

SYMBOLS OF GROWTH

Raimundo Figueroa

Presented by Luigi Marrozzini Gallery

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THE GROWTH OF AN ARTIST

The local public is most certainly, aware of Raimundo Figueroa and his work, since he has participated in numerous exhibitions, both personal and collective, in different galleries over the past years.

Personally, I would have introduced him before to my collectors, had I not found his work too derivative, although it had excellent pictorial and “stylistic” quality. This was not just my opinion. Art critic Manuel Perez Lizano, who covered a Figueroa retrospective in October of 1987 for *El Nuevo Día*, wrote: “...In various works one can appreciate an evident influence of Miró (Lover of Dreams) and of Picasso (Brothers, etc.)... excessive dependency on the plastic spirit of Chagall (The emigrant, Stop the War).”

At the time Raimundo himself was not satisfied with his work and was in continual search for a style of his own, of a more personal creative process. It's not easy. Only thanks to the persistency that distinguishes him, his great capacity for work, his desire to find himself, and his conscious and admirable effort to channel all his internal forces and convert them into creative energy, did he achieve it. And today, I present to you, finally, Raimundo Figueroa.

Some might be tempted to attribute to him references to Spanish informalism, to Millares or, according to the point of view, to American expressionism and, in particular, to Cy Twombly but, this time, the references are casual. The apparent similarity of his work to that of Cy Twombly, for instance, might seem obvious to a superficial observer; however, Figueroa's use of color, which in his work plays a very significant role, is totally different meanings, as happens with the graffiti which he traces and scratches by a nervous gesture of the left hand. His calligraphic strokes, his spontaneous autographic gestural

expressions, his color, and, most of all, his retelling of his experience through symbols of autobiographical emotion intrinsic to each canvas, are only Figueroa and pure Figueroa.

At this point I confess to not knowing the theory of creativity through chaos that the artist uses in his creative process. I also find unintelligible and/or irrelevant all the other little devilishness that the artist introduces or uses in the same process: occultism, cabala, alchemy, etc. None of these have served to transform lead into gold (not that this is necessary, since lead now has a respectable value of its own, and gold would be worth very little if there were as much of it as lead).

I am pragmatic, and I prefer to see in the Figueroa of the series Symbols of Growth, the artist is search of himself, the child with a great desire to grow, the beginner of SRI CHIMMOY: "...The moment you want to make constant and continuous progress, the moment you want to constantly surpass yourself and enter into the ever transcending Beyond, at that moment you become an eternal beginner." The autobiographical retelling of the child Raimundo towards the adult Figueroa who tries to find himself reminds me of the late musical genius and poet Vinicius de Moraes, author of the Girl From Ypanema and Black Orpheus, in his series of compositions titled "Per Vivere un Grande Amore" in which he describes man's steps through life, from infancy, when he still enjoys playing games, to the child awakening to his sexual instincts, loving his aunt from a distance with real passion, as well as all his young cousins in their tight skirts, to the man who makes it to Wall Street, makes money makes it to the cover of Time Magazine and ends up as ashes under a slab of marble and three feet of earth.

The existential black hole still hasn't swallowed up our artist who has just begun to find himself. The apples in his work that are almost hearts and the hearts look like phallic symbols (profane and/or sacred love) are only symbols that suggest needs, emotions, personal experiences; all those things which the future reserves its right to change, substituting one for others.

Growth is painful, and the artist is a child in continual growth, open to constant change. Figueroa himself discovered, on one occasion, that

the best book for children is one with blank pages. That is why I wish him many blank canvasses to come, so that he may continue to grow as the eternal beginner.

Luigi Marrozzini

San Juan, Puerto Rico

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