," "El Perraje," "Aves de Guatemala," "Personajes de Muro y Cal," "Serie Terror," "Goyescas," "El Paredón," "Usumacinta," and "Géminis."²²

In musical composition, the aim is to reconcile contemporary techniques expressed in movements with purely aesthetic directions and in the function of denouncing and criticizing the political, social, and cultural environment.

²¹ Grupo Vertebra, Guatemala. Antecedentes, Definición y Contexto. Manuscrito de Roberto Cabrera, San José, Costa Rica, Septiembre 1991.

²² "El Muro" and "Génesis" by Roberto Cabrera, "La Limonada," "El Perraje," and "Aves de Guatemala" by Marco Augusto Quiroa, "Personajes de Muro y Cal" and "Serie de Terror" by Elmar Rojas, "Goyescas," "El Paredón," and "Usumacinta" by Enrique Anleu Díaz, "Géminis" by Quiroa and Anleu Díaz together on the same canvas, and "Escenas" by Ramón Avila.

In a climate of political violence, government repression, and police actions within which these manifestations develop, the production of musical and visual art becomes "expressions of social criticism and denunciation."

This state, which will primarily characterize plastic production, persists over the following years, merging with the phenomenon of cultural massification that was already of interest to sociologists and artists. In its overwhelming and unified advance, mass society is deemed by Guillermo de Torre as "fatal for the creative artist."

Later, the earthquake of February 4, 1976, causes the displacement of institutions, affecting in the case of music the lack of venues for the normal development of activities by official ensembles, accelerating the crisis process that culminates at the end of the 1980s, as with the case of the National Symphony Orchestra, practically disappearing due to lack of interest, official support, and internal disorganization. The discouragement caused by this does not allow musical composition to produce works for the medium, once again blinding the development initiated since the 1930s-40s until 1986.ⁱ

Artistic Nationalism

As an ideological tendency, "nationalism" is part of a sociological study in which the process of territorial and cultural expansion and conquest is framed within the concepts of ethnicity, cultural identification, and territorial limitation.

Miguel Siguán²³ refers to the identification of nationalism with the close relationship of a specific geographic territory, and the fact of sharing symbols that allow individuals to be recognized and to recognize each other. Among these symbols, "the most important is the fact of speaking the same language, which is much more than an external sign of identification; it is indeed a bond of communication and unity among the members of the community, as well as an expression of their cultural heritage."²⁴

This concept has had various interpretations throughout the development of history according to the changes that occur in different historical periods.²⁵

The idea of "nationalism" that emerged in the 18th century aims to establish the distinctive character of nations and individuals. These distinctive characteristics are linked to another trait that identifies the idea of nationalism: the revival of the past and the escape from reality. This is because in the past, the heroic origins of peoples and the traits that identified them are sought, fueling interest in ancient cultures through disciplines like history and archaeology.²⁶

²³ Miguel Siguán- "España Plurilingüe - Alianza Editorial, Madrid 1992.

²⁴ Idem

²⁵ William Fleming- Arte, Música, ideas.

²⁶ C. W. Ceram-Dioses, Tumbas y Sabios.

Although outside the concepts framed within politics and sociology, the nationalist sentiment that developed in the 17th and 18th centuries in art is a consequence of social and political changes. This consequence expanded in America, serving as a repository for expressions of European art, which in some ways created conditions for realizing "nationalism" in the new continent.

In music, this term takes root during the Enlightenment, a period of individual emancipation, reaffirming individualism amid increasing social collectivization, where "the role of the individual was diminishing in the face of growing social collectivization."

This conception has historical precedents in 18th-century Europe, primarily linked to centers devoted to music and art. These cultivating centers were mainly located in Italy, Spain, France, and Germany during the 17th and 18th centuries, creating, in a way, "a new art" that by the 19th century extended beyond the boundaries of Central Europe to the region of the Scandinavian countries and the Urals.

In this same 19th century, the Romantic movement spread with a variety of nuances. "The discovery of traditional values from historical pasts contributed to the formation of a new national consciousness, both politically and spiritually, as well as artistically."

Alongside this process, there was an influence exerted by the great polyphonic art of the Flemish composers of the 16th century, resulting from the integration of "new stylistic contributions from Viennese musicians and the unique elements of different countries—the 'national styles'—in the opinion of Hamel & Hurlimann, the premise of this nationalist trend in music was constituted by a new emergence of national elements; primarily folk songs and dances."²⁷

These were compiled, with meticulous studies conducted on the melodic characteristics and dialectical peculiarities of folklore. These popular melodic elements that found fruition within classical music had begun this process in the 18th century. Regarding this, Beethoven used Russian folk melodies in his Op. 59 quartets as themes for variation, and Schubert incorporated "a whole series of compositions, melodies, and rhythms from Hungarian folklore" into his works.²⁸

There is a "nationalization" of music, which, although occurring during the Romantic era, was developed over a considerable period of time. Above all, the musical tradition of schools like the Italian, which had such a character in cosmopolitan musicians

²⁷ The same authors refer that starting from 1742, in England, compilations of popular melodies from Scotland, Wales, and Ireland had appeared. George Thompson incorporated these popular melodies into classical music by commissioning composers such as Pleyel, Kotzaluch, Haydn, and Beethoven to harmonize these songs.

