

Free figuration

In 1963, a new aesthetic emerged within the movement, thanks to Sessano, consisting of eclectic and free figuration. Esperilio Bute was to take part in it during the final years of his participation in the group, as would Franco Venturi when he joined.

This new figurative language, freed from expressionist indigenism, inherits proposals that were taking place during this decade in movements like New Figuration and narrative figuration.

Muralism on the easel

Linked to Mexican muralism, they differ from it in the way they tackle social issues, moving away from the narrative component and Soviet realism.

The mural component in Spartacist painting is even found in works that are not painted on walls. They produced paintings with large dimensions for the masses that sought to bring an end to individualism, studio painting and art intended for exhibitions and the bourgeoisie.

The Spartacus Movement includes genres like landscape, still life, nudes, motherhood and scenes showing couples, as well as its typical themes of labour and the peasantry. The scenes depicted seek to dignify the indigenous figure and references to it, without a trace of populism or folklore. Women are not treated as objects of beauty, but rather with a background of protest and demands for equality (only in Carpani's work do we see women depicted in a sexualised way).

Spartacus beyond painting

One of the movement's proposals was a public art programme, which was not limited to its murals. It contained graphic production and drawings that were of great importance, with both forms of media being used to bring art closer to the people, making it more accessible.

An example of this is found in the folder on display in the exhibition, edited by the Spartacists in 1961. It contains works that provide a summary of the predominant languages and iconography of the different artists who were part of the movement.

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This exhibition on the Spartacus Movement is based around a series of works by the artists who were part of it. Without following a chronological order or structure, here we can find examples of the different tendencies, aesthetics and languages that were developed throughout its lifespan and how they were projected beyond it, maintaining certain similarities and recurring themes in each artist's individual work. In particular, we see this artistic development within the same artist, based on the reiteration of motifs and subjects tackled using a different language.

The works on display here are part of the Ralli Museums collection, along with other pieces on loan from the private collection of Eduardo Bute Sánchez de Hoyos, thanks to which it has been possible to provide a comprehensive overview of the movement.

HORARIO

Martes a Sábado 10.00 a 15.00 h

VISITING HOURS

Tuesday to Saturday 10.00 am to 3.00 pm

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MOVIMIENTO

02/06/2018 18/04/2020

ESPARTACO

Carpani
Mollari
Sánchez
Bute
Sessano
Diz
Di Bianco



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The beginnings and formation of the Spartacus Movement

In 1957, Ricardo Carpani, Juan Manuel Sánchez and Mario Mollari started holding joint exhibitions with the intention of creating social painting with a revolutionary discourse. A manifesto was written one year later, entitled “Por un arte revolucionario” (For revolutionary art), in which they set out the ideological foundations of the movement, which emerged as a result of the First River Plate Exhibition of Modern Art in Buenos Aires in 1959. The three aforementioned artists were joined in the exhibition by Carlos Sessano and Esperilio Bute. From this moment they became known as the Movimiento Espartaco, translated as the “Spartacus Movement”, in homage to the Spartacus League (a German labour movement of Marxist origin led by Rosa Luxemburg).

At the end of this same year, the photographer Tito Vallacco (present in two early exhibitions by the group) and the Bolivian Raúl Lara (who was involved for just 6 months) joined the movement. Juana Elena Diz and Pascual Di Bianco entered in 1960.

A living movement

The movement’s history was marked by the comings and goings of its members. It can be clearly divided into two periods: the first, between 1959 and 1961, marked by Carpani leaving the group; and a second stage from 1962 to 1968, when it was dissolved at the initiative of its own members.

Carpani’s departure in particular due to discrepancies in the group’s approaches (more strongly linked to political and trade union militancy), followed by that of Di Bianco, freed the movement from the political burden and the aesthetic of the pamphlet. These were not the only changes in the group’s ranks, however. Bute also left in 1963 (this being a friendly departure as he was moving to Paris) and Franco Venturi, an Italian resident in Argentina, joined two years later.

The movement, which was continuously evolving, was based on Americanist art at the start, moving towards the renewal of the tradition through the assimilation of contemporary avant-garde proposals.

They created young art that represented the panorama of their country and the continent as a whole, establishing themselves as an indispensable group in the 1960s.

The activity of the Spartacus Movement was brought to an end in 1968 with the exhibition held at the Witcomb Gallery, in which Bute, Carpani, Di Bianco and Lara were also invited to participate. This dissolution was the result of the advent of new critical approaches in Argentine art, meaning that the position of the Spartacists ceased to be the minority **alternative**, with its existence as an isolated group no longer making sense.



Ricardo Carpani, *Figure*, 1960

A social and aesthetic matter

The Spartacus Movement was an artistic, political and social initiative. They sought to create a national art that would reflect people’s real concerns through a new language.

We can identify shared traits within the movement itself, which is formed by different artists who each developed his or her individual aesthetic. These include the tendency towards monochrome and the use of flat colours, anthropocentrism, the presence of indigenous traits and the elimination of anything anecdotal in representations.

Several styles, one movement

Geometry and indigenous expression

Two aesthetics that have been present from the start can be distinguished within the movement. On the one hand we find a type of geometric painting initiated by Carpani and Sánchez, which Di Bianco and Diz were to adhere to at the start of the 1960s. On the other hand, expressive indigenous painting by Mollari, Bute, Sessano and Lara focused more on the agricultural theme, which Diz was also to join at the end of the same year after her geometric stage. Cold colours predominate in the former, with warm ones in the latter.

The movement was to reach a turning point in 1961, opting henceforth for the predominance of expressiveness linked to indigenism. The reasons were Diz’s abandonment of geometrization in favour of an expressionist language focusing on gender issues, and the departure of Carpani and Di Bianco, who also had a geometric tendency.



Juana Elena Diz, *The woman with the white handkerchief*, 1970

Mollari created a language of his own within the expressionist tendency, which Diz’s works also approached for a time, with a use of figuration that was taken to extreme deformation, emphasising expressiveness.

Bute, who began within the theme of indigenous expressionism, evolved towards a more lyrical manner of representation that was also related to gender issues. His works also have a satirical theme, linked to Sessano’s work from that time.

Meanwhile, only Sánchez maintained the geometric style of the industrial theme, being increasingly concerned with the planimetry of shapes and the use of colour.