

BETWEEN NEW YORK AND THE ANDES, ABSTRACTION AND
INDIGENISMO: CAMILO EGAS'S PAINTINGS FROM THE 1940S AND
1950S

A Thesis
Submitted to
the Temple University Graduate Board

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
MASTER OF ARTS

by
Diana Iturralde Mantilla
May 2018

Thesis Approvals:

Mariola V Alvarez, Advisory Chair, Art History, Tyler School of Art
Erin Pauwels, Assistant Professor, Art History, Tyler School of Art

©
Copyright
2018

by

Diana Iturralde Mantilla
All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

Recent studies of Andean Indigenismo and Andean abstraction tend to overlook the intersections between these two artistic trends, as well as schematize the production of artists who experimented with both. The scholarship on Ecuadorian artist Camilo Egas, for example, only focuses on his role as a precursor of Indigenismo without delving into the diverse artistic styles that intertwine in his transnational career. Such selective interest in his Indigenist production, which tends to focus on his early works from the 1910s to the 1930s in Ecuador, Paris, and the first decade in New York, might be related to the fact that his oeuvre from those periods can be clearly connected to documented developments of modern nationalist painting in the Andean region. Yet, this gap in art historical studies ignores the compelling visual experimentations that Egas undertook in the 1940s and 1950s while residing in New York. Particularly interesting is an exhibition of these works organized in Quito in 1956 by the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, and Egas's peculiar avant-gardist role in the country's artistic milieu, at a time when Indigenismo, the country's dominant aesthetic trend, was being challenged by other alternatives. In this thesis, I examine Egas's position in-between two different contexts, cultures, and temporalities, which informed artistic experimentations and how these two contexts did not necessarily ascribe to the same ideas of modernism and art's role in society.

This thesis is based in archival research conducted both in Quito, Ecuador, and in New York. From May 2017 to February 2018 I visited several archives in public institutions and private holdings in both countries in search of the exhibited artworks, exhibition ephemera, written reviews of the work, relevant correspondence, Egas's

personal documentation of his work, and other existing academic material, to inform my research and writing.

To my grandma, Doris Cashmore Mantilla
for her constant inspiration.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During this research and writing process I greatly relied on the support and generosity of many people. My academic advisor at Temple University Mariola Alvarez has been incredibly generous dedicating a great deal of her time to discuss my ideas and the structuring of this project. I was also honored to share my research with Professor Erin Pauwels, who constantly reassured me of the importance of this project. She encouraged and motivated me through every step, helped me keep my topic in perspective, and guided me to find my voice as a scholar. For that, Professors Alvarez and Pauwels have all my gratitude. Special thanks to my previous mentor Adele Nelson, who has maintained contact and offered advice regarding my thesis topic and my professional development. Finally, I would like to acknowledge all the professors who have contributed to my training as a scholar in the History of Art, immensely helping me to sharpen my analytic and writing skills throughout my graduate education.

This research would have not been completed without the kindness and resourcefulness of the people and institutions who granted me access to archival material and art collections, both private and public. I want to thank Eric Egas, who welcomed my mother and I to his house and was immensely generous allowing us to browse through his father's artwork, personal files, exhibition ephemera, and archives. Trinidad Pérez, who first introduced me to Egas's works, was also incredibly kind, letting me access her private archival material on this artist, and sharing her insightful thoughts on my research. I would also like to thank the Ministry of Culture in Ecuador, especially Ramiro Espín, Fabián Poacarina, and Adriana Díaz for granting me access the Museo Nacional and the Museo Camilo Egas's collection, as well as Sara Bermeo for providing

information about Egas' works at the Museo Antropológico y de Arte Contemporáneo (MAAC) in Guayaquil. Further, the colleagues who work at the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana were very helpful in providing information about the artist. Many thanks to Guido Vásquez, who has done an important work in building, organizing, and maintaining many Ecuadorian artists' archives at the Biblioteca and Centro de Documentación, and to Danilo Núñez, who opened the doors of the Casa de la Cultura's reserve and kept in contact with me through this process. I want to acknowledge Carlos Mantilla Battle from *Diario El Comercio*, who was very resourceful in providing articles related to this topic from their archives. Jenny Swadosh, the associate archivist at the New School, kindly guided me through the few archives that contain information related to Camilo Egas' work from the 1940s-1960s. I would also like recognize the work of archivists from the Smithsonian Archives of American Art and the Brooklyn Museum, who diligently assisted me when consulting their material.

Last, but not least, I owe a great deal to my family and friends, who provided the most avid support and motivation. Thank you all for your encouragement, patience, feedback, and company through this process. I want to thank my friend, my partner, and the love of my life, Andrés, who worked the hardest to understand and sympathize with me. My eternal gratitude for your receptiveness, your love, and your endless faith in me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Constructing National Identity Through a Complemented Landscape.....	6
Primitivist Strategies and Cultural Authenticity.....	15
In Search of An Artist’s Identity.....	21
CHAPTER 2: CAMILO EGAS AND HIS ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT IN POST-WAR NEW YORK.....	28
The Reception of Egas’s Social Surrealist Works in 1946.....	29
The Art Workshops at The New School for Social Research.....	34
Egas’s Paintings at ACA Gallery in 1955.....	39
CHAPTER 3: THE CASA DE LA CULTURA ECUATORIANA AND BENJAMIN CARRION.....	47
Birth of Benjamín Carrión’s Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana.....	49
Art and Modernism in the 1950s.....	57
CHAPTER 4: CAMILO EGAS’S EXHIBITION AT THE CASA DE LA CULTURA ECUATORIANA IN 1956.....	61
Works of Camilo Egas at the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, 1956.....	63
The Exhibition Catalogue.....	71

The Contemporary Critical Reception: A Review of the Artist or of His

Work?.....	73
CONCLUSION.....	80
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	125

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Camilo Egas, <i>Ecuadorian Festival</i> , 1935, oil on canvas. The New School, New York	89
2. Camilo Egas, <i>Las floristas</i> , 1916, oil on canvas. Museo Camilo Egas, Ecuador	90
3. Camilo Egas, <i>El Sanjuanito</i> . 1917, oil on canvas. Private collection, Ecuador.....	91
4. Camilo Egas, <i>Danza ceremonial</i> , 1922-1923, oil on canvas. Museo Nacional del Ministerio de Cultura, Ecuador.....	92
5. Camilo Egas, <i>Caravane Otavalo</i> , 1925, oil on canvas. Location unknown.....	93
6. Camilo Egas, <i>Porteur au Repos</i> , 1925, oil on canvas. Barbara and John Duncan collection.....	94
7. Camilo Egas, <i>Caravana</i> , 1922-1923, oil on canvas. Museo Nacional del Ministerio de Cultura, Ecuador	95
8. Camilo Egas, <i>Media tarde</i> , 1925. Private collection	96
9. Catalogue's cover for <i>Exhibition of Paintings Camilo Egas</i> at the Nicholas M. Acquavella Galleries Exhibition, 1946.....	97
10. List of paintings by Camilo Egas at the Nicholas M. Acquavella Galleries, exhibition catalogue, 1946. The work <i>Arrival</i> reproduced to the left.....	98
11. Camilo Egas, reproduction of <i>The Modern Don Quixote</i> in The New School Bulletin, 1946-1947.....	99
12. Camilo Egas, <i>Civil War in Spain</i> , oil on canvas, 1940. Location unknown.....	100
13. Camilo Egas, black and white reproduction of <i>Hex Signs</i> , material, date and location unknown.....	101
14. Camilo Egas, <i>Goodbye (Adiós)</i> , 1954, oil on Masonite. Private collection, Ecuador.....	102
15. Elaine de Kooning, <i>Willem de Kooning</i> , c.1952, oil on panel. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.....	103
16. Willem de Kooning, <i>Woman 1</i> , 1950-1952, oil on canvas. Museum of Modern Art, New York.....	104

17. Camilo Egas, <i>Studio Corner</i> , 1953, oil on Masonite. Museo Antropológico y de Arte Contemporáneo, Guayaquil, Ecuador	105
18. Camilo Egas, <i>Calso</i> (New York), 1953, oil on Masonite. Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana.....	106
19. Camilo Egas, <i>Untitled</i> , oil on canvas, 1953. Collection of the New School, New York.....	107
20. Camilo Egas, <i>Pennsylvania</i> , material, date, and location unknown.....	108
21. Camilo Egas, <i>Self-Portrait</i> , 1953, oil on canvas. Location unknown.....	109
22. Camilo Egas, <i>Self-Portrait</i> , 1953, oil on canvas. Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana.....	110
23. Edward Munch. <i>Sleepless Night: Self-Portrait in Inner Turmoil</i> , oil on canvas, 1920. Munch Museum, Oslo, Norway	111
24. Cartoon published by Asdrubal in the newspaper <i>El Sol</i> (Ecuador), in 1952. Archive at the Art Museum of the Americas	112
25. Oswaldo Guayasamín, <i>Ataúd blanco</i> , 1950s, oil on canvas.....	113
26. Oswaldo Guayasamín, <i>Huacayñan: Ecuador</i> , portable mural, oil on wood, 1951. Private collection, Ecuador.....	114
27. Cartoon published in the newspaper <i>La Nación</i> (Ecuador), in 1952. Archive at the Art Museum of the Americas.....	115
28. Araceli Gilbert, <i>Litografía #5</i> , 1955, material and location unknown	116
29. Benjamín Carrión, Claire Egas, and Camilo Egas (center) at the inauguration of his exhibition <i>Exposición de Egas</i> (August 15- August 30, 1956) at the Museo de Arte Colonial of the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, in Quito, Ecuador.....	117
30. List of exhibited works in the 1956 <i>Exposición de Egas</i> at the Museo de Arte Colonial of the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana. Exhibition catalogue	118
31. Camilo Egas, <i>Después del Rejo</i> , 1950s, material and location unknown.....	119
32. Detail of Camilo Egas's <i>Después del Rejo</i> , 1950s.....	120
33. Camilo Egas, <i>Al Mercado</i> , 1955, material and location unknown	121
34. Camilo Egas, <i>Camino al mercado</i> , 1922-1923, oil on canvas. Museo Nacional del Ministerio de Cultura, Ecuador	122

35. Camilo Egas, *Caravana*, 1956, oil on Masonite. Private collection, Ecuador.....123
36. Camilo Egas, *Calle 14*, 1937, oil on canvas. Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana.....124

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On January 2, 1933, the New School for Social Research held a tea reception to unveil the latest addition to its series of murals: Camilo Egas's *Ecuadorian Festival* (Fig. 1). This large portable mural depicts a scene in which many Ecuadorians from diverse ethnic backgrounds come together in synergic rhythm to configure a fluid and complex national identity. When interviewed about the work, Egas described the subject as "something that reflects the moments of happiness into which the natives of Ecuador immerse themselves, so colorful and simultaneously so solid; strong in body yet anxious to enjoy their festivals,"¹ and added that while the primary focus is the Indigenous dance, "it is socially significant in some details."² The mural received predominantly positive reviews in journals and newspapers,³ and marked a shift for the artist's practice from collaborating in the collective consolidation of a national Ecuadorian identity to delving into a personal quest to define himself as an artist in exile in a cosmopolitan city. This work of art served Egas as an introduction to the New York City art world, and validated him as an artist in the 1930s, and continues to do so even today.