²⁸ The act of directing the gaze and the search for material in traditional folk expressions greatly valued ethnicities, while simultaneously creating a classification and differentiation between traditional popular sources that were exploited and used. Slavic, Spanish, or Italian music, for example, demonstrated the richness of traditional folk music as a source that was utilized and incorporated into classical music.

like Boccherini, Clementi, or Cherubini, represents in this context, including Tartini, Viotti, and Paganini, the international Italian "virtuosity."

Cases like that of France signify an essential transformation, directed towards the "independence of its musical creation," but also significant in the development of instrumental virtuosity schools. Among these instrumentalists were Rudolphe Kreutzer and Antoine Habeneck, founder of a violin school from which survived musicians like Delphin Alard and the Spanish virtuoso Pablo de Sarasate.

From the Belgian violin school, notable representatives include Charles de Bériot and his disciple Henri Vieuxtemps.

France reached a distinctly national expression in musical domains with the symphony and oratorio. With Jean François Lesueur, music director at Napoleon's court (1804), "the characteristics of the French spirit in music were perfectly outlined," applying the concept of programmatic music—music that is motivated and imitative—to orchestral music and grand choral art accompanied by orchestra. This concept is so inherent to French musical spirituality that it is found in the chansons of Janequin from the 18th century.

Lesueur consistently promoted his principles, focusing on the literary-polemical aspects of music. However, his disciple, Hector Berlioz, managed to elevate these principles "to historical significance through musical creation." In doing so, Berlioz became the prototype of the Romantic composer, who, much like Victor Hugo in poetry, exerted a decisive influence on musical evolution far beyond the borders of his homeland.²⁹

The diffusion of this sentiment spread to the rest of the European nations. Among the Slavic peoples, this nationalism has been broader, more fertile, and richer. In the late decades of the 18th century, it began in Poland with the work of Mathias Kamiński, the author of the first Polish national opera. This trend continued with the Singspiels of Joseph Elsner, the operas of Stanisław Moniuszko, and the well-known figure of Frédéric Chopin.

In Chopin, Polish nationalism is expressed more vehemently, evident in the introduction of popular elements into classical music, particularly manifested in his Polonaises and Mazurkas.

In Russia, the personality of Mikhail Glinka, who had studied in Italy and was impressed by the national folklore in the Caucasus, was advised by Siegfried Dehn, a prestigious German theorist, to "write Russian music." Using a Russian libretto, musically characterizing a national theme, and incorporating melodies from indigenous folklore, Glinka composed his opera "A Life for the Tsar", rightly regarded as the birth of Russian music from that moment onward.

²⁹ Hurl. Idem

This nationalizing trend was continued by Dargomyzhsky with his opera "Rusalka" and other works, having more impact in the subsequent generation (1834-1844), including the group known as "The Five" or the school of New Russians, composed of Korsakov, Cui, Balakirev, Mussorgsky, and Borodin. Cui's connection to Russian nationalism is more due to his aesthetic convictions than his musical style, as his work is placed within the later phase of French and German Romanticism. Korsakov, alongside his symphonic poems (such as "Russian Easter Festival Overture", "Antar", "Sadko"), composed the first large-scale Russian symphony. Borodin was the symphonist of the group, writing three symphonies that developed the typically Russian technique of constant repetition and transformation of small musical motifs.³⁰

Mussorgsky, the most brilliant and original of the New Russian school, achieved a genuine harmonization of Russian melody, becoming a precursor to subsequent music. His work, marked by great individualism and originality, is reflected in his songs, the suite "Pictures at an Exhibition," his opera "Boris Godunov," and "A Night on Bald Mountain."

Anton Rubinstein represents an approach of Russian music towards Western-European language, leading to the creation of internationally valuable and enduring Russian music in his disciple, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Hurliman, defining Tchaikovsky's art and his French and Russian heritage (his mother was French), refers to a conscious antagonism that led him to seek the ideal of his artistic aspirations halfway between Paris and Moscow, in Germany. Tchaikovsky's inclination towards programmatic music in the Berlioz sense is typically French-oriented, while his commitment to the mastery of "absolute" symphonic and chamber music is German. The Russian element is everywhere, albeit in a quite distilled form.

