



c.torres

ORGANIC ABSTRACTION

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*“Art touches us all, for it has an eternal soul,
a nature that expresses feelings with unmatched clarity.”*



Carlos Torres was born in Bogota, Colombia in 1955 and found himself interested in the world of art at a very young age. While an anthropology student at Universidad Nacional Bogota, Torres gained a unique perspective on the energy and spirituality of the human condition which ultimately redirected his ambitions. No longer content to merely study the past, he desired to influence the present and contribute to the future and subsequently graduated with a Degree in Fine Art.

This unique background and his intimate exposure to the artifacts of the ancients have inspired Torres' unique use of textures, tones and the energetic magnetism that is so palpable in his works. Each of his artistic creations evokes an emotional response from the viewer, a sense of spirituality from deep within, perhaps even the same type of spiritual feeling that Carlos himself experienced at dig sites in his native Colombia as a student.

“Through the language of art, we are able to look at our world with new perspective, for it communicates the subtleties of life to us at their most basic levels.”

After immigrating to the United States in 1980, Carlos quickly began to regard his new country as his portal to the world, a base from which to launch exhibitions throughout the Americas including Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and the United States itself.

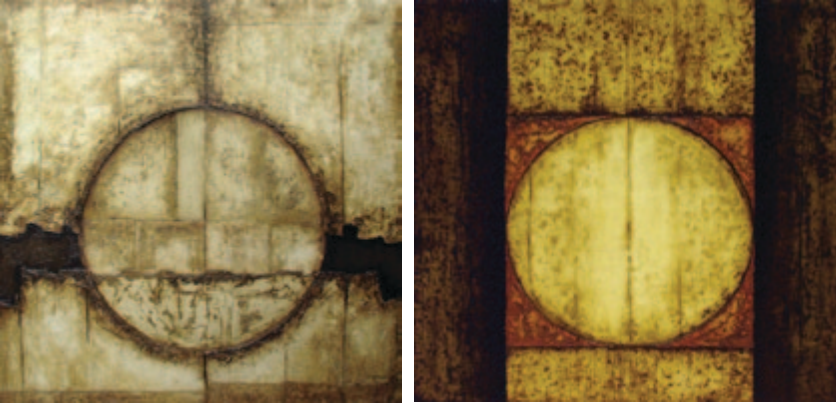
Demonstrating Torres' self-defined “organic abstraction” style, his paintings and sculptures range from highly organic textural pieces that feature earth-tones to more geometrical offerings with an expansive color pallet and intersecting lines to create shapes that tantalize the imagination, presented in a fascinatingly abstract manner. All within the framework of “organic abstraction”, for the creations of nature itself derive much of their beauty and interest from geometric shapes and abstractions as well.

Carlos Torres was awarded First Prize honors, establishing him as “The New Master of Painting”, at the Salon Alzate Avendano in Bogota, Colombia (the most significant art competition in Colombia) and went on to represent Colombia in a prestigious art competition held in Cuenca, Ecuador and then was among only thirty artists who were selected to participate in a second competition in Madrid, Spain.

chronology



- Carlos Torres was born in Bogota, Colombia in 1955 and found himself interested in the world of art at a very early age; gaining a unique perspective on the energy and spirituality of the human condition over the years.
- This perspective was enhanced and expanded as an anthropology student at Bogota's National University, where he ultimately redirecting his ambitions and graduated with an Art Degree, becoming a Master Painter.
 - The experiences of his early college years provided a unique background by exposing Torres to the artifacts of the ancients, having a profound influence on his use of rich textures and warm earth-tones, especially in his earlier works.
- The energetic magnetism that is so obvious in each of his paintings and sculptures cannot help but evoke an emotional response from the viewer and a sense of spirituality from deep within.
- "Through the language of art, we are able to look at our world with new perspective, for it communicates the subtleties of life to us at their most basic levels. Art touches us all, for it has an eternal soul, a nature that expresses feelings with unmatched clarity."
- Carlos immigrated to the United States in 1980 and considers his new country as his portal to the world, his base of operations from where he has launched exhibitions throughout the Americas including Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and several locations within the U.S.
 - "Organic Abstraction" features paintings and sculptures that range from highly organic textural pieces that feature earth-tones to his more geometrical offerings with an expansive color pallet and intersecting lines to create geometric shapes that tantalize the imagination, presented in a fascinatingly abstract manner. The creations of nature itself, after all, derive much of their beauty and interest from geometric shapes.