While Egas tried to promote himself as an artist who could portray the complex nationalistic sentiment of diversity, union, and authenticity of the Andean context, viewers and critics in the United States perceived him and his work as the embodiment of the Ecuadorian native experience, representing his nation and the tragic results of a

¹ Camilo Egas quoted in Michele Greet, "From Indigenism to Surrealism: Camilo Egas in New York, 1927-1946," in *Nexus New York: Latin/American Artists in the Modern Metropolis*, ed. Deborah Cullen, (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2009), 174.

² "School Displays Mural by Egas," *New York Times*, January 3, 1933, 20.

³ Edward Alden Jewell, "New School Offers a Variety of Exhibitions Including Egas's Completed Mural," *New York Times*, February 9, 1933, 13.

violent colonial process. In a review published shortly after the mural's unveiling in *The American Magazine of Art*, a North American critic asserts that, "the subject is the great ceremonial dance for which the whole population of Ecuador assembles. It is apparently a joyous occasion, full of vitality and movement, but it is instinct with Indian sadness. Egas is heir to it like all of Ecuador."⁴ Though Egas explicitly mentioned that he depicted Ecuador's natives, differentiating himself from the represented subjects, the critic stresses that this accounts for the *whole* population of the country, indistinctly. In other words, the critic understands Ecuador to have a predominantly native population and, at the same time, identifies Egas within this assumption. Similarly, Alvin S. Johnson, the school's director and Egas's mural commissioner, goes even further to attest to the artist's legacy by declaring that,

Egas combines in himself the blood and the spirit of the Inca and the Spaniard. He is alive as none of us are to the great problem of Latin America, the amalgamation of the Pre-Columbian civilization with that of Spain. No Anglo-American has cried to Heaven because Egas represents the creative, artistic, indignantly pietistic Native American culture in its struggle against the suppressive hand of Spanish white race arrogance.⁵

While it is possible that Johnson was commenting on what Egas implied as "socially significant" about the mural's subject matter, his interpretation of the artist's work centers on the colonial struggles, and racial and cultural amalgamation. Yet, it is important to note that this is not limited to Johnson's understanding of the artwork, but also extends to the artist who created it. In this way, these two comments reveal how the

⁴ *The American Art Magazine*, "Mural at The New School of Social Research" 26, (1933): 150-151. This is one of the most elucidating statements that evidence that people in New York perceived "the whole population of Ecuador" as indigenous, and regarded Egas as part of this Otherness.

⁵ *Ibid.*

artist and the artwork are conceived as exchangeable as they both embody, in materiality or in the flesh, a process of social struggle, racial conflation, and a nation's sole identity.

While art centers viewed this Latin American artist as the embodiment of Ecuadorian identity, he may have perceived himself as a cosmopolitan artist who compiled learning experiences through his voyages. As a young, emerging artist, Camilo Egas (1889-1962), traveled to and trained in major artistic cities such as Madrid, Rome, Paris, and New York, all the while, searching for innovative aesthetic languages and self-discovery. Through these peripatetic student years in major cultural centers, Egas nurtured a tendency to reinvent his work through experimentation of style, facture, and technique. Throughout these experiences, he went from representing his nation's land and native inhabitants to experimenting with avant-garde strategies to explore his own identity and subjective vision as an artist. Frustrated with the conservative and stagnant trends of the arts in his native Quito, Ecuador,⁶ Egas recurrently applied his tendency to challenged pre-established, traditional notions of "High Art," causing a rupture in the artistic scene."⁷ In doing so, Egas served as a catalyst for Ecuador's transition into different visual idioms, while continuing his unrelenting quest for self-definition.

In attempting to construct an identity, be it self or collective, the dichotomy of "self" and "other," or "us" and "them" is unavoidable. The idea of "otherness" is essential to the analysis of the power dynamics imbued between the dominant central nations that controlled peripheral, political and historically minor cultures.⁸ In his book

⁶ This is evidenced in the Manifesto published in *Hélice*, a magazine he started in 1926, and which will be later discussed.

⁷ See Trinidad Pérez, "The Indian in the 1920's painting of the Ecuadorian Camilo Egas" (MA Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1987), 42.

⁸ See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 46.

Mind, Self, and Society (1934) George Herbert Mead states that social and cultural identities are created as a product of self-reflection of one society after interacting with another, and recognizing its differences. In many cases these differences have been associated to race, gender, and class, and thus to the marginalized. In Latin America, an awareness of alterity first surfaced with the arrival of European colonizers. However, the necessity of building a sense of national identity emerged after gaining independence and prompted different cultural endeavors to foster this project. Egas embodied the struggle of being caught in the middle of two forces: defining his nation's identity while trying to figure out where he stood as an artist living far away from home.

During most of his career, Egas was an immigrant artist who contributed to the development of cosmopolitan cultural centers with his unique "double perspective," to use a term the postcolonial theorist Edward Said coined to describe the experience of exile.⁹ As T.J. Demos eloquently states, a migrant acquires such a perspective by gaining bicultural knowledge while living abroad and it usually yields a fresh and constant appreciation of one's cultural origin.¹⁰ In Egas's case, as with many other Latin American artists living abroad, this prolonged state of exile sparked a long quest to define himself as a "marginal cosmopolitan" modern artist.¹¹ He frequently attempted to define his

⁹ See T.J. Demos, *The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary during Global Crisis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 3. Even though the term "exile" commonly has negative connotations, it also serves to describe a state of voluntary displacement from a person's home, and could respond to a number of reasons such as politics, religion, sexual orientation, economics, education, among others. As consulted in Dicitonary.com, s.v. "exile," accessed February 17, 2018, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/exile>

¹⁰ Demos, *The Migrant Image*, 3.

¹¹ See Natalia Majluf, "'Ce N'est Pas Le Pérou,' Or, the Failure of Authenticity: Marginal Cosmopolitans at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1855." *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 4 (1997). Majluf describes these "marginal cosmopolitans" as elite, creole Latin Americans who went to Europe to train in prominent artistic schools, and perceived themselves as cosmopolitan citizens, but in turn were regarded as Others, and thus, marginal. Although Majluf focuses on a Peruvian

distinctive national identity by turning to primitive tropes of the Indigenous people of the Andes, while employing experimental idioms suited for his sophisticated audience. In this sense, Egas may have felt in a middle ground between being an insider and an outsider at the same time. While he was certainly a foreigner, he came from a privileged upbringing¹² and had received artistic training, which allowed him to understand and communicate well with his peers. However, as one can see in the reviews voiced regarding the mural for the New School, other people perceived him as a peripheral migrant artist who could depict his nation more accurately, and his art as well as his demeanor responded to the expected Latin American stereotype of cultural hybridity.

The selective interest in Egas's production, which tends to focus on his early works in Ecuador, Paris, and the first decade of his time in New York, from the 1910s to the 1930s, might be related to the fact that during those periods it can be clearly connected to *Indigenismo*¹³ and thus consistent with accounts of modern nationalist painting of the Andes. Inadvertently, therefore, Egas's work from the 1940s and 1950s produced in New York and exhibited in Ecuador and Venezuela, remains unexplored. In

painter exhibiting his work in mid-nineteenth century Paris, her arguments can be applied to the expectations, limitations and circumstances of many foreign artists in cultural centers throughout the twentieth century.

¹² Other scholars have described his upbringing as "modest" in the sense that he did not come from the social elite and speculating that his mother had some familial relation to the *Zambizas*, and indigenous group in Ecuador's capital. Even though he may not have come from the nation's most affluent circles, he was well educated, trained in the capital's art school, spoke more than four languages, lived and traveled in Europe and the United States, and rubbed elbows with the cultural elite in both sides of the Atlantic.

¹³ There are many different approaches to this term, from the initial writings of José Vasconcelos in Mexico, to José Carlos Mariátegui in Peru in the 1920s, and the redefined, more academic definitions by current scholars like Anna Indych-López, Natalia Majluf, Michele Greet, Trinidad Pérez, among others. Broadly speaking, *Indigenismo* can be understood as a Latin American trend, led by non-white yet non-indigenous intellectuals, in which they explicitly denounced unjust treatment to native Americans in political and economic matters, or render them in a more empathetic manner.

particular, a 1956 survey exhibition organized in Quito by the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, and its peculiar avant-gardist role in the country's artistic milieu has not previously been the object of thorough investigation. In this thesis, I will look into this specific case study: Egas's exhibition in Quito in 1956. Occurring at a pivotal moment in Egas's quest to demonstrate his versatility as an artist, this exhibition emblemizes his transition from a "humanist" interest in depicting the socially oppressed to a more abstract, introspective manner, which elucidate personal questions of identity in exile, and further bolstered a set of efforts in Ecuadorian art to promote other aesthetic possibilities during the 1950s. I will also examine the complexity of artistic experimentation in a time and place where a dominant trend had been officially established as the quintessential artistic expression to represent a nation. As an artist in exile in the United States, and consistently defined by others in this context through limited understanding of the Latin American culture, Egas transitioned from painting an established idea of Ecuadorian identity to expressing emotional states through the experimentation with color and form, allowing the idea of identity to be in constant flux. As a migrant, his acquired "double perspective" provided the necessary tools to communicate to a wider audience while addressing a similar subject matter or depicting a particular identity.