Upon achieving independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Czech provinces (Bohemia and Moravia) simultaneously achieved musical independence. This was initiated by Bedřich Smetana, who represents for Czech music what Glinka and Rubinstein represent for Russia; he skillfully combined in his music, with great naturalness, the national language with international tradition. Utilizing the principle of the symphonic poem in his own compositions, he infused his scores with an authentically popular tone, although specific popular melodies are hardly found in his musical output. He composed the cycle "My Country" and his opera "The Bartered Bride."

Smetana found a brilliant successor in Antonín Dvořák. Dvořák's creations possess a robustness translated through obstinate melodic and rhythmic invention, and a somewhat rough constructive technique, which precisely stems from his vitality deeply rooted in the sentiment of the people. Hence, the explanation that Dvořák's expression as a composer is more pronounced and directly popular than Smetana's. Popular songs are introduced into his Slavonic Dances, not only songs from his homeland but also exotic ones, as seen in his Symphony No. 9 "From the New World". His symphonic poems and, in general, his oeuvre are saturated with nationalism.

³⁰ Idem. Hull

This nationalist phase is also evident in Scandinavian countries with Gade and Grieg, the latter known for his suites for Henrik Ibsen's drama "Peer Gynt". In Spain, it is seen with Enrique Granados, the author of the opera "Goyescas", and Isaac Albéniz with "Iberia", a beautiful and ingenious piano work that captures the peculiarities of various Spanish regions.

Similarly, visual arts acquire distinctive characteristics that allow us to identify a Flemish, Italian, German, French, or Spanish art in many ways. Initially, as schools developed styles associated with a technique or genre, intentional signs, episodes, or local themes were later depicted, hinting at the intention to express regional peculiarities and themes that exalt that sense of nationalism gradually becoming increasingly intertwined with romanticism.

Several theorists point out that among some of the traits of this nationalism from the 17th to 19th centuries is the persistence of a taste for local color. Landscape artists at the end of the 18th century who had traveled to distant countries had a more precise understanding of the environment, customs, and peculiarities. English artists like Hodge depicted images of India, while American painters like West introduced Native Americans into their historical paintings. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre described the island of Bourbon.

In the Low Countries, painting of interiors and landscapes was practiced, referring to both Flemish and other schools. If the individual character of races and nations has different significance in different epochs of history, the collective character of Christendom comes to possess a degree of reality incomparably higher than the individuality of each people.

At the end of the Middle Ages, feudalism, common throughout the West, international chivalry, the universal Church, and its unitary culture were replaced by national bourgeoisie with its civic patriotism, distinct economic and social forms in each place, along with the narrowly limited spheres of interest of cities and provinces, the particularism of principalities, and the diversity of national languages. It is then that the national and racial factor comes to the forefront as decisive, and the "Renaissance" appears as a particular historical form in which the Italian spirit individualizes itself against the backdrop of European cultural unity.

These signs of an incipient nationalism can be seen in the case of the Low Countries through the work of their artists. If there was something great in the life of these countries, it was their absolute simplicity and rusticity. Upon achieving independence from Spain in 1648, they organized themselves into towns and governments. When Van Ruysdael painted his "View of Amsterdam Harbor," more than just depicting an image of the old fish market, he presented a local variant, capturing in painting the new bourgeois way of life.³¹ Similarly, Rembrandt, in painting scenes from the Old Testament, portrayed Jews from the Dutch neighborhoods of Amsterdam—the merchants and traders reflecting the emerging commercial city—with distinct features that represent a particularism

³¹ Fleming

distinguishing the Dutch school and its bourgeois Baroque. This bourgeois concept, in its diversity of aspects, maintains a common denominator—shared ideas such as mercantilism, anti-authoritarianism, nationalism, individualism, fervent defense of rights and freedoms, and the practical application of scientific discoveries—all converging in the unity that resides in the worship of the home.³²

American Nationalism

The colonial system established in America by Europeans revolved around racist and classist foundations, providing economic advantages from various angles depending on social class. The classification of criollos (Creoles), peninsulares (those born in Spain), mestizos, and indigenous people also represented the social and political positions occupied by these groups in the American continent. The abuses of power, with some attempting to dominate others or restrict and deny rights to certain groups, fostered resistance movements throughout the American continent. Undoubtedly, the usurpation of lands belonging to indigenous peoples, along with systems of land distribution, encomiendas (granting of native labor to Spanish settlers), and other exploitative mechanisms, sparked interests and ambitions among new landowners. This, in turn, led to a sense of territorial defense stemming from the established political system. With the creation of viceroalties and captaincies-general, local problems emerged. Criollos maintained and fostered a spirit of rebellion against colonial authorities, exerting pressure to seek power and rid themselves of Spanish rule and European dominance. Other interests ranged from legal scholars drafting laws to structure a new state, to merchants advocating for free enterprise and the establishment of economic and political liberalism.