notable placements & installations

- The Bogota Modern Art Museum in Bogota, Colombia
 - The Latin American Art Museum in Long Beach, California
 - The Cuaunahuac Museum of Art in Cuernavaca, Mexico
 - The Luis Angel Arango Library in Bogota, Colombia
- *This library houses the largest and most prestigious art collection in Bogota*

The Torreon Art Museum in Mexico

- The Convenio Internacional in Andres Bella, Bogota, Colombia
- *An important showcase of art from the Andean countries of Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Peru*

PERMANENT COLLECTIONS

- Prominent French Critic and Writer Yves Frederic Jeannet
- Werner Wagenman, a well-known art collector in Berlin, Germany
 - Steve Dabrosky, former publicist for Coca Cola in Mexico
- Leo Kats, noted collector and food purveyor in Bogota, Colombia
 - The Cecil de Ave Collection in Mexico
- The collection of Mexican Tycoon and Industrialist Jaime Camil

Who's Who

The News

Wednesday, June 24, 1998 2

CARLOS TORRES

Mixing Spirituality And Spaces

By CATHERINE CRADDOCK
The News Staff Reporter

Carlos Torres is an artist from Columbia now living in Mexico City. He has painted professionally for 20 years, and held exhibitions in South America, Mexico, Europe and the United States. His work, always in mixed media, is a concrete mixture of spirituality and spaces, of serenity and form, creating and recreating themselves. He literally destroys and then recreates his works, looking for their true essence, the real expression that lies underneath. This process doesn't end.

"Sometimes," Torres has said in describing his work, "I think I have only painted one work in my entire life. The totality of the work is the evocation of the very same painting, finding a variety of paths and recourses."

Torres' work was recently on display at Galeria Kin in Mexico City.

How was the inauguration of your show? What is the public's reaction to your work?

The inauguration was great ... it was a very happy environment. Everyone was very serene. They were very moved by the exhibition, because my work is very serious, very concrete. It's not subtle, it's very direct. It was a very agreeable evening.

In the invitation was a quote by Paul Valery saying that a work of art should always show us that we haven't seen before what we are seeing now. What do we see in your art? What are you showing us?

I am talking about the spirit, essence. What I am interested in you, or in anyone, is the spirit, what's below the surface. That's the most marvelous thing. All human beings are very similar. In a painting, it really is not the object that is the point of the painting, but what is behind it, the spiritual world. It is not so much the apple that Cezanne painted, but what's behind the apple, the invisible force. You don't capture it with your eyes. It's what the painting invokes, but also the viewer needs to look inside. This is the message of my painting, in life, and in art in general. My work is very spiritual, I think things in a very spiritual way, and I want my art to reflect this. And this spirituality is not religion of dogmatic faith ... no, but more real. I am not referring to doctrines, organized religion, no. My spirituality has more to do with everyday life, and what is behind it. A painting should never tire. When a painting gets tired, or doesn't inspire any more after a certain time, it means it isn't good. Time should not deteriorate a good work of art.

Could you explain why your work is described as a process of creation and destruction? What does that mean?

I paint a canvas, create, then I destroy it. And then I recreate it. Do you understand? It creates a symbiotic process ... when you are destroying, you are creating something new. In the moment of destroying a work, very important things can be seen that you haven't thought of before. Let's say I make something of wood and attach cardboard, then I paint it and it looks nice and pretty. Then I erase some of the paint, or take off the cardboard ... and I often discover colors I had painted before.

Do you wait a while before destroying a piece?

Yes, I usually wait a month or so. Then I can see things about the piece more clearly and discover what is created as I take it apart ... new paintings are discovered, always very expressive. Obviously, it's a very delicate line, because a work can be ready at any time, the trick is to know when to stop, when you have done enough.

How do you know when to stop, or is it something ...