Constructing National Identity through a Complemented Landscape

After gaining independence from Europe in the early nineteenth century, many newly-founded countries in the Americas undertook the mission of building a sense of national identity. During this period, and especially into the twentieth century, artists and

intellectuals focused on nationalistic socio-political and artistic endeavors. Indeed, between 1928 and 1929 the Cuban magazine that circulated widely in the region, *Revista de avance*, published a questionnaire, “Inquiry, What Should American Art Be?”¹⁴ In it, the question, “Do you believe that the work of an American artist should reveal an American concern?” was addressed by several leading Latin American intellectuals. The majority of the participants concurred that this preoccupation was pressing at the time.¹⁵ In doing so, they revealed a generalized understanding that American artworks should express a cultural sense of belonging in respect to subject matter, yet it was still expected for artists to follow models and standards of the cultural centers such as Europe and the United States. Whereas this proposition faced a complication in maintaining a dialogue with European traditions while at the same time rejecting them, Egas’s paintings provided a critical edge by adopting a local mode that in many ways complied with the described goals.

In the early twentieth century, whereas the Ecuadorian elite considered itself an extension of the West (as did many others across Latin America), their discourse sought to overtly differentiate themselves from the Spanish colonizers by asserting their Otherness: their noble native American legacy.¹⁶ Though this discourse shaped the quest for developing an authentically Ecuadorian art, European culture was still deemed superior and thus, artists were expected to master these styles and techniques with which

¹⁴ See Ivonne Pini, *En busca de lo propio: inicios de la modernidad en el arte de Cuba, México, Uruguay y Colombia 1920-1930*. (Bogotá, Colombia: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2000), 235. In the original text, it reads: “Indagación ¿Qué debe ser el arte americano?” Note that in this context, “American” refers to either north, central or south Americans.

¹⁵ Ibid. ¿Cree usted que la obra del artista americano debe revelar una preocupación americana?

¹⁶ Trinidad Pérez, “Exoticism, Alterity and the Ecuadorian Elite: The Work of Camilo Egas,” trans. by Philip Derbyshire, in *Images of Power: Iconography, Culture and the State in Latin American*, ed. Jens Andermann and William Rowe. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 102.

to render their local subjects. Egas started as an artist in Quito, Ecuador, when he enrolled in the Escuela de Bellas Artes in 1905, at only 16 years of age. His experiences in Rome, Madrid, and Paris in the 1910s and 1920s contributed to his professional development—from artistic to ideological and sociopolitical inquiries—and accentuated the prevalent subject matter he would work with throughout his career: the indigenous people of Ecuador. This not only responded to the open call in Latin America to work with American concerns, but it mostly reacted to the country’s convoluted proposal to configure a new and unique national identity.¹⁷

Upon his return to Quito from his first sojourns to Italy and Spain, Egas asserted his position as a modern artist by keeping up with European aesthetic techniques and reconfiguring local concerns within these styles.¹⁸ In turn, the Escuela de Bellas Artes, under the directorship of José Gabriel Navarro since 1911, had renewed its focus and personnel. One of Navarro’s goals for the academy was to cease teaching from strictly European—mostly Spanish—models, prints and imported plasters, while paying more attention to the local context by incorporating *plein air* painting, live models, and local cityscapes to the curricula.¹⁹ However, he perceived pre-Columbian art as a representation of a primitive, inferior culture, as opposed to the Western tradition’s

¹⁷ Trinidad Pérez. “La apropiación de lo indígena popular en el arte ecuatoriano del primer cuarto de siglo: Camilo Egas (1915-1923),” in *I Simposio de historia del arte: Artes “académicas” y populares del Ecuador*, ed. Alexandra Kennedy-Troya, (Cuenca: Abya-Yala and Fundación Paul Rivet, 1995), 151.

¹⁸ Xiro Varela. “Camilo A. Egas,” *Caricatura: Seminario humorístico de la vida nacional*, December 8, 1918, 7-8.

¹⁹ See Michele Greet, *Beyond National Identity* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 25. To read more about the evolution of the art schools and academies in Quito, see Trinidad Pérez, “Modos de aprender y tecnologías de la creatividad: El establecimiento de la formación artística académica en Quito, 1849-1930” in *Academias y Arte en Quito, 1849-1930*, Museo de Arte Colonial de la Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, Quito: Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, 2017.

canonical principles of originality, fidelity and progress.²⁰ Therefore, he hired foreign instructors including the French artist Paul Bar and the Italian Luigi Cassadio, who were enthusiasts of local cultural traditions, yet based their instruction on European models and approximation of the local subject matter.²¹ In other words, under these circumstances and despite the national identity discourse, artists applied foreign visions, exalted the exotic and idealized local tropes according to Western standards, while appropriating the image of native Americans to justify their cultural authenticity.

As is evidenced by his most renowned works from his early period, the gold medal winner *Las floristas* (Fig. 2) presented at the Salón Anual de Bellas Artes in 1916, and first prize winner *El Sanjuanito* (Fig. 3), which earned him the teaching post at the Escuela de Bellas Artes in 1917, Egas quickly adopted the local trends and magnified their potential.²² Since the nineteenth century, national identity and cultural constructs were translated into landscape and *Costumbrismo* paintings, permeating the definitions of the body politic by referencing their fertile natural resources in the Andean terrain, and documenting the exoticism of its native inhabitants.²³ *Costumbrismo*, a genre that had abounded in the region especially during the second half of the nineteenth century, attempted to categorize, classify and catalogue exotic renditions of local types, highlighting their costumes, traditions and physical features. These were commonly

²⁰ Pérez, “La apropiación de lo Indígena”, 150.

²¹ Pérez, “The Indian in the 1920’s,” 47. Numerous accounts about the art academy’s practices in these years mention how Paul Bar took his students out of the classrooms to paint what they saw surrounding them.

²² Greet, “Painting the Indian Nation: Pictorial Indigenism as a Modernist Strategy in Ecuadorian Art, 1920-1960” (PhD diss., New York University, 2004), 84.

²³ See Katherine Manthorne, “The Latin American Landscape in a Global Context,” and “Natalia Majluf, On the Margins of Painting: Nature in the Andean Imagination, c.1800-1900,” in *Traveler Artists: Landscapes of Latin American from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection*, ed. Katherine Manthorne (Seattle: Marquand Book, 2015).

rendered in small-scale watercolors and relied on stereotyped, caricatured depictions of figures in an isolated or undefined space.²⁴ Art historian Trinidad Pérez has stated that with these paintings Egas presented a new style of costumbrismo to Ecuadorian art by aestheticizing native figures as tall, elongated bodies in rhythmic poses, and theatrical compositions with vibrant colors, in large-scale oil on canvases.²⁵ But Egas did more than that; he blended landscape and costumbrismo to heighten the obvious difference from the colonizers as the symbol of Ecuadorian identity.

When Egas returned from his first sojourn abroad, he already started experimenting with this particular combination. For example, in *El Sanjuanito*, a balanced composition compartmentalizes the diverse arts. Organized as a triptych, the piece pictures two indigenous men flanking each side while playing wind instruments (a rondador at the left and a flute at the right), leaving the larger center to a couple dancing to the typical Sanjuanito rhythm, evidenced by the movement of their arms and legs. Both musicians wear red and green striped ponchos and white shorts, and they each show us a different side and angle of their figures, as if they were one person. Meanwhile, the couple interlocks in dynamic choreography: while she bends downward, extending her elbows out, and lifts her left knee up against her chest, he stretches his arms in a wide diagonal, jumps upright and lifts his left knee. Their garments also complement each other, blue poncho and skirt, and white short and blouse. Furthermore, these figures' poncho and skirt resonate flawlessly with the color and shape of the monumental

²⁴ See Juan Castro y Velázquez, “La pintura costumbrista del siglo XIX,” *El Arquitecto* 1, no.5, 1981.

²⁵ See Trinidad Pérez, “La construcción del campo moderno del arte en el Ecuador, 1860-1925: Geopolíticas del arte y eurocentrismo” (PhD diss., Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, 2012), 250. As Pérez has argued, he elevated these subjects to the realm of high art, as they were depicted in large-scale oil on canvas, worthy of an important position in culture.

mountain in the background. The ultimate strategy to acquire this harmony between landscape and costumbrismo, however, relies in the subtle yet problematic relation between the color and texture of the native's skin with that of the soil, which perhaps earned him the nickname of "the telluric painter."²⁶ By explicitly indicating a resemblance between the land and its inhabitant, Egas might have wanted to celebrate this harmony and a sense of authentically belonging to this territory, however, in the eyes of the contemporary spectator, this complementation of men and land may acquire a different reading, related to struggles of labor, race, and subversion.

Whilst is evident that his style matured when Egas returned from Spain, his interest in choreographed movements that coalesce harmoniously with the landscape remained essential to his oeuvre. As is natural, while Egas resided in Italy and Spain he was constantly exposed to many European movements, styles, and artists which informed his later stylistic development.²⁷ In fact, while he lived in Spain, Egas visited Hermenegildo Anglada Camarasa's studio numerous times and most likely witnessed the rich ways in which this artist envisioned lavish compositions of gypsy celebrations with swirling figures, as well as resilient landscapes.²⁸

²⁶ Susan Rocha, "Investigación. La crítica sobre Camilo Egas (1917-1940)," published September 17, 2016, http://www.paralaje.xyz/investigacion_la-nocion-de-vanguardia-a-traves-de-la-recepcion-de-la-obra-de-camilo-egas-1917-1940-2/.