Over three centuries of colonial rule in America, these experiences shaped the consciousness of generations, defining their social position and aspirations. Their connection to the land and deep-rooted attachment translated into a defense of their territory. The institutions that were established fostered a localist sentiment directed toward a concept of nationalism, although true nationalism could not exist until legally recognized as a "nation". Technically, these characteristics defined the beginnings of nationalism.³³

In Guatemala, these traits are evident within the romantic tendencies that emerged in art towards the end of the 19th century, defining a first nationalist movement in art that extended into the early 20th century.

In this movement, linked to various artistic forms, there is an escape from reality, exoticism, individualism, and a return to the past. The conception of nationality is directed towards vanished cultures, especially the Maya, the mythical pre-Hispanic world, and historical events following the Spanish conquest. In some ways, a few artists reacted

³² Fleming

³³ These same traits existed in pre-Hispanic societies. Their geographic location, linguistic and ethnic characteristics, and political, economic, and religious organization provided the elements that defined them as "nations". The defense of all these material and spiritual values against other pre-Hispanic societies, and later, on the brink of Spanish conquest, also bestowed upon them a "nationalist" character.

against the European taste with a strong "elitist" accent that was maintained in Guatemala by the dominant groups in society and commerce. In the realm of visual arts, from the realism with photographic intent,³⁴ two trends emerge: one towards Guatemalan landscapes, and the other concerned with technical evolution.

At the beginning of the following century, the arrival of Sabartés was very significant for Guatemalan visual arts, renewing it with works of expressionist and impressionist tendencies, branching into two currents. One maintains a concept of "Guatemalan-ness" with works that reflect indigenous people as tourist-decorative objects appreciated by landscape artists and painters of customs. The other is concerned with aesthetic changes through modern artistic currents. The former, in their quest for local color representing the characteristic Guatemalan landscape (indigenous people, ruins of Antigua Guatemala, Lake Atitlán and Lake Amatitlán, some Mayan ruins), treat it within a dual realistic-impressionistic technique; authors like Gálvez Suárez and Garavito are representative of this approach.

In music, nationalism is manifested through the use and imitation of instruments considered to be expressions of the national identity (such as the chirimía, marimba, and tun).³⁵ There is a hybridization in composition where romantic-nationalistic features are revealed, as seen in waltzes or mazurkas with European styling but indigenous titles. In these compositions, the oboe is used to emulate the chirimía as a symbol of "national sentiment," and traditional melodies are transcribed for other instruments or incorporated into symphonic works with impressionistic and romantic tendencies. This can be observed in the works of Jesús and Ricardo Castillo, Raúl Paniagua, Martínez Sobral, Benigno Mejía, Felipe Siliezar, and Julián Paniagua Martínez.

During the early decades of the 20th century until 1944, the dominant cultures, in which class interests play a significant role, altered the meaning of nationalism. The indigenous people, according to the ruling classes, became seen as an obstacle. These ruling classes, seeking the consolidation of the national society, viewed indigenous people as elements that needed to be excluded from it. In this situation, the growing need for labor in the pre-industrial stage of Guatemala City shifted the concept of the national, replacing the "indigenous" with the "peasant," which by 1944 would become the proletarian worker.

³⁴ En 1878, el Barón Augusto de Succa, que era fotógrafo, realiza obra pictórica, siendo de gran interés dos vistas de la ciudad de Guatemala. Además del interés de la técnica de tendencia realista éstas y dentro de los cánones de las escuelas académicas europeas, su mayor importancia es que el modelo deja de ser extraño al medio guatemalteco.

³⁵ It is not intended to enter into a discussion about the origin of the mentioned instruments (whether they are Guatemalan or from other regions, such as the marimba, of African origin, the chirimía of Moorish-Arab origin, or the tun, which was an instrument unknown among the Maya).

By the 1930s, nationalist characteristics were affirmed in groups like the "tepeus," who aimed, they said, for a new sensitivity focused primarily on criollo-indigenist themes.³⁶

From those years onward, there was a search for the identification of a nationalist idea through social struggles, defending the heritage threatened by foreign intervention, as popularly denounced in the events of '44, giving rise to the working class as the builder of the new state, and the peasant as symbols of Guatemalan identity. Art sought to capture this new strength in praising the worker, raising awareness of the importance of their labor through works that depicted them with a vigor that synthesized the strength of our nation in the new state of affairs.

Visual arts, especially sculpture in its attempts to integrate with architecture, reproduce figures realistically in poses that suggest having achieved the highest human ideals. In December 1946, a group of young students and workers in Guatemala came together to form an association that would engage youth in addressing the problems faced by humanity in our times amid the crisis of culture. This association became known as Saker-ti, a Quiché word meaning "dawn." The intellectuals and artists who formed it did so in response to the "historical" necessity within the democratic climate that followed the October Revolution. Prior to Saker-ti, the group ACCENTO was formed in 1941, revealing that the primary goal of the intellectuals and artists involved was not the direction of nationalism as a basis for cultural or social homogeneity, but rather the issue of class and its impact on taste and collective art.