It's intuition, instinct. There will be a day that I know it's where it should be, and I can perceive that what is there is interesting. Because really, a painting is never finished. I could work on one infinitely. When I stop working on one, it's because I tell myself to stop, but I could always do more things.

Is that what you meant by what you have said about your work: "Sometimes I think that I have only painted one painting in my life. The totality of the work is the



THE NEWS FILE PHOTO

Carlos Torres is an artist who specializes in mixed media with an emphasis on spirituality, space, serenity and form.

evocation of that same painting."

Yes, it's the same evocation ... all of my paintings are similar in that they evoke the same feelings. They seem different at first, but they have the same evocation, the same tranquility, serenity.

How has your art evolved since you first began? Was it very different initially.

Yes, because everyone has an idea inside which they might not understand at first, or they might not know how to express it. It's a spirituality, a force, you just don't know how to get it out. It's always an evolution: using different materials, going to the exhibitions, experimenting ... sometimes using more color, sometimes less. And one finds daily what one really feels and wants to create. That comes with experience. There are some paintings I did from around five years, or even a month ago, which I don't even like anymore. Other times, I find I really like paintings I've done from a long time ago. It's rather hard to explain.

Do you always use mixed materials, like wood and canvas, etc.?

Yes. I am not very traditional. I want to be more informal than just a painting of oil on canvas.

What is the meaning of all the spheres in your work?

Yes, at a certain time in my work. I now use that shape a little less. The circle is the perfect form of nature. It encompasses eternity, time, spirituality ... everything is circular. For a time, I worked a lot with circles, spheres. The meaning is that I consider it the most perfect geometrical form there is. I feel there is silence in it and in my paintings. The circle is serene, silent. When I want to do a very serene work, I use spheres, they help me a lot to give that feeling of spirituality, serenity and silence.

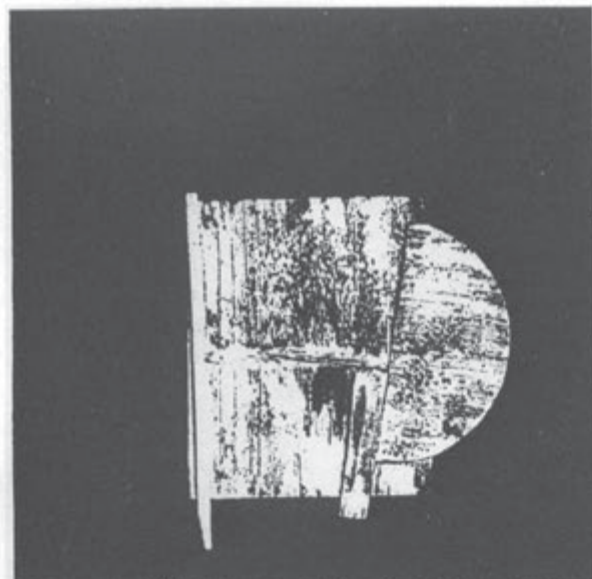
Are there ever days you get stuck? Do you ever get what writers call "writer's block," days when you have to force yourself to be productive?

Yes, there are dark days where you just can't paint. I usually just try to paint less during those days because they are always unproductive anyway. For painting as for writing, the artist's creativity depends on many things being in place, balanced: emotionally, physically and financially well, that they have all the materials they need. With all that, you can work harmoniously. Those days are few and far between, so you need to be able to create a harmonious place for your art, let your life be and not worry so much. You need to be able to psychologically overcome your problems to be able then to work productively. Nowadays I don't try to force myself to paint on those days, because to try to paint without *animo* is like trying to write without *animo*: it's awful.

A Silent Dedication

Carlos Torres' Sacred Spaces

By Barbara Kastelein



'De espacio y ...' (110x110cm, mixed/wood, 1998)

The Galería Kin has welcomed once again the haunting work of Carlos Torres with the inauguration this week of the Colombian artist's new series, "Espacios."

Resident in Mexico now for five years, Torres (b.1955) majored in fine arts at the National University of Bogotá, after finding that his initial foray into the humanities via the study of anthropology served to confirm his calling as an artist.

