



*Monarchs Binomial*, 50 x 70 cm, 1995 (mixed color engraving).



The artist and her teacher, muralist Ramón Alva de la Canal.

## *América Gabrielle* An Artist of Two Millennia

Gabriela García Correa\*  
Demian Fernández García\*\*

**A**mérica Gabrielle is a true product of women breaking new ground in society, going from being spectators to being protagonists in Mexico's productive, creative society.

---

\* Mexican writer and poet.

\*\* General director of the Diomara Center for Comprehensive Human Development.

As a little girl, América Gabrielle lived in the San Ángel neighborhood and often walked with her brothers toward what is today the Insurgentes Theater. At that time, Diego Rivera was painting the theater's famous Venetian mosaic mural. From atop his scaffolding, Diego used to throw little América diminutive colored pieces of tile that she would then arrange in a harmonious whole on



*Marine 1*, 70 x 90 cm, 1990 (oil on canvas).

The artist merges with her surroundings, embraces with her soul whatever she touches and expresses this in her work with a simplicity that goes beyond the visible.

the sidewalk to make her own mosaic. Later, when Diego would come down, the two would talk a little and go buy an ice cream cone. That was her first incursion into the world of art, just the start of her journey along that road.

She did her extensive training in several places: the San Carlos Academy in Mexico; the National School of Fine Arts in Paris; the Pietro Vannucci Institute in Italy. She has had the opportunity of working in teams and getting advice from great masters like Ramón Alva de la Canal, a founder and member of the 1930s movement known as Mexican Muralism, from whom she learned fresco technique. With him, América painted the mural *Our Order* in the Benito Juárez Space of the Valley of Mexico Great Lodge. With Alfredo Zalce, a member of the second generation of Mexico's muralists and a founder of the League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists (LEAR), she partici-

pated in several exhibits at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Morelia in 1984, and, in 1992, in the National Lottery Building Gallery, where they showed sculptures in copper, glass and "litho-gradients," a technique América invented.

Together with Francisco Moreno Capdevila, an engraver and teacher at the San Carlos Academy, she tried out engraving techniques. With Alberto Beltrán, sketch artist and engraver, she illustrated magazines, newspapers and books published by the Chamber of Deputies Institute for Legislative Research, among them the magazine *Quorum*. In 1979, with Dr. J.J. Fonseca, the director of the Urban Visual Arts Workshop, she sculpted *Solarium*, a monumental, stainless-steel piece mounted in the city of San Luis Potosí.

From the time she was a student, her work received recognition and awards that earned her scholarships to several countries in Europe. Once

she became a professional, she won first place in France's 1982 International Sculpture Contest. The winning piece was a copper sculpture now on display in the Parisian Higher School of Fine Arts.

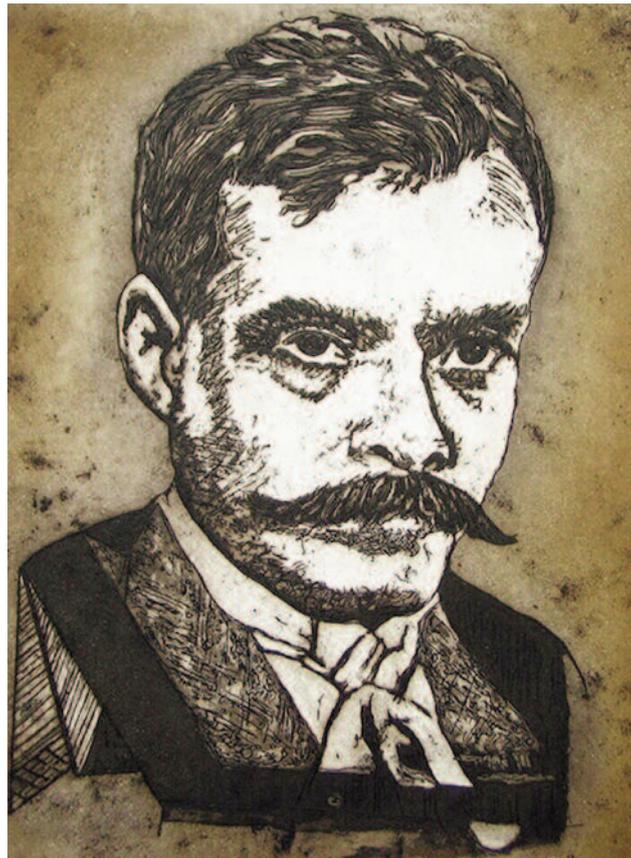
América Gabrielle works masterfully in sculpture and has experimented with different techniques, mediums (glass, copper, bronze and stainless steel) and dimensions. Some of her best known pieces are *Aerogenia*, a sculpture in glass displayed in the building of the Mexican Pilots Union, commissioned to commemorate the organization's twenty-fifth anniversary; *Rhythms*, a work in bronze that can be admired in the Morelia's Contemporary Art Museum; *Freedom*, displayed at Toronto's Henry Moor Museum; and *The Family*, a work in bronze shown in Tokyo's Hakome Museum.