²⁷ Scholars like Pérez and Michele Greet have pointed out that Egas's paintings discussed previously not only extolled Italian classicist ideals, but cited the elongated and stylized figures on theatrical backgrounds of the Spanish modernism, which Egas explicitly praised. In an interview conducted by Xiro Varela, a young contributor to the Ecuadorian magazine *Caricatura*, which circulated from 1918 to 1924, Egas admitted that artists Hermenegildo Anglada Camarasa (Spain), Federico Beltrán (Spain), Giulio Aristide Sartorio (Italy), Gustav Klimt (Austria), and Anders Zorn (Sweden) were amongst those who indirectly impacted his work. Varela, "Camilo A. Egas," 8.

²⁸ See, for example, Anglada Camarasa's *Baile Gitano* (The Gypsy Dance), n/d., and *Paisaje con nubes* (Landscape with Clouds), n/d.

However, Egas's paintings denote these stylistic exchanges not as derivative elements, but as a significant strategy for accomplishing harmonious configurations of his nation's landscape, characterized by congruous choreographed movements.²⁹ As we see in *Danza Ceremonial* (1922) (Fig. 4), one of the commissioned pre-Columbian themed works, eight naked women dance close to a bonfire, while a dressed man kneeling at the corner of the composition plays a flute. Egas used careful brushstrokes to define the women's bodies, emphasizing the muscles and contours of their curvy yet elongated shapes. Following the ideological anatomy of female classical sculptures as references, such as the Venus de Milo and Praxiteles's Knidian Aphrodite,³⁰ Egas portrayed the pre-Columbian female bodies with curvy torsos, wide hips, small waists, and big breasts. However, he stretched their figures, slightly elongating their legs and trunks, and contorted them in dancing motions. The sensual gestures of their long legs echo the smooth curvilinear flow of the white smoke emanating from the central bonfire. Further, in states of ecstatic frenzy, euphoria or reconciliation with the land, the copper-colored

²⁹ For more details on this topic see Pérez, "The Indian in the 1920's." In 1922, after Egas returned from Spain, he was commissioned fourteen paintings to decorate archaeologist Jacinto Jijón y Caamaño's new library which housed his archaeological collection. Out of the fourteen paintings, one addressed the discovery of America, six imagined pre-Columbian rituals, and seven portrayed contemporary Indigenous scenes. As observed in an existing image of this historic library, these works were placed on the second floor of the room, atop the stacks that hold archaeological and historic accounts illustrating the place and time where these objects were found. It is important to mention that while the pre-Columbian paintings draw heavily from exoticism, perhaps suggesting the colonizers attitude toward the natives at the time of their arrival, the contemporary subject matter paintings have a hint of empathy and sadness as Egas draws from intimate moments for the community. For the sake of brevity, I will only analyze one of these paintings, but there is much to talk about regarding these different points of view applied to the 14 murals.

³⁰ In his systematic analysis of Ecuadorian painting published in 1942, entitled *La pintura ecuatoriana del siglo XX*, José Alfredo Llerena describes the precarious state of the European-imported plasters artists have been using for modeling since the beginning of the twentieth century. Amongst these, he names "models of Venus", *Victory of Samothrace* and the *Knidian Aphrodite*. Egas could have also used these plasters as models for his naked female figures.

women connect with each other while dancing, prompting a reference to Matisse's renowned work *The Dance* from 1909-1910.³¹ The thick, rapid brushstrokes applied to the landscape set a telluric atmosphere, and again, the color palette ties together the natural atmosphere with its inhabitants. Yet this time Egas also marks a clear distinction between figures and landscape, verticality and horizontality, as if something about these humans is about to disrupt its harmonious relationship. The maenadic ritual takes place atop a landscape of arid tundra where only a few agaves, cacti, and isolated patches of muddy greens survive the stomping rhythm of the dance. The women look engaged with the ritual. They either look at the sky, the ground or close their eyes in connection with the ceremony. Except for one: a woman appears to have averted the presence of a stranger who has interrupted the ceremony. Positioned in the middle of the composition and depicted with longer, darker, unraveled hair, she has stopped cautiously and turned her head acknowledging the viewer, as if foretelling the coming of a violent conquest. The dry, almost inhospitable grounds, the proximity of the clouds, and the view of other mountain peaks indicates that this pre-Columbian ritual was set in the highlands, where people would most likely cover themselves from the harsh freezing wind gusts and wear other type of jewelry traditionally associated with cultures of the Andes.³²

In *Danza ceremonial*, as well as most of the pre-Columbian paintings of the commissioned series, Egas presented an essentialist representation of the indigenous

³¹ Even though Egas was not exposed to Matisse's works until he traveled to Paris in 1925, it is possible that he was exposed to renowned works in avant-gardist European magazines that circulated in Ecuador.

³² Although other interpretations could be drawn regarding the culture and the exact location in relation to their nakedness, the fact that the kneeling flute player is dressed in a thick poncho also inclines one's understanding of a cold, Andean setting. Most likely, Egas is not referring to a specific culture or place, but rather emphasizing their condition as uncivilized natives in pre-Columbian times.

people *vis à vis* a discourse of national identity that assert a pre-Columbian heritage yet appealed to racial and classist hierarchies in the local scene. Portraying a group of aboriginal women adorned by dull, off-white long necklaces with big pendants, ankle and arm bracelets, round earrings, and long, untamed hair, Egas seemed intentionally to overstate the exoticism with which the pre-Columbian cultures were regarded at the time. The type of shell or stone jewelry and the fact that the women are naked possibly references coastal cultures such as the ones described by Europeans who encountered the first Americans on the shorelines in 1492. In doing so, as Pérez has pointed out, Egas presented an essentialist visualization of the Indigenous people set in time and space; for they are completing the picture of the rural Andean landscape and stressing the pre-Columbian past.³³ In *El Sanjuanito* as well as in *Danza ceremonial*, the inclusion of material objects, pre-Columbian designs, traditional garments and particular postures and gestures are indicators of the otherness that abounded in a society that consistently and desperately sought to prove how close to the civilized and far from the savage it was.³⁴ Thus, in representing national identity through the disruption of the constructed notion of a balanced and complemented landscape, Egas's attempt is at best critical and at worse exoticizing.

³³ Pérez, "The Indian in the 1920s," 24.

³⁴ Mariano Giordano, "Memoria de una Alteridad Periférica: Imaginario del Indígena Chaqueño en la Fotografía Contemporánea," In *Arte Latinoamericano del Siglo XX: Otras Historias de la Historia*, ed. Rodrigo Gutiérrez Viñuales (Zaragoza: Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, 2005), 309.

Primitivist Strategies and Cultural Authenticity

Widely recognized, exile or displacement is not always joyous and seamless, yet its transformative experiences instigate critical and creative energies. Sentiments of dislocation, angst, and disillusion often permeate an artist's work and its undertones--even more so when the artist's works and ideas are not only misunderstood, but also essentialized by its audience. In many cases, this discomfort translates into the subject matter or the facture of the artwork. For Egas, his sojourn in Paris produced a drastic transformation in his work. A bitter taste and a critical stance towards the portrayal of identity, be it personal or national, imbued his paintings of the 1920s, breaking from his previous rhythmically harmonious scene paintings.

A government-sponsored trip to Paris broadened Egas's perspectives regarding modernism and introduced him to avant-garde notions such as primitivism and cubism from a transnational perspective.³⁵ In 1923, Egas enrolled in the Academie Colarossi, an art academy in Paris that presented an alternative to the renowned École des Beaux Arts. The active and diverse Parisian artistic scene allowed Egas to experiment with the avant-garde trends without losing sight of his local concerns. Additionally, he associated and exchanged ideas with artists from different countries, including Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil, who like the artistic elite of Ecuador, were constantly pondering the American identity.³⁶

³⁵ Greet, *Beyond National Identity*, 39.

³⁶ Pérez, "The Indian in the 1920s," 87; Greet, "Painting the Indian Nation," 95. Also see Raúl Andrade, "Dos escorazos de Egas," in *Egas*, Quito: Museo Camilo Egas, 1979, exhibition catalogue, unpaginated, Trinidad Pérez's private archives. In her research, Pérez claims that Egas might have met with artists such as Emilio Petrorruti, Xul Solar, Pedro Figari, Anita Malfatti, Tarsila do Amaral, among others. Likewise, Andrade attests that Egas met Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco in Paris.

Many European artists working in Paris at this time were creating primitivist works,³⁷ evidencing their position of power over Others. Most often they would draw from the aesthetics of African traditional sculptures while disregarding their context, cultural significance, and function in order to subvert the naturalistic style closely associated with the Academy. After centuries of domination over colonized countries, Europeans had accustomed themselves to perceiving anyone from these nations equally as an Other, ignoring class and racial nuances that existed in these societies. As Natalia Majluf has accurately stated, however, Latin American cosmopolitan artists training in Paris were caught in a paradoxical position: while in their home countries they commonly came from a privileged position controlling the power dynamics, in Europe they were expected to embody “an Other” in language and culture, different from that of the West, without necessarily owning it.³⁸ This was the cultural authenticity with which they were expected to contribute to the artistic milieu. By depicting distinctive scenes of their “primitive” nation, they served as intermediaries between European viewers and their local context, which validated and defined their production.³⁹

By depicting Ecuadorian natives in a widely recognized and promoted aesthetic language in Europe, Egas avowed his position of a marginal cosmopolitan, albeit with some discomfort. During his time in Paris, Egas combined the European style of modern monumentality and flat application of paint with Ecuadorian caricatures and a lurid palette to construct a notion of the indigenous tropes, which circulated in his country, creating a grotesque representation of the Andean natives. Indeed, artworks such as

³⁷ I am referring here to artists such as Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee, Paul Gauguin, Amadeo Modigliani, among others.

³⁸ Majluf, “q"Ce N'est Pas Le Pérou,"” 870.

³⁹ Ibid. 888.