Raúl Leiva, who was a member of the group, stated that his poetry and the literary creations of the other members constitute a protest against loneliness, against individualistic, liberal, and petit-bourgeois laissez-faire. In their poetry, they address, in their view, urgent contemporary themes: human solidarity, peace, the indigenous issue, the motives of class struggle, and freedom. They argue that they move beyond the almost exclusively romantic delimitation of the poets of the early 20th century. They add that their lyricism expresses the conflict of mestizaje, the ideological battle of our time, as they have taken the place of the collective revolutionary forces that increasingly condition our era. Rather than being static observers of reality, they have taken the side of our people, bolstering with our poetic voice and our action the forces currently striving to create a COLLECTIVE ART of deep social intent, which, by demolishing and sinking the last towers of art purism, will lay the foundation for a new era of authentic humanism.³⁷

As can be appreciated, although the focus is more on social impact, it has effects at the level of aesthetic issues, which will intensify in the 1960s in new expressions of art.

³⁶ Los Tepeus en el Panorama de las Letras. Suplemento Cultural "La Hora", sábado 6 de noviembre, 1993.

³⁷ Raúl Leiva, "Grupo Acento", en Tesis de Graduación de Dante Barrientos Tecún, Universidad Rafael Landívar, 1988.

One change that brings about a new problem for the art of the years 1944-1954 is its officialization; faced with this situation, commissioned works for public functions tend to falsify the reality of the worker and the peasant in the name of propagandistic art. This is the case with engravings used as posters for agrarian reform or the route to the Atlantic; the peasants and workers represented in these works do not identify with them, nor do the sectors that include the bourgeoisie.

Although authors working on such aspects revisit the theme of foreign usurpation in works portraying the burdened peasant faced with their miserable situation, their socio-economic drama linked to the land, and the painful reality of the exploited worker, the message does not find receptive audiences among them. In this situation, art becomes aware of its negative role in this bourgeois society, which does not fulfill the various postulates of social order intended by the artists; this is a utopia, before a blind and deaf environment.

By the sixties, profound changes in society, industrial and commercial internationalism, along with political violence, poured concern for protest art into new expressions. The increasing mass culture and consumerism, as well as the foray into new international aesthetic possibilities in competitive attempts, directed experiences towards other directions. In this case, the "nationalistic" sense as conceived in maintaining certain symbols or meanings of Guatemalan identity at a localized sectarian level is abandoned. Perhaps one of the phrases embodying this sentiment regarding other directions in art is expressed by Maestro José Castañeda when referring to four Guatemalan composers in the 1970s, applauding the works they composed; these works, as he expressed, contained a breaking away and at the same time an overcoming of outdated romanticism and nationalism. Or the words of journalist René Augusto Flores, who, in addressing the work of composer Jorge Sarmientos and his internationally characterized compositions, wrote that "he has left behind his folkloric provincialism," alluding to the use of formulas removed from the known nationalist character.

Conclusions

The "purist" schools detach the artistic aspect from the socio-political, alleging that manifestations such as art occur in a context where only inherent situations prevail, as a response to their own dynamics, that is, persisting in escaping from reality. This is questionable, as we insist that as a human expression with social connotations, art is conditioned by the economic, political, and social environment, along with the implicit aesthetic development within it, creating an interdependence between it and other factors for its realization. Under these parameters, we have addressed the present work, also aiming to present the situation of plastic and musical art over more than six decades in relation to socio-political changes, as well as determining the existence or absence of Guatemalan art, and if it exists, under what circumstances. In response to this, we present the research conducted on the development of Guatemalan art, which reveals a fragmented line in terms of the continuity of its trajectory. Regarding this last point, the

musicologist and composer José Castañeda believed that there was no musical tradition in Guatemala due to its lack of continuity from the Colonial era to the present day.

Two problems can be discerned in this discontinuity. First, there are very few composers, and the experiences they acquire in their profession, as well as the preparation and knowledge obtained, are wasted by the responsible authorities, resulting in a waste of talent, time, and loss of cultural resources that should be utilized for the benefit of artistic education and public entities.

In government administration, an artist who is fortunate enough to go abroad and gain new and beneficial experiences for the aesthetic development of the country, upon returning, does not have the opportunity, place, or suitable position to apply them; this does not happen in private technological careers in such fields. A technician from any private sector career who attends training courses for improvement, specialization, or new knowledge, upon returning, is utilized by the same company for its benefit and that of others. Public administration, on the other hand, wastes such resources that could be used in the fields of official and national artistic education and professions.

