

Continuity of Live Forms in  
**THE ART OF RAUL ANGULANO**

*Berta Taracena\**

Painter, muralist, sculptor, ceramist, sketch artist and engraver, Raúl Anguiano is one of the most important exponents of twentieth century Mexican art. Fundamental values like luminosity, sculpting structure, the simplification of volumes and chromatic balance are to be found in him. His work is a mix-

inspired compositions and historic themes (in his murals). His splendid body of work includes several masterpieces.

A general review of his work reveals that Anguiano is a multifaceted creator capable of condensing images akin to his sensibility and temperament in particular forms and modes of expression.

*Peace* (1967), *Cinetic Venus* (1968), *Melancholy* (1971) and *Woman with Iguanas* (1986). Their lyricism comes out in a surprising continuity of live forms in his language. Details of the world around him as simple as a mask, a thorn or the charm of an indigenous woman, exalted to the point of poetry, attain a singular character, an



*Birth and Death*, 55 x 75 cm, 1942 (oil on canvas).

Photos reprinted courtesy of Raúl Anguiano

ture of different techniques, genres and tendencies and aims to portray ordinary people's lives and human endeavors through classical realism: scenes of daily work, portraits, landscapes, nudes, free poetically

\* Mexican art critic.

Photos reproduced by Arturo Piera.  
**Previous page:** *The Maids*, 90 x 70 cm, 1943 (oil on canvas).

His original brand of realism gives him great freedom of poetic expression, one of his main characteristics. His power of observation makes him lean toward using a figure from his surroundings as a reference point and giving it a fantastic aura simply by accentuating a gesture, an attitude or a particular trait, as in his works *Birth and Death* (1942), *The Thorn* (1952), *War and*

original mode of expression that identifies the true Anguiano.

EARLY PERIOD

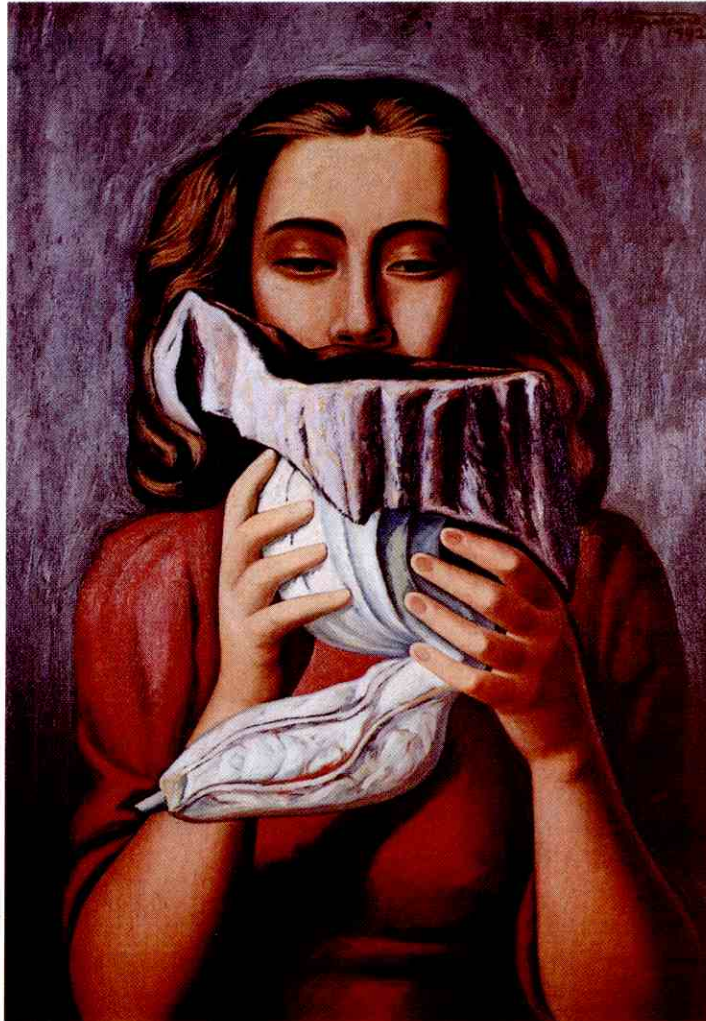
From his early period (1935-1950)—with its circus people, scenes of the lives of workers and peasants, rooftops—An-

About his mural *History and Legend of Coyoacán* (Raúl Anguiano House, Pedregal de Coyoacán, 1997), Anguiano wrote, “Quetzalcóatl, a plumed serpent inspired in the pre-Hispanic petroglyph found in this area of Pedregal when it was dynamited for urbanization, is at the bottom of the

the right are Hernán Cortés and the Malinche, a couple who procreated one of Mexico’s first mestizos and a symbol of the mix of the two cultures, the Aztec and Hispanic, blended to forge our nationality.”

Employing different historical and geographic elements and various tech-

poetic and decorative sense. In the same way, he is a painter with a great capacity for absorbing trends in the plastic arts, from both the past and the present, with both fine sensibility and a sharp intellect which allow him to synthesize eloquent and convincing images.