Caravana Otavalo (Fig. 5) and *Porteurs au Repos* (Fig. 6), evidence his ambiguous stance regarding their condition. Instead of heightening their exotic cultural objects, gaudy textiles, and particular features as typically depicted, Egas unveiled what hid beyond the traditional picturesque scenes. Art historian Michele Greet suggests that Egas chose to stress a state of degradation, perpetuating the Western perception of native Americans as inherently ignorant and uncivilized.⁴⁰ Furthermore, Greet argues that by stressing these characteristics to depict the Indigenous people of Ecuador, Egas undermined the images' ability to denounce their condition. However, this over-exaggeration of Indigenous phenotypes and primitivist strategies to depict the uncivilized cultures might also be seen as evidence of Egas's personal experiences and struggles to define his own identity as an artist.

For European artists and critics, Egas was an Andean artist painting genuine representations of his culture and people, depicting the reality of his hometown. For Egas himself, he was a cosmopolitan artist reinventing his practice. Returning to the paradox of the marginal cosmopolitan, Egas viewed himself in the same position as his fellow artists in Europe representing the Others of his country, and comment about their culture and their detrimental condition. Indeed, he even may have felt he had greater insights to their reality as an insider who could further complicate this type of representation by criticizing the colonization process.⁴¹ Undeniably, Egas now delivered a more conscious and indeed empathetic representation of the oppressed and marginalized by accentuating

⁴⁰ Greet, *Beyond National Identity*, 45-46.

⁴¹ Besides the few published volumes of his magazine *Hélice*, discussed later in this introduction, which talked generally about the state of the art scene in Ecuador, Egas did not voice his thoughts and intentions about his work. However, looking at the works he produced in Paris, it becomes clear that he is wanting to add some sort of social commentary about the Indigenous people's conditions in his native country.

their affliction and exhaustion as opposed to the idealization of the untamed purity. While being in exile, however, Egas, as well as many other foreign artists coming from peripheral nations, examined his identity and practice more than before, probably recognizing himself in the alterity of the people he recurrently depicted. In other words, realizing that he himself was perceived as an outsider –an Other– he translated his emotional state into the new renderings of the indigenous people of Ecuador.

Though Egas was famously reluctant to discuss his work, the paintings he created and exhibited in Paris during the 1920s are emotional, empathetic and troubling, and they attest to the shift in stylistic and social commentary that would accompany him for decades.⁴² Indeed, one of his closest friends, Raúl Andrade, in a text published several years after the artist's death, observed that Egas had experienced a serious personal and artistic crisis in Paris which drove him to stop painting for some time. Andrade states that when he returned to his practice, he reinvented and transformed the way he conceived "his Indians," by stripping them of picturesque galas and evidencing the tragic opprobrium of their reality.⁴³ In fact, the figures in this new stylistic approach occupy most of the composition, leaving just small corners to suggest a rural or urban context. They are no longer in harmony with their surroundings, and the proximity of the viewer to their condition provokes an uneasy but enticing response. Moreover, their exaggerated

⁴² Greet. "Painting the Indian Nation", 99. According to Greet, this reevaluation of style relates to Egas's acquaintance with a tendency that emerged after World War I known as "call to order," in which "artists such as Picasso and Braque began to paint monumental nudes, idyllic peasants, and images of maternity and tradition, which conveyed the post-war desire for order and stability." Greet also asserts that during this time Egas makes subtle social denunciations regarding the Indigenous conditions in Ecuador, which will accentuate and grow stronger when he goes to New York and works at The New School for Social Research.

⁴³ See Andrade, "Dos escorazos de Egas."

indigenous phenotypes and robust bodies make them appear more “beastly,” as commented by an art critic, playing with the extant stereotypes.⁴⁴

This artistic shift becomes more visible when comparing his 1923 *Caravana* (Fig. 7), produced as one of the fourteen canvases for Jijón y Caamaño’s library, and his 1925 *Porteur au Repos*. In the former, Egas depicted a group of Yumbos, a peaceful pre-Incan society that traveled through the coast, the mountains, and the Amazon lands of the country transporting food and goods, walking tiredly on top of a grassy hill that overlooks a monumental volcano ridge at dusk, as they approach an urban destination. Conversely, the latter emphasized the moment amid the Yumbo’s journey in which they stopped to rest on a mountain peak. These types, who until this point had been commonly depicted on the march, were now humanized highlighting discomfort and suffering. Additionally, by exaggerating the size of their working hands and feet and shrinking their heads, Egas directed the viewer’s attention to the Indigenous people’s social and class status of field workers. Beyond the clear distinction between these earlier naturalistic and slender forms, to grotesque and rounded figures, Egas also in most of these pieces rendered the indigenous as fatigued, discouraged, and defeated amid exhausting labor activities. For they are no longer portrayed in rural spaces pertaining to the bucolic landscape, but rather the artist has chosen to extol the strength of their bodies while covering most of the space in the composition. Thus, a clear emphasis is drawn to the figure as opposed to the exotic scene of the under-explored American land.

⁴⁴ To read more about the reviews on Egas’s exhibition while in Paris, see Pérez, “The Indian in the 1920s,” 90-95.

While in Paris, Egas depicted indigenous people taking a break from labor, as if illustrating his own break from his creative production.⁴⁵ In these paintings, his figures are rendered in a melancholic state of contemplation, out of place, yet still alluding to their activities: transporting goods, shoveling, painting. Another example of his Paris' pieces, *Media Tarde* (Fig. 8), which was last seen publicly in a magazine reproduction,⁴⁶ elucidates Egas's emphasis on this state of ponderous discomfort and displacement. In this painting, three indigenous people are portrayed sitting on the floor, next to a thick white wall. There is no presence of nature, soil or vegetation, yet the artist included a portion of what appears to be a shovel close to the male figure, perhaps hinting at the type of work these people were engaged with and linking them to their rural context. Their vestment is synthesized into flat, subdued colors, and the intricate details of their textiles are no longer emphasized. Instead, the strong foreshortening of the male figure's working tool and bare foot and elbow alerts the viewer about its proximity to the scene in an intimate manner. Further, their body language prompts an emotional response of empathy and solidarity; lowered heads and crunched-up legs, and the look of despair on their faces speak of the Indigenous people's struggle, and the artist's sense of nostalgia while he tried to convey this situation in a foreign context, or his own while in exile. As Pérez has pointed out, Egas no longer idealized his forms, but summarized the Indigenous'

⁴⁵ Some examples from 1925 in which this is evident are *La Siesta*, *Media Tarde*, *Raza India*, *Composición indigenista*, and *Insidiense*. Similar works were reproduced or produced for publications in his artistic magazine *Hélice*.

⁴⁶ It has not been possible to obtain a better reproduction of this work, and it is not clear whether this image captured the painting in its entirety and final state. However, due to its relevance to the discussion, I have decided to include this example regardless.

character and state of resignation with their condition.⁴⁷ The same could be said about Egas in Paris while embodying his cultural legacy in this particular manner.

In Search of An Artist's Identity

Egas's return to Quito after his time abroad was not as successful as his previous relocations, as he quickly found himself frustrated by the provincial and traditional mentality of his society. In hopes of enlightening the art scene and providing a space to divulge artists' proposals, Egas founded a private art gallery in Quito: Galería Camilo Egas, in 1926, and launched the country's first independent art magazine, *Hélice* (Propeller).⁴⁸ The discomfort with Ecuador's stagnant artistic trends becomes evident in a Manifesto published in this short-lived magazine's first issue. Egas's writing with other emerging artists at the time, declared that "like no other civilized city, Quito lives on the margins of artistic currents, which now impassion all other cultural centers. Only tradition waves its discolored flag. Art remains stationary."⁴⁹ In other words, in this Manifesto the artists expressed their position against a society that is reluctant to consider new styles and cling to conventional and outmoded artistic trends. The avant-garde attitudes and initiatives that abounded in Paris (such as independent exhibitions and circulation of provocative ideas through visually enhanced journals) altered Egas's beliefs regarding the functions and potentiality of the arts.

By opening a private space for artists to exhibit, and circulating avant-gardist ideas through *Hélice*, Egas's return to Quito suggests his eagerness to promote an art that

⁴⁷ Pérez, "The Indian in the 1920s," 81.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁴⁹ Egas, et al in Greet, *Beyond National Identity*, 61. This Manifesto was signed by Camilo Egas, Juan Pavel, Guillermo Latorre, Kanela, Sergio Guarderas, Pedro León, and Efraín Díez.

would be free from governmental affairs, and that could provide a range of tastes, styles, and forms. Andrade describes *Hélice*'s collaborators as a generation of young people who “pursued, expressed their desire, and were ultimately able to disengage themselves, in both art and literature, from the sanctified yet surpassed formulas.” He then asserts that “in this way, as in others, Camilo Egas was the point of departure, the break with the past,”⁵⁰ highlighting the artist as the originator of change in this artistic milieu.⁵¹

However, Egas soon realized that his efforts to promote and activate the Capital's art scene would be unsuccessful, so he ceased *Hélice*'s publication and closed his gallery.⁵²

In 1927, Egas decided once again to seek inspiration abroad, and left for New York, an emerging artistic center at the time, with the hope of finding a place to continue his experimentations and journey to self-discovery.⁵³

Egas arrived in the United States during the “Roaring Twenties,” a time of optimism, ambition, modernization, accelerated progress and a vibrant artistic scene. In fact, 1927 was also the year in which Albert E. Gallatin established the first museum devoted to modern art, known as the Gallery of Living Art, where Egas was exposed to

⁵⁰ Raúl Andrade, *Camilo Egas: Agosto-Octubre, 1978*, Quito, Ecuador: Museo del Banco Central del Ecuador, 1978, unpaginated, exhibition catalogue. Special Archives at the New School for Social Research. All translations are my own, unless stated otherwise.

⁵¹ Even though *Hélice*, nor its contributors, declared a political affiliation, through its circulation, Egas disseminated his innovative and thought-provoking exploration of the Indian's social and psychological state, amongst other avant-garde international proposals. Amongst many others, the magazine published articles about artists and movements such as Amadeo Modigliani, Georges Braque, Diego Rivera, Boris Grigoriev, André Derain, and Futurism. See Greet, “Painting the Indian Nation”, 112.