As a consequence, it turns out that due to the lack of transmission of such experiences, every emerging artist trying to develop in their field starts from scratch, since logically the continuity of knowledge that should be preserved, taught, applied, and projected is unknown, thus hindering the evolution of art. This can be corroborated in the periods that appear in the artistic history of the country, where there is a total lack of creative activity. Upon later reactivation of this activity, the thread of its development has been lost.

Regarding this same discontinuity in music, the idea of "cyclical form" prevails concerning stages that are fragmented by various causes, especially of a socio-political nature, interrupting the development that should exist in a gradual and logical manner in composition and instrumental technique.

This phenomenon can be observed today: Starting from the late 1980s, the authorities' abandonment of official artistic institutions due to political zeal has practically led to the disappearance of the National Symphony Orchestra, accompanied by personal interests and "artistic vendettas." This musical institution has drifted without appointing a director and assistant director for the ensemble since 1990 up to this date (1994). Despite the existence of such resources in the country, the authorities squander them showing Olympic-level disinterest, instead creating political bureaucracy within a "culture and sports" ministry, whose function for the arts so far has been nil. As a consequence of this, there is no vehicle to stimulate symphonic musical creation, establishing another cycle, a result of new fragmentation caused by official musical inactivity. The same situation exists in other neglected artistic institutions such as the National Conservatory of Music, the National School of Fine Arts, and the Ballet Guatemala.

The socio-political issue with economic implications shows periods of time that are related to the same history. Unfortunately, such changes contribute to truncating the

continuity of programs and projects, due to different directions, often opposed to the ideas that came before. Also, at another level, internal changes in leadership and management within the same administration are a significant issue that fragments continuity in educational systems, consequently mutilating and interrupting artistic creation.

The thing about the “big artistic culture”

When it comes to this topic, it seems to have no benefit for some artists; in fact, they are proud of not having any kind of "artistic culture" because, in their view, lacking it makes their creation "purer and more original."

The artistic careers show a diversity of interests among those who pursue them. Generally, in music, instrumentalists are only interested in their instrument in terms of learning the execution technique; the rest of their lives are dedicated to practicing it, and some to perfecting such execution. It is natural, then, that under an academic type of teaching, which is the official one, other aspects such as harmony, counterpoint, orchestration, and orchestral conducting are relegated to the composer's field. Furthermore, taste is directed based on the authors who, according to teachers dedicated to their instruments, "represent the school," decisively opposing any innovation in traditional technique and execution. This closes the field to contemporary aesthetics concerning new works, which represent an unfamiliar aesthetic that often fails to penetrate the mindset of artists and educators trained in the traditional manner.

Then, the part that corresponds to the importance of "creation within the medium" is not understood by instrumentalists (except for rare exceptions). Hence, the lack of awareness among composers' efforts to create works that fall within progressive expressions contributes to the little value placed on national creation, a factor that is gradually relegating the trajectory of such work to oblivion. Moreover, this work, besides not being disseminated, lacks a historical record where its evolution and status can be consulted. Such a state, albeit to a lesser extent, is also observed in the visual arts. All of the above reaffirms the need to conduct critical research on the history of Guatemalan art.

An expression of Guatemalan

Regarding the existence of a "Guatemalan art" that can be clearly defined and isolated from other foreign elements for clear identification, we need to resort to various approaches. The pursuit of this art, which aims to highlight particular values of a people, characterizing the traits that are unique to them and with which they identify, is associated with nationalism, which is diminishing alongside the globalization and commercialization experienced by peoples—a phenomenon that is growing and intensifying to this day due to massification caused by the "consumer society," which establishes an impersonal generality, loss of individual identity, and, of course, the characteristics and values specific to different peoples—a phenomenon that is currently observed in society and acute massification.

Referring to music, we begin with a "nationalist" stage located at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. In this period, elements derived from vernacular music appeared in "classical music," as it is called, studied in academies and conservatories, and were used in European-style musical forms, creating a hybrid that clearly does not reflect a sense of Guatemalan identity as intended but rather reflects a classist art. It is important to note the emergence during this period of the marimba as a symbol of nationalism, although it also reflects a sectarian taste—the culture of non-urban and middle-class groups, distinct from the taste of the upper bourgeoisie and classical music. Regarding this, among musicians, there was also a classist situation, with some lamenting that the introduction of the marimba to the middle classes in the capital had affected expressions of "good taste" and "classical music" as the marimba had taken over theaters and salons. The search for nationalism through the marimba even extended to the adaptation of Viennese-style waltzes, mazurkas, and polkas by Guatemalan composers. Pieces originally written for piano were supposedly imbued with national spirit when performed on the marimba. Thus, waltzes like "Tecún Uman" and "La Flor del Café," which mimic Viennese musical forms, and other works like "Bella Guatemala" (in the form of a mazurka) reflect, according to this criterion, the Guatemalan essence.