In an architectural dig in the early 1980s, he was so struck by the emotive force of the ruins that he decided that for him the quest for mankind's roots had to follow a spiritual rather than a material path.

This, however simplified,

sketch is the initial context that will help a newcomer approach the art of Torres — all of which is non-figurative, executed in mixed media (wood, netting, paint), and most reflecting a perceived, or desired, harmony in muted and natural colors.

Nevertheless, having gained a name for himself here and being equally a very marketable proposition, the time has come when openings of new shows by Torres are less populated by novices and watched eagerly by critical eyes who have already lapped up his earlier series, *Dorado*, *Música* and *Navegando*.

Interviewed Wednesday by the *Mexico City Times*, Torres explained why he often prefers to

work in series.

"Often I am working on 10 or fifteen works simultaneously, for many ideas will arise from just one painting, and with a single work I cannot say enough."

The intense cerebral approach (and "quite large" studio!) is balanced by an omnipresent religious sensitivity reflected in the archetypal power of his harmonious compositions in which balance is almost a watchword.

While pursuing a metaphor, Torres' themes are also a studious devotion to the spiritual theme he has elected.

"I studied humanities first as I was looking for the reason for being human, really I was in search of spirit, in which I believe strongly."

The series "Música," of which one large work (120x170cm, 30,000 pesos — average price for works of this size) is on display, originated from the perception that "all art is music. Colors are music while lines are compositions. So art is visual music," Torres said.

The following series "Dorado" (Golden) draws from a Prehispanic myth and is a homage to Colombia's indigenous past. The works here are silver, gray, golden and honey-colored using sprayed netting whose worn surfaces and torn edges echo the anthropological world the artist was first drawn to.

The current series, "Espacios" (Spaces) denotes "spiritual, psychological and pictorial spaces," Torres explained.

The two works called "Espacio ceremonial" (ceremonial space) focus on "the idea of the circle for these are religious paintings in line and composition. The circle is the sacred space within the work," Torres says, "so that the work is like a church with the circle as the altar or spiritual center."

A recurrent motif in Torres' art — including his brightly colorful series "Navegando" (Navigating) — it symbolizes "the perfect and most sacred natural form," for the circle embraces the abstractions of time, the cosmos as well as the natural life cycle of birth, reproduction and death.

Just one work is on show from the Navigating series, in which Torres said he was inspired to use a more pure color — primary blues and greens — to suggest the emo-

tion of travelling, and it jumps out in luscious turquoise (120x120cm, 25,000 pesos).

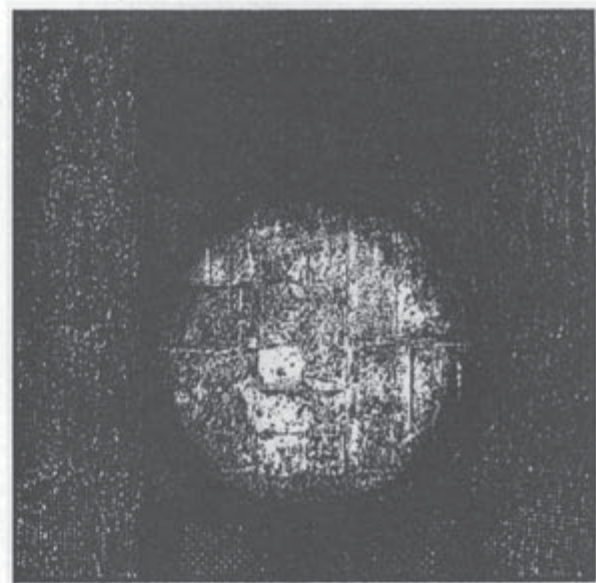
Along with "Sabbat", it provides a valuable contrast, underlining the serenity and organic feel of the majority of the work. The artist is intrigued by the bark of trees, feels art should be organic and adheres to the notion that nature can teach us many things. "I do not copy nature figuratively, but representatively," he says.

Avoiding oil paints for ten years (because of their traditional place in art creation) and taking an informalist approach with his use of sand, scraps of cloth, fragments of wood, and rubbish he has found in the street, Torres admits to a technical fascination

works bespeak his most inner emotions, Torres agrees: "A painting is a self-portrait. Painting is an extension of what one is."