⁵² *Hélice* paved the way for younger artists to continue a more vital and original artistic environment drawing inspiration from their local culture and maintaining relevant discussions through the arts. Alas, the circulation of the magazine was not lauded by many as Egas intended. In a similar manner, only a reduced number of people attended the exhibitions at his gallery.

⁵³ Greet, “From Indigenism to Surrealism,” 168. His marriage in 1925 to the North American dancer Margaret Gibbons may have also contributed to his decision on moving to the United States.

works by artists such as Picasso, Léger, Braque, Miró, and North American painters working with abstract idioms.⁵⁴ Conversely, ideas of communism, socialism, “authentic” national culture and social protest pervaded in Union Square, where he settled upon arrival. After establishing himself in the New York artistic scene with a successful solo show, and an important mural commission, he was hired as an instructor for the Art Workshops at the New School for Social Research in 1932, where he taught a course on modern art and another on painting, oil and drawing. In 1935, he was offered the directorship of this program, and he went on to run it for the next 27 years.

As part of the New School’s initiative to integrate the arts into the institution’s ideology of “Americanness,” the director Alvin Johnson, decided to erect a new, modern, International-style building and commissioned three artists he considered “modern and American” to paint murals within it.⁵⁵ Thus, he hired Thomas Hart Benton, José Clemente Orozco, and Camilo Egas to paint murals related to the school’s “profound interest in the interpenetration of the two great American cultures, the English-American and the Latin-Indian American.”⁵⁶ While Benton and Orozco worked on monumental murals in prominent spaces of the new building, the dimensions and preassigned location for Egas’s piece, *Ecuadorian Festival* suggests a less ambitious idea that was integrated into this project two years after its inception.

⁵⁴ Greet, *Beyond National Identity*, 86.

⁵⁵ For a detailed rendition of this project see Alvin Johnson, *Notes on The New School Murals*, (New York, ca.1934), 2. As Greet points out, it is important to clarify, however, that during this time, “American” did not refer strictly to someone from the United States, even for Johnson, but it alluded to the notion of a unified nation, that included everyone living in North and South America.

⁵⁶ Johnson, *Notes*, 5.

The portable mural consists of a large, oil on canvas (96x199 inches) created for the dance studio anteroom, in the basement of the New School's new building. Painted with thin layers of evaporated oil,⁵⁷ the artist's selection of earthly tones evokes the native American's surroundings and common materials of their everyday labors, and for a moment deceives the viewer's perception into thinking its monochromatic. From afar, the rhythmically divided composition conveys movement, musicality and dance in a performative and contagious way, as if the dancers were coming from these two separate directions and approaching the viewer by arriving to the central space. But as one gets close to observe each character involved in this festival, the feeling evolves from commemorative to empathetic. For the mural presents a repeated dichotomy between white and non-white, Catholic and pagan characters, control and submission. Although none of these figures seem to be enjoying themselves, it is evident who leads the procession: the Catholic Almas Santas are playing drums and ringing bells that announce their arrival while the Inca sun dancers follow behind alluding to prisoners in shackles.⁵⁸ In both sides of the composition, two children (a boy and a girl) confronting the viewer can be observed. The boy, who is positioned, perhaps coincidentally, at the left side of the painting, holds a red handkerchief and a sickle, a quintessentially communist symbol. Thus, in a very subtle way, *Ecuadorian Festival* denounces the supremacy of Western culture over the primitive and defeated Indigenous people, by suggesting a renewed political consciousness awakening amongst the coming generation.

⁵⁷ Pérez, "The Indian in the 1920's," 93.

⁵⁸ Almas Santas (or holy souls) are an important character in traditional processions of the Catholic ritual Corpus Christi. For more information about this ritual see María Fernanda Cordero de Landívar, *Cuadernos de Cultura Popular: El Corpus Christi*, (Cuenca: Centro Interamericano de Artesanías y Artes Populares, 2009), 51.

While some scholars have proscribed an ethnographic and anthropological reading of Egas's mural by speculating that the artist rendered specific indigenous rituals and nationalities,⁵⁹ others have proposed that it represents a generic celebration of the people in Ecuador.⁶⁰ Be it from a political, ethnographical, or philosophical reading, the mural denotes the convergence of different cultures that although coming from opposing sides, ultimately coalesce in the center, producing a new and more complex identity. Nevertheless, Egas's proclivity for quick adaptations to changing modern societies as well as the socio-political environment at the New School allows us to conjecture that he was not only considering an ideal collective space for interculturality, which is congruent with the multiracial and multicultural reality of early twentieth century New York, but also that he was concerned with producing a more inclusive and accurately diverse representation of the Ecuadorian indigenous population. In turn, while in New York Egas might have felt accompanied by many "Others"—marginal cosmopolitans—in his journey of self-discovery, the power dynamics and residues of the Western culture which seemed

⁵⁹ In a documentary entitled *El Mural* directed by Daniela Merino in 2016, the researcher Heather Reyes describes the mural as a theatrical representation of what is known as "la toma de la plaza" (the Plaza's take over), a symbolic ritual that takes place the night before the celebration of the Corpus Christi, and Inti Raymi celebrations in Ecuador. Although she explicitly describes this celebration pertains to the town of Cotacachi, it is well known that it also occurs in other towns such as Pujilí, Cuenca, and Otavalo. During the "toma de la plaza" two groups of indigenous people place themselves at each side of the public square, symbolizing the colonizers and the colonized. The start moving into the center while they chant and dance, until they confront each other. Whoever leaks the first drop of blood after a tumultuous fight, loses domain over the plaza. Even though the interpretation may seem cogent due to the separated group of indigenous people, the central figures of Almas Santas (also present in Corpus Christi celebrations), music instruments and dancing, we can still observe that there are elements of other celebrations: burning candles and sticks, related to Inti Raymi and Saint Peter and Saint Paul's festivals, bulls, (not part of la toma de la plaza), harvested products, and the presence of children.

⁶⁰ Pérez, "The Indians of the 1920's," 103; Greet, "From Indigenism to Surrealism," 174; José Pereira Valarezo, *La Fiesta Popular Tradicional del Ecuador* (Quito, FLACSO, 2012), 106. For example, the Ecuadorian scholar José Pereira Valarezo argues that a festival as the one Egas has depicted on this mural should be regarded as the idea of cultural hybridity, the acceptance of the clash of two cultures which as a result brings beautiful chaos to prosper as one culture.

to dominate over his own would not escape him. Indeed, a tense atmosphere is perceived by looking at *Ecuadorian Festival*: the empty spaces in between the processions at each side elucidate the artist's dilemma: a separation between "two worlds that coexist, but do not integrate, and that only relate to each other in a relationship of unequal power."⁶¹ It is important to also note that the manifestation of the white and creole (criollo) culture is only latent: through the native's adoption and literal embodiment of the Catholic religion and white-painted faces. In relation to his earlier works, this mural denotes a more nuanced yet complex understanding of Ecuadorian identity, one that is not reduced to a single ethnic population, and tackles the post-colonial social intricacies of race a culture.

The subsequent years in New York, which would become Egas's city of residence until his death, would prompt this artist to abandon collaborative efforts to build a sense of national identity⁶² over a pursuit to further comprehend what it meant to be an artist living and working in exile. However, Egas still grounded his identity in the national symbol⁶³ that had become the Ecuadorian natives, and a terrain and flavor that he felt like "his own."⁶⁴ In the 1940s he experimented with Surrealism, perhaps as a means to

⁶¹ Pérez, "Exoticism, Alterity and the Ecuadorian," 102.

⁶² This became definite after a bitter experience with the Ecuadorian government and the Ecuadorian public who attended the New York World Fair in 1939. Whereas the city's critics positively reviewed Egas's mural and bas relief, commissioned by the Ecuadorian government, and positioned him among the well-revered Mexican muralists, the Ecuadorian government perceived his work as an insult and misrepresentation of the nation while they were trying to depict a lavish and prosperous country. For more on the analysis about this mural and the Ecuadorian reception, see María Helena Barrera-Agarwal, "En busca del mural de Camilo Egas en la feria mundial de 1939," *Procesos* 31 (2010).

⁶³ This is congruent to what Ecuadorian prominent scholar, José Alfredo Llerena, proposed in Ecuador in 1942, that the image of the Indian was more important as a national icon than as a social being, and as such their presence should be understood as symbols to represent national identity. See José Alfredo Llerena, *La pintura ecuatoriana del siglo XX: Primer registro bibliográfico de artes plásticas en el Ecuador*, (Quito, Ecuador: Imprenta de la Universidad, 1942), 13.

⁶⁴ In Spanish this would translate to "lo propio."

explore his own consciousness and that of his culture. Nonetheless, he did not abandon the use of his art to decry and express what he considered to be relevant social and human struggles, moving away from the Indigenous-centered works to encompass themes of collective significance. Notwithstanding, Egas would not return to painting “his Indians” for more than a decade, when he began painting a constructive memory infused with sentimental nostalgic yearning for the place where he came from. In the 1950s, he complicated his representations by combining various artistic styles in one, almost as a biographical representation of his artistic experimentation and development throughout the years. In 1956, he had the opportunity to return to his native Ecuador and present a new approach to his preferred subject matter in a transitional state, which echoed the artistic milieu in New York. This, perhaps, would complicate his individual search as he would enter an ambiguous position between being a “transnational” migrant artist, bringing this creative energy back to his home country, in a moment where Indigenismo was still predominant over all other cultural endeavors.

CHAPTER 2

CAMILO EGAS AND HIS ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT IN POST-WAR NEW YORK

The years during and after World War II witnessed a surge in migration to New York, instigating rapid change in this already fast-developing city. Artists from different parts of the world arrived in Manhattan to contribute to the growing transnational art world. However, while many European émigrés were well received as pioneer avant-garde contributors to this international setting, other artists who came from peripheral nations were still expected to work in a manner representative of their native culture.