A review and study of the problem in this situation that identifies "such nationalism" reveals its association with "class tastes" as a social reflection.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the establishment of the capitalist bourgeoisie in the city of Guatemala directed tastes through various means such as social gatherings, commerce, entertainment, fashion, imported customs, etc., as can be seen through the abundant printed information of the time. Naturally, artistic taste was not immune to these influences. Given the interests concerning socio-economic and political issues, such tastes were not directed towards seeking national identity, which at that time was synonymous with the lower classes, as the sense of nationalism was difficult to interpret within the elitist class that advocated for "European refinement" in their preferences.

This complex extends to artistic education, reflecting in its methods the European model. Artists aspired to go to the old continent to "learn" the art of the "great masters" and become familiar with their works. This widespread idea of experiencing European art in the best possible way allowed the most gifted individuals the opportunity to achieve this, and upon returning to Guatemala, they put into practice the knowledge and experiences acquired.

In music, rules are established for composition, which is done within the "forms of classical music" that must be imitated and adhered to. These rules are so rigorous in their application that they do not allow for "strange liberties" in academic composition.

In the visual arts, a fragile nationalism is sought in the representation of indigenous people, who are used as exotic elements for decorative purposes. Alfredo Gálvez Suárez, with his paintings framed within the epic, exalting indigenous people in works like "The

Clash of Races" or "The Message," created for murals at the National Palace, represents one of these examples that seek a sense of the national. However, the truth is that this significance can only be perceived at the level of decoration and not as part of a comprehensive ideological expression of Guatemalan sentiment.

These examples reinforce the notion of seeking "nationalism" as a utopia that clearly shows us that in different periods and amidst the growing changes in Guatemalan society, there is a lack of determining elements that define a "nationalistic" art, except for what was known at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries.

Final recommendation

It is worth noting that with the earthquake of 1976, Guatemala City undergoes enormous transformations as a "closed city." The economic crisis, along with the uncontrolled and constant expansion of the metropolis, brings acute problems such as overpopulation and job scarcity. Consumerism and the loss of cultural identity due to the invasion of customs and fashions foreign to our environment naturally have an effect on the arts.

Artists, in the stages of their personal development, while accommodating the creation of works reflecting a "national character," strive to surpass this phase and seek universal languages. Maestro José Castañeda defines this state of affairs when referring to contemporary Guatemalan music through the voices of composers from the 1960s-70s, expressing that "composers have moved beyond that period of outdated romanticism to have an international voice." Similarly, critic René Augusto Flores, referring to the same period in Jorge Sarmientos' work, writes that it "has transcended its provincial character" obviously, to take on a universal turn.

Therefore, after examining the causes that have led, on one hand, to the loss of our cultural identity and the discontinuity of art development in our country, it would be advisable to include in the curriculum of art schools (National Conservatory, School of Fine Arts) courses that present the history and development of Guatemalan arts, in order to maintain a constant knowledge of schools, trends, and works as a way to situate and raise awareness among artists and art scholars about their role in fulfilling their responsibility in the development of national art, and as part of their comprehensive artistic education.

The universities in the country should conduct analytical and critical studies, as well as monographic works on art and artists, in order to bring these values to light. Such works should be edited, and their content should not only serve for information and data collection but also act as guides for conducting in-depth research on the authors, the context in which they develop their work, and the search for mechanisms to promote the dissemination of Guatemalan visual and sound art. This approach aims to prevent the irreparable losses suffered by many artistic works and the forgotten state in which many authors have been submerged.

These are the foundations and intentions of this research.

Enrique Anleu Díaz

Dirección General de Investigaciones

Centro de Estudios Folklóricos

Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala

Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción, junio de 1994

Art History Annexes

- "We have handled in our poetry themes of pulsating current events: human solidarity, peace, the indigenous issue, the motives of class struggle, freedom, etc., thus escaping the almost strictly amorous delimitation of the poets who preceded us in this precarious 20th century. We have expressed in our lyricism the conflict of mestizaje, the ideological battle of our time, for we have taken our place alongside the revolutionary, collective forces that are increasingly conditioning our era. Formerly static, mere observers of reality, we have taken sides alongside our people, adding our poetic voice and action to the forces currently striving to create a collective art of profound social intention, which, by demolishing and sinking the last towers of artistic purity, will be the foundation of a new era of authentic humanism."
Acento Group (Association of Young Artists and Writers)
Otto Raúl González, Augusto Monterroso Bonilla, Angel Ramírez, Eloy Amado Herrera, Raúl Leiva, Enrique Juárez Toledo, Guillermo Noriega Morales, Carlos Illescas, Antonio Brañas, Rafael Sosa.
(From "Manifesto in the Literary Section of Impacto Newspaper," July 19, 1968)
- "The young members of Saker Ti were between 20 and 30 years old. Their leader, Huberto Alvarado, in 1948 proposed and the group accepted: For a national, democratic, and realistic art. Three points drawn from Mao Zedong. The interpretation was oriented towards what was known and established; something similar to what I saw in 1936 with the League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists. I did not betray my young novice Stalinist friends. I wanted their work to arise from remarkable conditions; for the young to think and act without schematism, confident that they would be the initiators of change in their field. I wanted for them a vibrant culture, not obstructed by mechanical recipes. To encourage in them a critical spirit acquainted with Gongora and Lenin, as much as the Popol Vuh, to strengthen their wings, not to atrophy them with servile submission to ecclesiastical slogans that spoke with wooden tongues, that had no monotonous soul. Only thus could I help them; not by suggesting, but by inspiring.