Yet, at the same time, he has shown an interest in creating a space for people to integrate themselves into the art, into silence and harmony.

One critic has suggested that Torres' art may be experienced as "a broken mirror for us to piece together to make our fragmented image whole again." The works create a refuge and the resolution of spatial concerns codifies various potential points of entrance. For example, nets and screen both create a barrier as well as offer multiple openings to peer



'Espacio construido' (170x120cm, mixed/cloth, 1998)

with his materials. He hopes to maintain a freedom from "the traditional" (even to the point that he is investigating oils again) and clearly wants no truck with conservative struggles to define a national art.

At the same time, the ethereal mood his works evoke is in danger of becoming a fashion victim, for the seductive tranquility of his compositions is so appealing and liveable-with that they tend to contribute to a "universal language" that is too easily digested.

The catalog text by Eva Orzynski claims that "the surface can be transformed into a state of inwardness." Asked whether his

and move into.

The challenge and attraction for the viewer is this: to eye the works coldly for their form and composition and find a point of contact with their poetic force; to imagine the works as portraits of the artist as he extends himself through his chosen iconography; and, lastly, to enter — slowly, leaving yourself behind you — into the sacred spaces and discover a creative receptivity to their still and mysterious life of mind and spirit.

"Espacios" by Carlos Torres is in the Galería Kin, Altavista 92, Col. San Ángel, Mexico DF 01000 (tel: 550-8910) until June 13th.



From the series 'espacios' (170x120cm, mixed/cloth, 1998)

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arts
& entertainment

The News

Friday, March 8, 1996

EDITOR: JONATHAN WHITAKER

LIVING

Torres Creates Order In Decay And Sets Fire To Silence

By ALBERT SGAMBATTI
The News Staff Reporter

There is a path towards the spirit, the divination of a secret code that has to do with the peeling back of layers. And it is within this process, crossing these types of spaces and exploring these silences that we arrive at the work of painter Carlos Torres.

The 41-year-old Colombian-born Torres opened his exhibition Wednesday, at the Galeria Kin, bringing with him an undulating world that wavers between the naked tension of the real and the introspection of compositions that form a harmonious whole.

"Generally people see art as the projection of a portrait of themselves — a reflection," says Torres of his work. "My interest is in creating the space for people to interrogate themselves. To do this a certain silence and a certain harmony is necessary."

A life-long artist, Torres studied anthropology and sociology in Bogota but gave up the circuitous highways and byways of planning and career to wholly dedicate himself to art.

As any viewer can readily see walking through the gallery, Torres has made a wise choice. His canvases strike an emotional chord that is seldom achieved by the mostly figurative work seen in galleries in Mexico. The weathered and worn surfaces, the rusting metal screens and softly broken edges are an invitation into a sensual world where vagabond spirits leave their prints across the sands of time.

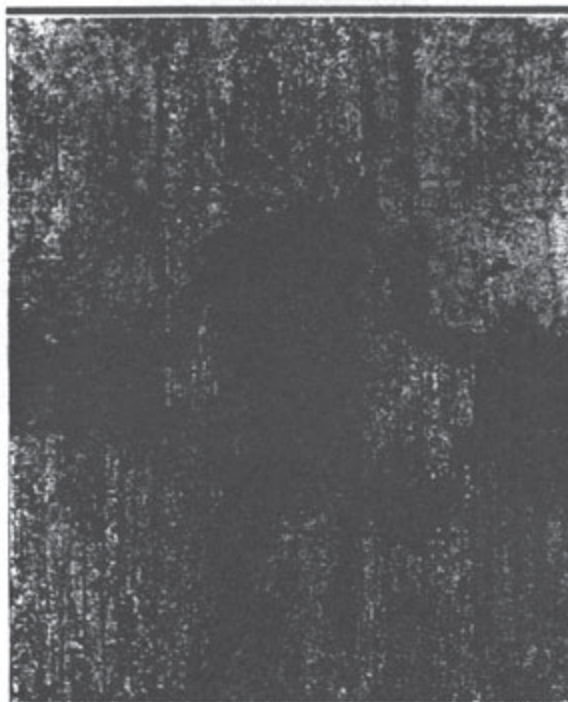
Like the geography of order in structures and objects that is only revealed upon decomposition, or skin to the fire that lives inside the austere silences of wrecked buildings and rain sites, Torres' art seems to work upon the unconscious.

