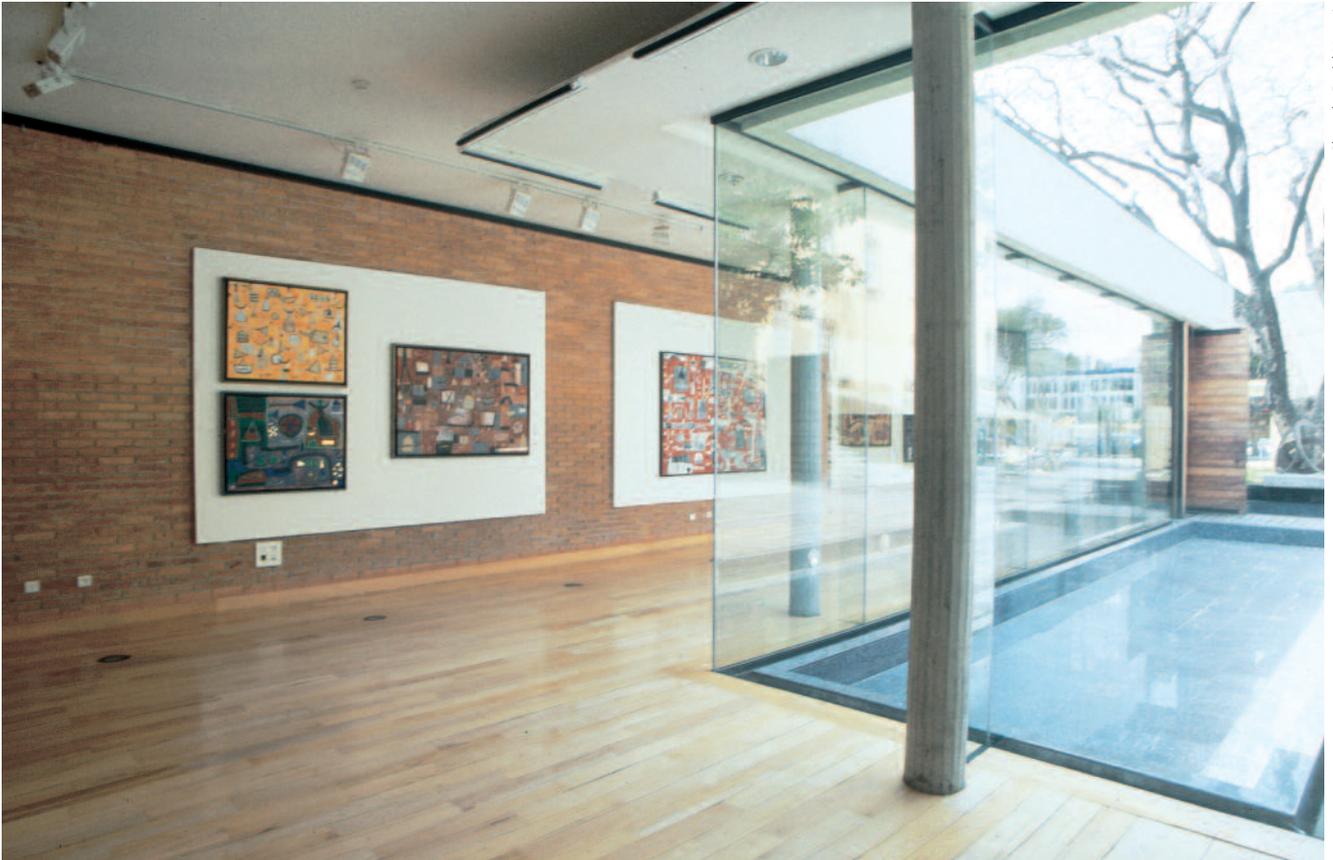


Quiet Strength

Fernando Solana Olivares*



Photos by Daniel Munguia

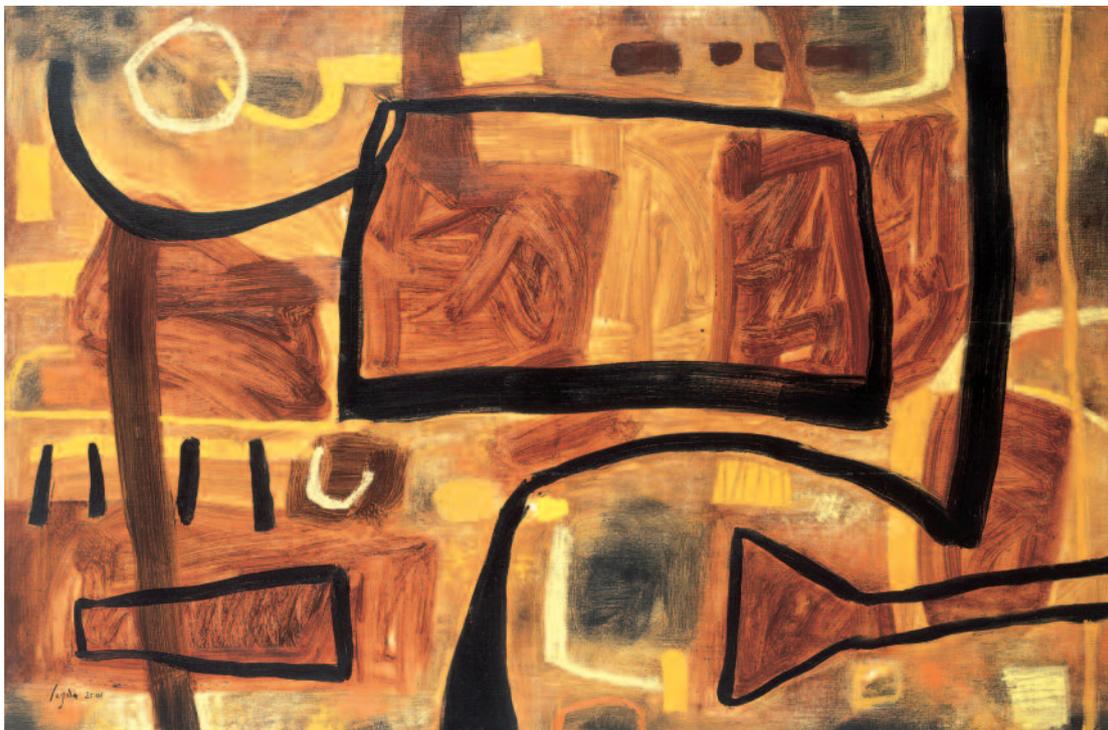
Through the 15 oil paintings of his latest exhibition,¹ Rubén Leyva's memory concentrates the lessons that the years have left in his visual work. People say forgetting is part of every action. Rubén Leyva has forgotten what he knew pictorially and integrated it into a new visual synthesis in which the characteristics of his previous work—a smiling, childish and profound creative awareness that showed the command of a surprising artist, the complete master of great expressive capabilities—join

with the unprecedented reach always attained in a higher order. So this painting by Leyva absorbs its predecessor, is nourished by it and attains an essential pictorial language that holds both what was already there and what has been achieved for the first time. The artist has climbed the rungs of his being and is moving toward a new formulation: that Leyva plus the new Leyva make for a fortunate, highly creative operation, a charming metamorphosis whose meaning lies exactly in itself, like an ascesis of imagined reality, as subtle and urgent, as severe and kind as any moment of illumination.

* Art critic.



▲ *The Sun's Whim*, 150 x 200 cm, 2002 (oil on linen).



▲ *The Sun's Road*, 100 x 150 cm, 2001 (oil on linen).



▲ *The Fairies Come Out at Night*, 150 x 200 cm, 2002 (oil on linen).

It should be said that, even in the past, Leyva was the artistic father of his own aesthetic genealogy; he had achieved mastery over the chain of influences that make up all personal harmony. Now he is the author who becomes his own father and personifies the quiet strength, the spontaneous confidence and the irrefutable achievement of someone who becomes a true artist and gives up residual