Although Camilo Egas lived in New York for many years, and served as the director of the Art Workshops at the New School for Social Research, he was not absolved from this expectation. In a commemorative exhibition organized by the New School in 1963, four months after the artist's passing, Alvin Johnson, former director and Egas's murals commissioner for the school, expressed that the artist felt compelled to adapt to the different artistic currents, "working himself remorselessly in directions that did not always run well with his primordial Quechuan blood."⁶⁵ Although Johnson does not specify which trends "did not run well" with his native Andean blood, it is most likely that he was referring to Egas's Surrealist and Expressionist works of the 1940s and 1950s. Perhaps Johnson perceived it unreasonable for an artist of a "primordial" background to venture into these European art movements, and not focus solely on what he could do best: represent his land and its inhabitants.

⁶⁵ Alvin Johnson, *Camilo Egas: Commemorative Exhibition*, New York: New School for Social Research, 1963, exhibition catalogue.

In this chapter I will analyze Egas's two major solo shows in New York before returning to Ecuador (at the Acquavella Galleries in 1946, and at American Contemporary Art (ACA) Gallery in 1955), as well as his contribution to the New School's Arts Workshops, in order to understand the context in which he was emerged, and how different exchange of ideas are reflected on his work of this period. I will first consider the 1946 exhibition and its reception, and discuss how Egas was responding to global tensions embedded in New York's art world, and how these works were received by the critics. Then I will analyze the various activities and progression of the workshops and lectures at the New School within these ten years (from 1946 to 1956) to indicate the complexity of the relationships between art and theory, and the connection between artists themselves in the academic circles. These interactions are significant to interpreting the work Egas presented at the ACA gallery and later in Quito, Ecuador. I propose that the socio-political context in the U.S., the diversity in practices and ideas exchanged with other artists and lecturers active in this institution, as well as the intense feeling of postwar existentialism and identity crisis pushed Egas to experiment with other styles, leaving behind the large-scale works of Indigenismo and Social Realism.

The Reception of Egas's Social Surrealist Works in 1946

Surrealism had been known within the artistic circles of New York since the early 1930s. However, it was not until the 1940s that it gained momentum amongst a more diverse crowd in the American city. This European movement was introduced to U.S. audiences in 1931 through an exhibition entitled *Newer Super Realism*, presented in the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, Connecticut, which later traveled to the well-known

Julien Levy Gallery in Manhattan. The exhibition presented works by Salvador Dalí, Giorgio de Chirico, Max Ernst, Pablo Picasso, Pierre Roy, Joan Miró, Andre Masson, and Leopold Survage. Later, in 1936, the Museum of Modern Art opened *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, further promoting this trend.⁶⁶ Moreover, during the 1940s, many Parisian modernists fled to New York City, introducing a larger population of artists practicing and promoting Surrealist work. Amongst them was the artists André Breton, who theorized painterly automatism, and Roberto Matta, who promoted it.⁶⁷ Their arrival to New York prompted more exhibitions in which they presented these highly intimate and introspective works in lieu of the Scene Painting and Regionalism with which the local audience was familiar.

The promotion of a more introspective and expressionist artistic practice attracted the different crowds in New York, artists and audience alike, who in one way or another experienced the angst produced by war. Additionally, Surrealism was embraced as a global movement, not only because it addressed “universal” themes, but also because its relatable nature allowed it to become diasporic. Indeed, artists working locally adapted these intimate proposals combining the social themes of their practice (unemployment, poverty, industrialization, cityscapes) with an emotional interpretation of the physical and experiential, often communicating a sense of desolation and uncertainty.⁶⁸ As art historian Ilene Susan Fort clearly describes, “the radical aesthetics of Surrealism enabled

⁶⁶ Ilene Susan Fort, “American Social Surrealism,” *Archives of American Art Journal* 22 no. 3, (1982): 8-9

⁶⁷ David Joselit, *American Art Since 1945* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 10.

⁶⁸ Fort, “American Social Surrealism,” 8. In this article Fort analyzes how U.S. artists such as O. Louis Guglielmi – who worked at the New School for Social Research with Camilo Egas starting in 1950-, Walter Quirt, and James Guy developed what she has framed as “American Social Surrealism.”

American artists to intensify the power of their social-political statements and thus to present familiar aspects of American life in a new perspective.”⁶⁹ Such is the case for the Surrealist works presented by Camilo Egas at the Nicholas M. Acquavella Galleries in 1946 (Fig. 9). The exhibition showcased nineteen oil paintings and twenty-one drawings (Fig. 10), most of which were executed in this Social Surrealist fashion, alluding to the social struggles in different contexts (be it New York, Spain, the Andes, or a non-existent setting), and were well-received by several cultural critics.⁷⁰

In most of the known paintings and drawings presented in this exhibition, Egas’s response to the rise of an art of emotional and introspective exploration, as well as the widespread and pervasive feeling of despair is prevalent.⁷¹ Indeed, titles such as *Time Runs Out*, *Judgement*, *Moondown*, *Black Mass*, and *Nirvana* evoke a feeling of despair, of being threatened by the unknown, emptiness, destruction, and the inevitable end that loomed over humanity after the detonation of atomic bombs throughout the globe. On the other hand, direct allusions to the war in Spain are also present in works by the title of *The Modern Don Quixote* (Fig. 11) and *Spain (Prologue)*⁷² (Fig. 12), evidencing his

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Many of these paintings may remind the viewer of David Alfaro Siqueiros’ work. Given that Siqueiros worked on his Experimental Workshops and lived in New York during the same time as Egas, and that Egas nourished a close relationship with José Clemente Orozco, as well as other Mexican artists, it is tempting to link these artists and their production. However, no evidence has been found so far regarding a clear connection between them, and a relationship remains uncertain.

⁷¹ It is not clear if these paintings are lost or were acquired by private collectors. The well-known and often cited artworks pertained to the collections of MoMA, the Banco Central del Ecuador or the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, including *Dream of Ecuador*, *Civil War of Spain*, *Dual*, *Alusión al fascismo*, *Estudio sobre la miseria*, *Desolación*, *Paisaje Surrealista*, and *Hell*. Even though there are some low-resolution images of other works of Egas’s Surrealist series, it would be difficult to carry out an object-based study since their current location and condition is unknown.

⁷² This work later became known as *Civil War in Spain*.

permanent link to this country and its tragic socio-political struggles.⁷³ Disregarding the titles and the specific situation each painting may be referring to, most of the paintings of this series share a common desolate, dusty and inhospitable setting marked by dramatic diagonal lines that guide the viewer's eye toward the uncertain setting. But why did Egas change his style so significantly? As he was constantly in dialogue with many artists from different backgrounds at the New School for Social Research, and considering that Surrealism and Dadaism were gaining notoriety at the time, perhaps Egas was responding to his surroundings while experimenting with color, texture, and emotionality in a new style.

Although many critics were unfamiliar with Egas's previous work, they were not quick to discard his new undertakings nor were they expecting work devoted to illustrating "primordial" and autochthonous subjects from his country.⁷⁴ In contrast to Johnson's obituary claim, art critics from the magazines *Art News* and *Art Digest* exclaimed that "It is hard to see how so expert a surrealist could have been overlooked" and that his was "the sexiest show in town, and that includes Broadway! (...) it includes some of the best painting to be seen hereabouts."⁷⁵ Perhaps because these critics were not acquainted with his previous work in relation to Indigenismo, their reviews understood Egas's references with European—mostly Spanish—and overlooked their more complex

⁷³ In fact, as his son Eric Egas pointed out in a personal conversation in November 21, 2017, during this time Egas had nurtured a close relationship with the Spanish artists Julio de Diego, who also worked at the New School, and painted elongated expressive figures to represent Franco's appalling aggression towards the Spanish people.

⁷⁴ In two of these reviews, from *Art News* and *Art Digest*, the writers mentioned that this was Egas's first one-man show in the U.S., which is inaccurate since he exhibited at the New School in 1927. It is true, however, that he had not had a solo show in the U.S. in a long time, and this may have caused new critics to quickly assume that this was his debut as a solo artist.

⁷⁵ "Reviews & Previews; Camilo Egas," *Art News*, December, 1946, 52; Alonzo Lansford, "Presenting Camilo Egas," *Art Digest*, November 15, 1946, 17.

socio-political positions. For example, one critic claimed that “Egas is particularly full of Bosch[’s] spirit of lewd fantasy, besides bringing to his task a *truly Spanish* ingenuity in unpleasantness,” whereas another assured that Egas’s Surrealist work had “obvious classical training, and a backward glance at 16th century Bosch.”⁷⁶ For the first time since Egas arrived in New York, his cultural background did not dominate his work. Instead he was appreciated as another Surrealist artist in this cultural center as opposed to a cultural representative of the Andes.

Even if Egas’s Surrealist series often maintained a link with his more socially aware oeuvre, the works tended towards an abstract and expressive manner which he would continue to develop in later endeavors. In a more substantial review written for the *New York Times*, art critic Edward Alden Jewell, who had reviewed Egas’s work before, expressed the following:

Camilo Egas has become a surrealist. There is no connection, thematically, between these canvases at the Acquavella (painted between 1939 and the present year) and the earlier Egas murals at the New School for Social Research, with flowing rhythms that recall modern Mexico. From the outset, so far as our acquaintance with his work extends, Egas has painted with informed cunning. There is prodigious skill in the later work, which in spirit, however, allies itself with Dali and Tchelitchev and other explorers of the unconscious (go back to Brueghel if you prefer). This is not to imply that Egas is deficient in imaginative fertility. Several of his painted nightmares are as fresh as experiences remembered in the first instant of waking. Now and then (as in “Spring,” “Nirvana,” “Love” and “Judgement”) the plastic resolution becomes abstract.⁷⁷

The last sentence in this citation is especially important as it highlights these initial experimentations with abstraction. In a similar way, the *Art News* critic also emphasized this trait by pointing out that the show included “heavily interwoven compositions of a

⁷⁶ “Reviews and Previews,” 52; Lansford, “Presenting Camilo Egas,” 17. The emphasis in *truly Spanish* is mine.