Saker-Ti Group

Amado Ramírez, Huberto Alvarado, Adrián Ramírez Flores, Jorge Raúl Castellanos, León Valladares, Armando H. Bravo, Carlos Raúl Alvarado H, Roberto Paz y Paz, Olga Martínez Torres, Jacobo Rodríguez Padilla, Flavio A. González, Salvador de León, José Egberto López, Benjamín Cordero, José Carlos Alvarado, Adalberto de León, Arturo Martínez, Orlando Vitola,

Mario Castellanos, Ariel de León, Oscar Edmundo Palma, Miguel Angel Vásquez, Rolando Llovera, Manuel Herrarte, Oscar González."

- "The fourteen years of dictatorship under the government of Ubico, from 1931 to 1944, represent an eclectic moment in Guatemalan art. There was an attempt to reclaim the values of our tradition, adapting them, so to speak, to the contemporary life experience, and the result is a strange mixture of styles that convinces neither as Maya nor Hispanic, much less as modern... The October 1944 revolution marks the beginning of 'the current moment' of Guatemalan contemporary art."

Dagoberto Vásquez, in Contemporary Art Guatemala.

- "Against indifference, against inaction, against deafness, we have gathered as a group of artists - we are a group of artists surrounded by mummies. We face the harsh feeling of living in an environment of things dead to art. Intellectuals cloaked in indifference, inactive entities occupying important artistic positions, bureaucratic institutions with their eternal rejection of culture. We are appreciated outside of Guatemala, but we are going to fight against that traditional way of being. They must recognize us here first, and when that happens, we will have fulfilled our desire and our deep patriotism."

"Circulo Valenti" Guatemala, January 1963.

Rodolfo Abularach, Luis Zaldívar, Efraín Recinos, Marco Augusto Quiroa, Gilberto Hernández, Roberto Cabrera, Haroldo Robles, Magda Eunice Sánchez, Elmar René Rojas, Enrique Anleu Díaz, Oscar Barrientos, Norma Nuila, Julio Barillas, Enrique Velázquez Vásquez. (Excerpts from the manifesto of Circulo Valenti)

- "...we were aware of what was happening, we discussed it, we suffered from it like all Guatemalans; as artists, we had to denounce it, but I think we lacked the 'ad hoc' means to express it, especially in musical composition, where composers were also concerned about new expressions, innovations, and technical changes to apply in the field. As for painting, we are more focused on social issues; for example, in tribute to the events of March and April against the public repression by the government of Ydigoras Fuentes, an exhibition was organized at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of San Carlos of Guatemala, where the following artists participated:

Dagoberto Vásquez

Roberto González Goiry Guillermo Grajeda Mena Max Saravia Gual Juan Antonio Franco Enrique Velázquez Vásquez Víctor Vásquez Kestler Marco Augusto Quiroa Roberto Cabrera Enrique Anleu Díaz Elmar René Rojas Gilberto Hernández

"In terms of the critical socio-political situation, I have vivid memories of when, in the early hours of the morning, we constantly heard voices, the stomping of boots and weapons, shouts, knocks on neighboring doors; we would suddenly wake up anxious, gathering in a room in our living room waiting for them to come to our house, then the violent knocks on our door, my father would open it and armed soldiers would come in to search our house. This happened several times. In such an environment, I remember a painting I did and still keep somewhere; during this time, I had read 'The Diary of Anne Frank,' and I titled this painting 'Tribute to Anne Frank,' where there are elements that I associated indirectly with the situation we were living through..."

Enrique Anleu Díaz in "Memories"

- "We have learned the lesson, we know how to recognize mistakes and gauge the limits of our abilities. We are not gods, geniuses, or prodigies; we are simply painters, and we know that the most wonderful aspect of creation is the human being, grand in its smallness, minimal in its greatness..."

Manifiesto-presentation of the Gemini series, Marco Augusto Quiroa, Enrique Anleu Díaz.

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J. Porfirio González Alcántara, Rapsodia Latinoamericana.

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1982

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ⁱ Reference is made to that year because it signifies the last shine of national composition with the premiere of works by Sarmientos and Anleu at the level of the Symphony Orchestra; after that, composition in the national sphere falls into silence and absence of new works.