knowledge, someone who forgets and leaves the superfluous behind to follow the only law which binds him: the law of what he does, the sovereignty of his own work. In this knowledge granted by the years only when time becomes substance and experience, integration, Leyva paints as if he were learning to paint anew and his single intention lines on the canvas are now the hand, and also the arm, and at the same time the whole body that becomes an incandescent soul and an operative God as he creates.

Painting of painting, painting of the disintegrated, painting of detachment, Leyva's work has its singular fantastic iconography, its abstract figurativism, to the point of purifying powerful chromatics and the combined order in an exceptional play of foregrounds and details that allow him resplendent freedom, a serene joy that moves and multiplies, which only obeys the dictates of a radiance that requires no darkness.

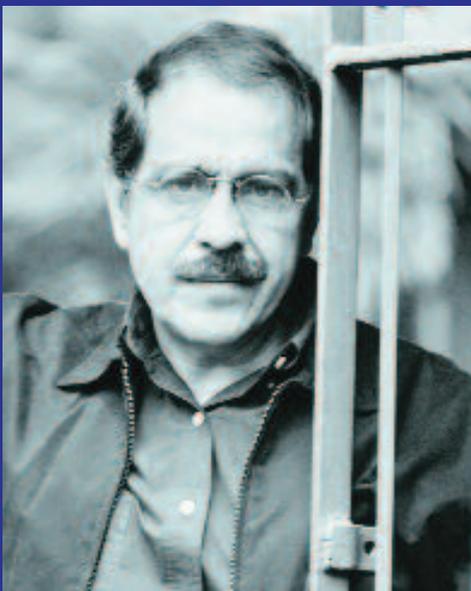
Rubén Leyva does not have to look further because his painting creates the encounters. He has spent 22 years on his artistic path, a period that these 15 works dissolve and memorize as if they had been painted tomorrow, now or yesterday. **MM**

NOTES

¹ "Sketching in Memory" at the Casa de Francia in Mexico City in February and March 2002.



▲ *Araucan Map*, 80 x 100 cm, 2002 (oil on linen).



Ivonne Kennedy

RUBÉN LEYVA was born in Oaxaca, Mexico, and studied at the Oaxaca School of Fine Arts and Kathy MacFadden's ceramics workshop in Portland, Oregon. He has had both individual and group exhibits in important museums and galleries in countries like Germany, Canada, El Salvador, the United States and Mexico. In 1995, the United Nations selected his work to illustrate the publication commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation. Leyva currently lives in Oaxaca.