In 1982, together with Ramón Alva de la Canal and Alfredo Zalce, she founded "Para el Arte Spacios" [For Art Spacios], a cultural movement inspired in José Vasconcelos's idea that it is possible

to redeem ignorance through education. Vasconcelos thought taking art to the people was the main mission and way forward for the state to build a nation.

The main premise of "For Art Spacios" is to humanize public and private spaces with art and to ensure that art be the formative factor in developing children and young people's ability to perceive in order to nurture their conceptual and expressive capabilities. For that reason, the movement's aim is that becoming an artist should lead to a way of life based on a system of positive values.

Committed to this mission, in her capacity as advisor to the Institute for Legislative Research and Secretariat of Parliamentary Affairs in Mexico's Chamber of Deputies, América Gabrielle has proposed a bill making art a required subject, not just an elective, in Mexico's formal educational system. At the institute, she is developing a research project about the most representative artists in each



*Zapata*, 32.8 x 24.5 cm, 1999 (engraving), based on a portrait hanging in the official residence of Mexico's president.

state of Mexico, and, based on this, is developing programs to formalize a painting gallery in the San Lázaro Chamber of Deputies complex.

América is the zenith that brings together artists in a cultural space, the point of movement whose main driving force is visual artistic endeavors. She is working with determination on a project to create a Mexican museum for the blind that would greatly benefit society.

As an untiring promoter of culture, and as director of the state of Michoacán's artistic and cultural heritage, she has participated in organizing gatherings convened by poet Homero Aridjis like the First International Poetry Congress held in Morelia in 1980, to which poets from all over the world came, including the 1999 Nobel laureate for literature Günter Grass. América always says that Grass suggested writers of all statures should write religiously a minimum of five pages a day to stimulate their creativity and master the language. She says that visual artists should do something similar.

In addition to her work as a disseminator of art, América Gabrielle is recognized in artistic circles as a portraitist because of her untiring experimentation and novel contributions to this genre. Out-

standing for its style and technical originality among her portraits is the one of General Emiliano Zapata, the leader of the revolutionary forces of the South, which hangs in Mexico's official presidential residence, Los Pinos. The gaze of that Zapata has the purity and sincerity of a child, and his face reveals the kindness and determination of the Mexican people. Naturally, the painting's qualities reflect the way the artist has experienced the life and personality of this Mexican hero, whom indigenous peoples venerate as one of their greatest forefathers.

Two passions rule América's creativity: family and art. Both are intertwined in an extraordinary way with a halo of the geometric warp expressed in her painting and sculpture. The artist merges with her surroundings, embraces with her soul whatever she touches and expresses this in her work with a simplicity that goes beyond the visible, revealing unsuspected natures.

It is obvious that Mexico's great artistic tradition nourishes América's inspiration and practice. She also has her roots in one of the purest lands of Mexico: Michoacán, a place of profound contrasts and legendary resistance, since this is



*Encounter*, 50 x 70 cm, 1992 (watercolor).



*Inner Landscape, 70 x 90 cm, 2003 (watercolor on canvas).*

For America, flowers are symbols of how to make the invisible visible by fixing in a physical medium, as the primary aim of art, the instant in which color explodes.

somewhere Aztec domination never penetrated and was, along with San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, a refuge where the indigenous peoples enjoyed the protection of Tata Vasco, a historic influence that has inspired and definitely influenced several of her works.

Because of what today's art market is like, particularly its well-known inclination to eliminate any vestige of socially committed art, América has decided to contribute to fostering belonging and raising the flag of nationalism with a contemporary bent. She thinks this is the time to partner up with every kind of producer of art and honorable people concerned about the process of artistic production in our country and its contribution to universal culture.

Artist Ramón Alva de la Canal, an initiator of the muralist movement, says that she "has real talent and a positive gift for expressing volume through color, one of her essential qualities. Her

very original style, her unprecedented techniques in engraving, sketching and painting make people think of her as an artist who will transcend, and has raised Mexico's name high through her work." Alfonso Moreno, an excellent Mexican guitarist, has also said that América's ideology is clear in her artistic expression.

Another fundamental aspect of América, in addition to her being a creator of art, is her activity as a protector of art, which prompted the National Autonomous University of Mexico to honor her in 1992.

Today, with her creative abilities at her vital center, América Gabrielle achieves novel, original forms in contemporary styles, in which her main theme is flora and fauna. For her, flowers are symbols of how to make the invisible visible by fixing in a physical medium, as the primary aim of art, that instant in which color explodes, so characteristic of her work. **MM**