Here we view poetic images of completion beyond the broken surfaces. Reference and image intermingle in the shifting depths. Ideas, that have in our age fallen into decline in favor of planning, reform and design, are once again taken up. The mysterious life of mind and spirit sounds the shoals and the depths of humanity with its braided chord.

Viewing pieces such as the "El Dorado" series, Torres invokes a world of memory. A reflection on the cross-section of time is visible like the rings of age revealed by a fallen tree.

Something that had always been present but hidden.

In works like "Navegando," a mixed



From the series "El Dorado," 1996.

GALERIA KIN PHOTOS



Carlos Torres' "Navegando," 1996.

media piece (as are the others), the constituent parts which seem in various states of decay are at the same time unified at the core with a near-perfect circle. There

is an interplay that speaks to us of man's ordering of the natural world around him.

A Mexican public viewing a show like this (and they should) will find echoes of Rafael Cauduro. The elements of decomposition are in some ways similar

and with that in mind the few steps it may take into the realm of the abstract are made easier.

But unlike Cauduro's work these pieces are wholly contemporary and would not be out of place in a New York or London gallery. They share a sensibility with a frenetic world at odds with itself which is constantly in search of harmony and defies the profane with glimpses of an ethereal beauty.

The work speaks to us of ourselves. It becomes a broken mirror which we are intended to piece back together to make our fragmented image whole once again.

A world of shadow and dream is also invoked by the mix of materials and the use of form and color. Here we are not talking of the dreams of flight, but rather the importance of the dream as related to the real. A psycho-mythic texture runs throughout the body of work and one gets the sense that Torres is familiar with the language of modern and contemporary psychology and spirituality.

Alvaro Mutis wrote "The color and a delicate sensuality of the material plays with the senses of the observer," regarding Torres' work. An interesting comment is that both the artist (and his sensibility that encompasses thought and mysticism), and his critics, speak of engagement. An interrelationship between the viewer and the work.

Torres himself is an admirer of Rembrandt and Cezanne and one might think this curious, but considering his attention to detail in terms of composition and the richness of his layered technique one begins to see the relationship, and even a synthesis in transformation.

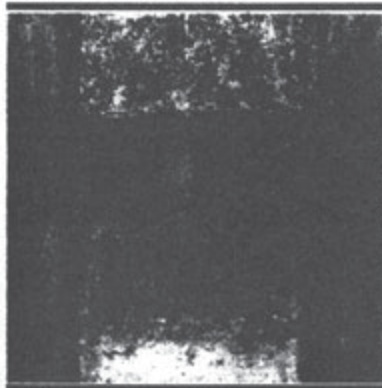
Torres' spatial concerns are resolved by breaks and ruptures, a pulling apart that has something to do with natural process. In some pieces screens are integrated, creating both a barrier and at the same time a space, or opening, to look into.

Inherent in the body of work is a sentiment that has to do with searching and transformation; a codified archetypal language familiar to those who are willing to scratch below the surface.

This show undoubtedly represents some of the finest abstract work to come around in a long time. Some of the pieces now hanging in the gallery hold such a powerful poetic force that the works are easily approachable by people who would not ordinarily view this type of art.

Of the shows that are now hanging in the galleries of Mexico City this is the one to see.

The Galeria Kin is located at Alta Vista 92, San Angel. For further information, 550-8910, 550-8641.



From the series "Desnudos," 1996.

Who's Who

The News

Friday, August 16, 1996

CARLOS TORRES

Colombian Artist In Mexico

By ALBERT SGAMBATI
The News Staff Reporter

Carlos Torres is a 40-year-old, Colombia-born painter of extraordinary talent. He is a conceptual painter who is an expert in the many different techniques he employs in the creation of his works. His canvases hold an ethereal power that evokes both tension and mystery. Trained in the fine arts, Torres graduated from the National University in Bogota where he lived 37 years and made a living through his art.

