

Photos by David Maawad

Untitled, 1992 (oil on canvas).

RODOLFO MORALES

The Nostalgic Company of Loneliness¹

*Antonio Rodríguez**

The silence of Morales' characters depicted in groups are reminiscent of those mystical conversations about religious art in which no one speaks to anyone else.



Untitled, 1992-1993 (oil on canvas).

Sometimes we get the impression that Morales marks what he does not show, what he hides, with a sign contrary to what he wants to express.

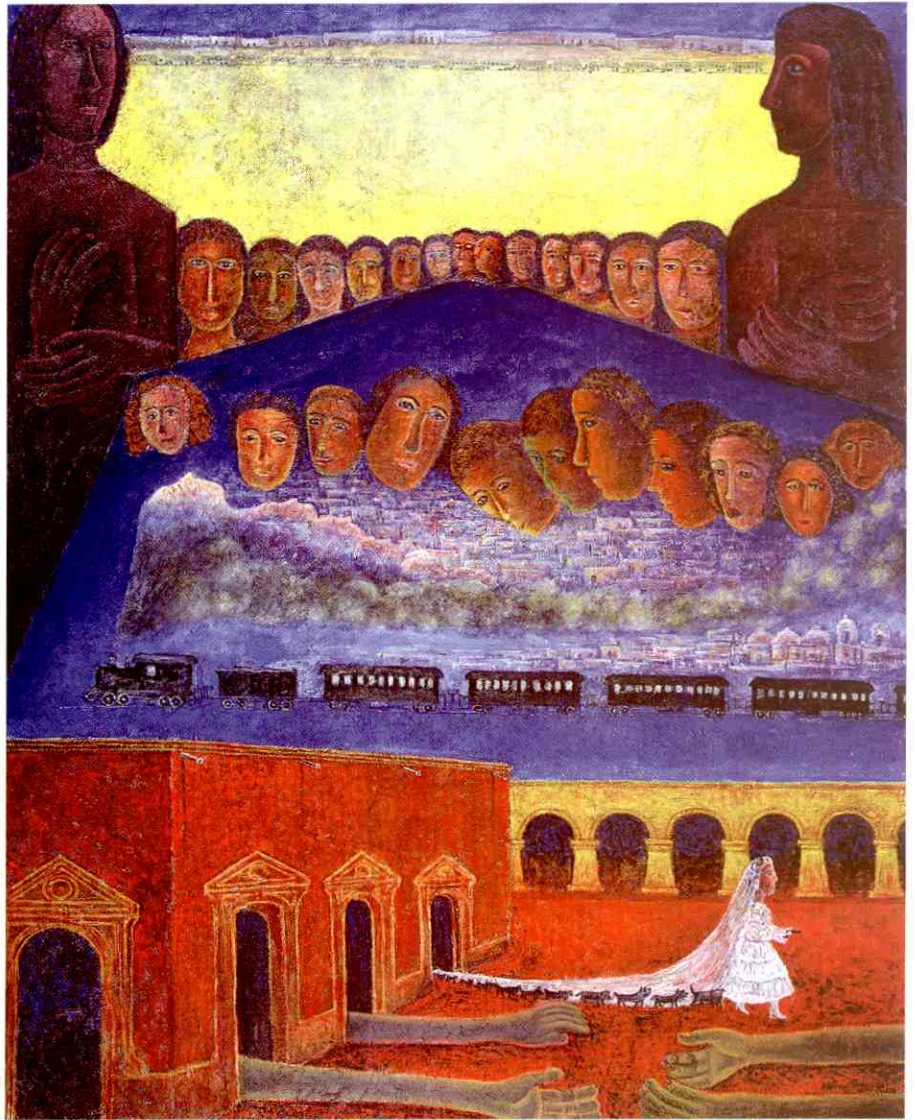
tasy requires; but he subjects it, without torture, to the demands of his expressive needs.

In his tonal harmonies, the color recalls the painting of María Izquierdo,² for whom he professes great admiration, but his palette is more charged with mystery and denser. He is nocturnal when he paints the day and phantasmagoric when he evokes the nights illuminated by sleep.

Even without figures, the color would still attract the imagination and the eye; it could live on its own, apart from the mountains and the valleys, the plazas and the trains. It is a great abstraction that unites well with what Morales designs and paints; it is a vital element of his organicity.

It is difficult to find in a painting from another part of the world a color of equal resonance; but it is certain that he did not take it from Mexican folklore nor from the outward look of things. His baroque facades, a constant in his work—he is an eminently baroque painter—start off, without a doubt—and he himself admits it—from the surroundings in which he spent his childhood. But not the color! The color is born, for him, in the cradle of hallucination. The composition is a game of chance in which the only rules are the ones the painter decides not to follow.

This is why Morales, who appears to burst forth in all his simplicity from the soil of his hometown, is a challenge to anyone trying to scrutinize the mysteries of his complexity. **MM**



New Life, 1991 (oil on canvas).

NOTES

¹ Abridged version of the original pamphlet, *Rodolfo Morales. La nostálgica compañía de la soledad* (Mexico City: Instituto Politécnico Nacional, October 1981).

² See Teresa del Conde, "María Izquierdo: Melancholic Nostalgia," *Voices of Mexico* 38 (January-March 1997), p. 29. [Editor's Note.]



RODOLFO MORALES

Born in Ocotlán de Morelos in the state of Oaxaca, May 8, 1925, Rodolfo Morales went to Mexico City at the age of 23 to study at the San Carlos Academy. From 1953 to 1985, he taught drawing in a Mexico City high school. An untiring traveler, he visited Europe, Latin America and the United States.

At a 1965 *posada* or pre-Christmas party, in the home of sculptor Geles Cabrera, Morales' collages were used as decorations. Geles, excited by the work, proposed a trade: one of his sculptures in exchange for a Morales canvas. This kind of recognition was the stimulus Morales needed to decide to dedicate himself fully to painting.

Rufino Tamayo "discovered" him at his first exhibition. After that he had a series of showings in Europe, the United States and, of course, Mexico. In May 1998, Rodolfo Morales painted a mural for the Mexico City subway line Fine Arts Palace station, entitled *France Through Mexican Eyes* and inaugurated by French President Jacques Chirac.

Today, as a sort of repayment to his native Oaxaca, he contributes the proceeds of his work to the Rodolfo Morales Cultural Foundation, the aim of which is to foster Oaxaca's cultural values and support young people from Ocotlán in their studies.



White Flowers, 1990 (oil on canvas).