*Duck Flower*, 83 x 61 cm, 1942 (oil on canvas).

composition. As in various cultures of Mesoamerica, Quetzalcóatl was the tutelary deity. In the center of the mural is the pyramid of Cuicuilco, surrounded by lava from the eruption of Xitle, a volcano depicted at the top of the composition. At

niques such as oils, frescoes, sketching and acrylic, Anguiano puts together a far-reaching, significant body of murals with all the traits of an artist who had a vocation from the very first and possesses notable technique and great

No less important are his entrepreneurial spirit, his organizing talents, his likeability, elegance and idealism, and particularly his intolerance of the evil of our time: the exploitation of Man by Man.

## NEW PROPOSALS

Around 1970, Anguiano's search for new proposals produced the splendid series called *Development of Venus*, done in sculpture, painting and sketching.

Taking the *Venus of Lespuegue* (Alta Gerona, France) as a central element, Anguiano produced dynamic essays of simultaneous figures whose powerful abstraction evokes both cubism and cinetism.

As a result, he has produced fundamental works, series done over several decades with themes such as Venus and love, women seen as a force of nature and represented in all their facets, effigies of workers and peasants, of heroes and the founding fathers of Mexico, historical landscapes and other key examples in new versions such as *The Dream of Na-Kin* (Lacandona de Chiapas, 1990), *Model in Repose* (1995), *Penitents of Taxco* (1996) and *Holocaust* (1996), which show

would be sufficient to consider his work extraordinary. The important thing, of course, is not the volume in and of itself, but the fact that this unique creator never repeats himself; for him, routine, conventional schematics and the commonplace do not exist; each new sketch or print is a new aesthetic contribution thanks to his unlimited gift of observation and his inexhaustible cache of formal resources.



*Still Life*, 90 x 110 cm, 1946 (oil on canvas).

Decomposition and understanding guided him toward an active definition of the image and a broader, more harmonious structure in his compositions.

In sculpture and ceramics, Anguiano shows the same qualities of clarity and monumental proportions that have characterized great Mexican artists throughout the main periods of its art: pre-Hispanic, viceroyal, modern and contemporary.

the eclectic cultural fiber from which emerge—as though from a sea of impressions and remembrances, encounters and clashes—audacious, independent plastic solutions.

## SKETCHING AND GRAPHICS

Anguiano has produced so many sketches and other graphic works that this alone

His talent for the visual arts became clear in his adolescence in the drawing classes given by José Vizcarra in Guadalajara. His ability as a graphic artist developed when he became part of the group of intellectuals and painters called “Banners of the Provinces,” which included Agustín Yáñez, José Guadalupe Zuno, Enrique Martínez Ulloa, Emanuel Palacios, Alfonso Gutiérrez Hermosillo,

José Cornejo Franco, Manuel Martínez Valadez, Jesús Guerrero Galván and Rubén Mora Gálvez. This group came together because of its members' interest in the complex social problems of the period (1930). Thinking about and analyzing the truth was a duty to himself that Anguiano took on from the first years of his career.

His being a nonconformist who rebelled against indifference, injustice

learned theory and practice about the golden section from Diego Rivera (1886-1957) and later joined the League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists and the Popular Graphics Workshop, working side by side with Leopoldo Méndez (1902-1969), Alfredo Zalce (1908- ), Pablo O'Higgins (1904-1983), Feliciano Peña (1915-1982), Francisco Dosamantes (1911-1986), José Chávez Morado (1909- ), Juan de la Cabada (1902-1986), José Mancisidor (1914-

chisel. Masses related among themselves, in black and white or in color, suggest corporeality every single time; suddenly, from the dark, from an opaque dun or a blackish grey, the artist's colors tend toward the luminous. It is as if the impenetrable, solid darkness had been the matter from which these energetically outlined figures were carved: the heads of stupendous portraits, landscapes, still lifes, scenes from daily life,



*Portrait of my Mother and my Brother Pepe*, 100 x 130 cm, 1944 (oil on canvas).

and mental and spiritual sloth enriches his talent as an artist; both in his visual work and his writing, conversation and lectures, he takes sides, denounces, harangues.

In 1934, he traveled to Mexico City where he became assistant fresco mural painter in the team created by, among others, Jesús Guerrero Galván (1910-1973) and Máximo Pacheco (1905-1970). He

1956), Silvestre Revueltas (1899-1940) and other great men of Mexican culture of the period (1930-1950), recognized for the spirit of social renovation expressed in their work.

Anguiano's graphic composition, rounded and in broad strokes, uses powerful contrasts to give his drawing and prints (like in his other disciplines) a certain sculptural character, like forms hewn with a

historical events, all depicted with clear precision.

Inside Anguiano's vision, the plastic and social world is organized in the form of masses, and, like a dense, moving and open mass, it includes each of the figures, each head, each isolated form, a whole of beings and things perceived by the artist both inside and outside himself, with a sharp eye, the hand of a master and unequalled genius. **MM**