Three years ago, after considerable success in Colombia, Torres came to Mexico and settled in Cuernavaca. The Mexico he had envisioned from his native country was a place where a contemporary painter would be offered many options — the reality proved otherwise. Rather than battle against the ever-present traditional trends which are so much a part of Mexican visual art Torres decided to seek a place that would have more to do with art at the cutting edge, with a more international flavor. His decision to move to Miami, Florida, in the United States, is based upon his desire to share in a more contemporary visual dialogue within an atmosphere that is concerned with creations of a more probing nature and not so much with representationalism or national art. His presence though in Mexico has gone far from unnoticed. He has mounted several major shows during his short stay in this country and he will surely be missed as an important forward-looking contemporary painter.

When did your interest in art begin?

My interest in art began at a very young age. I remember making figures in clay that I would leave outside and watch change as the elements affected them. Witnessing these transformations delighted me. When I enrolled in the National University in Bogota, Colombia, I chose to study subjects in the humanities but I soon realized that if I was going to dedicate myself to art it would require all of my time.

I dropped subjects like sociology and anthropology and majored in fine arts.

Your sole means of support since then has been through your art?

Yes.

When and why did you arrive here in Mexico?

I arrived in Cuernavaca in 1993. I didn't want to live in a huge city, and the proximity of Cuernavaca to Mexico seemed to meet my needs.

I knew Mexico mostly through publications as an attractive country. Through those same sources Mexico was presented as a country with an ample representation of modern and contemporary art, but after I came here I found out that it is really very conservative and traditional.

So the art scene in Mexico is more traditional than in Colombia?

Very much so. In Colombia there is a strong vanguardist tradition and aesthetic that you don't find here in Mexico.

What kinds of things can you point to and qualify as successes here in Mexico?

One thing I've succeeded in finding out is that Mexico is not the place where I should be. I don't say this in a negative sense, only that I now know that this is not the place for me. I have had a good deal of recognition here and have shown in galleries and museums, so really what I've succeeded with here, despite everything, is creating a space for myself.

What are some of the positive aspects of painting in Mexico?

There are many possibilities due to the large number of spaces available. The problem though is that too many of the painters here are essentially doing the same thing.

You've decided to move to the United States, why?

It seems more straight ahead there. It's also a country that



DIONNE RUBIO

Carlos Torres is a 40-year-old, Colombia-born painter of extraordinary talent.

I would like to get to know especially as it pertains to the art scene. I've had a few very motivating experiences with my own art there, and in general it seems more in tune with the present and less traditional. With all its problems and idiosyncrasies it seems to be more universal in its outlook as a nation.

I know that there are national currents in the art of all countries but what I am more concerned with is creating and participating in a universal language. I'm not interested in creating pieces that could be labeled as folkloric or nationalistic.

What kind of experiences have you had so far in the United States as pertains to your art?

I've made a couple of incursions thus far with my work. I've been to California and to Florida and without looking at it through rose-colored glasses I will say that it definitely seems more open. I feel that the United States is a huge, multi-faceted country that for the most part has created space for all of the Latin American cultures.

I also feel that the mentality, psychologically speaking, reflects the geography of the country. I see it as a place with positive possibilities as far as my work is concerned.

Have you had any success in selling your work there?

Yes. I've already sold work through the Mesa Gallery in Miami and also in San Diego.

Why have you chosen to go to Miami instead of somewhere else?

It's a city where two worlds meet. Its both a Hispanic and an American city. Also it's a rapidly growing city whose cultural importance is increasing. Artistically speaking Miami offers many different possibilities.

Have you made many connections thus far in the United States?

Yes, there is a group of people and some galleries that I'm in contact with so it won't be like stepping into a void. I also know that with Miami as my base it will be easier to present my work in other cities in the United States. Of course I want to extend these possibilities as much as I can and without really being able to say right now what will happen all I can tell you is that I feel good about this move.

How do you feel entering a completely new culture that speaks a different language at your age?

I have no fear whatsoever. It's curious but the United States offers a certain kind of security in that it's a young country without many limits. I want it to be an enriching experience within the context of a life that projects and conceptualizes itself as something different from what I already know.