⁷⁷ Edward Alden Jewell, “Surrealism and Mystery,” *New York Times*, November, 24, 1946, X9.

less suggestive, more semi-abstract nature.”⁷⁸ Whether for referencing deeply emotional collective sentiments of unconsciousness, or for his more expressive and abstracted style, the fact that Egas’s work was now far from constructing a sense of national identity is evident. Indeed, his style and subject matter would continue to change in the years to come, as waves of multifarious artists and critics would leave their mark through the New School’s Art Workshops.

The Art Workshops at the New School for Social Research

During Egas’s tenure as director of the Art Workshops at the New School for Social Research, the program evolved from an initiative to promote adult, accessible continuing education, to a progressive and influential art school that actively contributed to the city’s cultural environment. The Adult Education program, to which the Art Workshops belonged, was innovative and accessible to all as it had no admission requirements, charged modest fees, and offered courses with renowned intellectuals. Established in 1918 by dissenting academics from Columbia University as an alternative to the conventional higher education system, it promoted intellectual freedom and experimentation, and fostered scientific rationalism and democratic humanism while encompassing an interdisciplinary approach to learning.⁷⁹ In turn, the workshops were also a haven for European intellectuals who fled to New York since the 1930s. Between

⁷⁸ “Reviews and previews,” 52.

⁷⁹ To learn more about this progressive art school in New York, see Anna Indych-López, “Making Nueva York Moderna: Latin American Art, the International Avant-Gardes, and the New School,” in *Nueva York, 1613-1945*, ed. Edward J. Sullivan (London: Scala, 2010).

1945 and 1956, as evidenced by the *New School Bulletins*⁸⁰ circulated by the school, the Art Workshops went from offering a limited array of eight practical courses and six lectures, to an overwhelming range of 27 workshops and 17 lectures including a variety of media, regional and time period focuses, and interdisciplinary projects that conjoined theory and practice.⁸¹

As several of Egas's colleagues mentioned at the time of his death, the artist's keen eye and nearly infallible judgment in selecting adept artists helped him assemble an admirable faculty, a team of sorts that welcomed all trends equally and fostered artistic experimentation.⁸² Amongst the renowned artists working as instructors or lectures under Egas's direction at the New School were Stuart Davis, Berenice Abbott, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Peggy Bacon, Robert Gwanthmey, Mario Carreño, Abraham Rattner, Seymour Lipton, Antonio Frasconi, José de Creeft, Meyer Schapiro, and Hanna

⁸⁰ Although these were titled *New School Bulletins*, there were bulletins for different disciplines. Hence, from hereafter I will refer to them as Art Bulletins to remind the reader that it is about these specific bulletins that I am referring to in this chapter.

⁸¹ In one of the issues of the 1952-1953 bulletins, the Art Workshops offered courses in which theory and practice were intermingled, bringing together the content of the offered lectures with activities usually carried out by the workshops. For example, photographer Joseph Breitenbach taught "Creative Possibilities in Photography: Workshops," in which students would engage in roundtable discussions about the creative use of photographic techniques, the use of light, space and color to project objectivity facts or emotional impact, while creating a magazine in which they would develop their original and personal style. In another instance, photojournalist Kurt S. Safranski taught "Photography as Mass Communication: In Newspapers, Magazines, Books and Public Relations," where students would cover events, create pictorial magazines or photography for documentation, book illustrations, and discuss about public relation problems.

⁸² *Camilo Egas Commemorative Exhibition*, New York: New School for Social Research, 1963, exhibition catalogue. New School Art Center records. NS.03. 05.02, box 4, New School Archives and Special Collections. The New School, New York. On January 1963, The New School for Social Research held a commemorative exhibition for Egas, presented at the Wolman Hall, and co-sponsored by the Ecuadorian embassy. In its brochure, several of Egas's friends and colleagues expressed their thoughts and memories about Egas. Amongst them was the school's president, Henry David, Alvin Johnson, acting as president emeritus, Clara W. Meyer, former vice-president and Dean, Paul Mocsanyi, Director of the Art Center, and artist Julian Levi, acting director of the Art Workshops.

Deinhard.⁸³ By gathering people from different backgrounds –religious, ethnic, cultural, and social– the art workshops at this school enlarged and projected a continuously progressive conversation that echoed the development of the city, in thought and in aesthetics. In a book chapter about the Art Workshops at the New School, art historian Anna Indych-López cited a personal interview with Frasconi in which he remembered that “Egas’s choice of teachers coincided with his belief that art was about being true to oneself, no matter what the current fashion, and that art functioned as a mirror of life.”⁸⁴ Indeed, much of what happened at the workshops is reflected in the evolution of Egas’s ideas and works of art.

By looking closely at his selection of works to present and promote himself in this community, his innovative curricular strategies, and the newly-hired instructors to fulfill a growing demand on specific courses, Egas revealed his interests as an active artist and as a director of a vital art school, drifting away from his former nationalist concerns. Even before 1946, Egas had been promoting his Surrealist series in the *Art Bulletins* almost exclusively. In 1954, however, he started disseminating his latest expressive aesthetic, which better reflected his interiority as opposed to a public engagement with social causes and cultural nationalism.⁸⁵ Moreover, Egas taught the workshop “Drawing,

⁸³ Many other important and renowned artists worked at the New School. The few mentioned in this thesis are some of the most well-known names who worked between the years of investigation in this case (1945 and 1956). Other influencing figures include, but are not limited to, Stanley William Hayter, Julian Levi, Louis Schanker, Ralston Crawford, Chaim Gross, Gregorio Prestopino, Joseph Breitenbach, Alexey Brodovitch, and Paul Zucker.

⁸⁴ Indych-López, “Making Nueva York Moderna,” 245.

⁸⁵ During this period, there were only three occasions in which he presented previous works associated with Indigenismo: *Labor Day*, in 1949, and what is described as a detail of the 1939 New York World Fair mural of the Ecuadorian pavilion, in 1952. Furthermore, Egas presented *The Modern Don Quixote* (1946), *Arrival* (1947), *Civil War in Spain* (1948), *Dream of Ecuador* (1950 and 1952), and works from his later style, *Schuylkill Heaven* (1954), and *Ballad* (1955).

Oil Painting, Mural Paintings and Fresco” until 1954, when the title changed to a more generic “Drawing, Oil Painting, Composition.” Whether this change corresponding with a decision to disassociate himself deliberately from muralism—which instantly drew a connection to the Mexican trend that enjoyed wide popularity in the 1930s—or whether it was only an attempt to homogenize the curriculum and broaden his course’s scope, is uncertain.⁸⁶ Moreover, in 1946 Egas and Robert Gwathmey joined forces to teach an experimental workshop in advanced painting and composition in which, as they stated, “two painters of widely divergent backgrounds combine their efforts with a view to broader understanding on the part of students.”⁸⁷ This initiative proved to be successful and was offered in four different occasions, ultimately becoming core to the New School Art Workshops. For in 1954, due to the numerous emerging artistic trends, a new curricular innovation was presented in which painting and sculpture classes would be facilitated by three different instructors throughout the term, giving students the

⁸⁶ Mexican muralism, and thus most Latin American muralist projects at the time were also readily associated with communist and socialist parties. During the McCarthy period in the late 1940s and early 1950s, people across the United States, but especially in major cities and who circulated among intellectual and artistic circles were questioned by the FBI and incarcerated for aligning to these ideals, which were believed to be those of the “enemy” during the Cold War. Thus, it is possible to conjure that Egas might have felt the need to be more cautious not to allude to any communist or leftist’s ideals, or even to his background with Social Realism as it purported connections to these political inclinations. Therefore, he could not afford to present nuanced arguments that could present suspicion, which might had pushed him further to adopt other styles and subject-matters. According to William B. Scott and Peter M. Rutkoff, many faculty members from the New School were victims of such persecution, and anything “unconventional”, sexual, religious, or aesthetic, became a sign of national disloyalty. See William B. Scott and Peter M. Rutkoff, *New York Modern: The Arts and the City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 321. To learn more about the reactions of the New School and its artists during the McCarthy period, also see William B. Scott and Peter M. Rutkoff, *New School: A History of The New School for Social Research*, (New York: Free Press, 1986). 228. It is important to note that in page 61 of this book, the only one telling the history of this school, mistakenly and shamelessly identify Camilo Egas as a Nicaraguan painter and muralist.

⁸⁷ The New School for Social Research, *New School Bulletin-Art Classes 1946-1947*, 4, no. 2, September 9, 1946, unpaginated. Robert Gwathmey was a U.S. artist who focused in depicting workers and farmers of the South of the country, especially African Americans.

opportunity to “discover his [or her] own most congenial approach, and the teacher who will do most to encourage it.”⁸⁸ Lastly, this close examination of the evolution of offered courses in the Art Bulletins also suggests a more prevalent presence of abstract art in the city, going from offering one workshop in 1946 to three in 1955, each facilitated by a different instructor. These documents trail Egas’s shift in interest as well as style throughout his time in New York and at the New School, indicating how these places served as a site of crossings, and his works are a product of personal relationships and socio-political conditions.

Another significant factor contributing to Egas’s shift in style and subject matter during these years was the active participation of art historian Meyer Schapiro in the New School community. As has been noted by Indych-López and David Craven, who each cite testimonies of different art critics involved in these creative circles at the time, Schapiro’s lectures were always crowded with artists and writers, especially the ones he delivered at New York University and the New School.⁸⁹ His distinguished writings, *The Nature of Abstract Art*, published in 1937, and *Style*, in 1953, in which art is understood as a philosophy and the center of life, helped to shape understanding Egas’s approach to his practice in the 1950s. For Schapiro, an insistent attention to abstract art was not due to exhaustion of a mimetic representation of nature, but to the assessment of an altered natural and urban surrounding, in and of itself.⁹⁰ In this sense, Egas’s works from the late

⁸⁸ The New School for Social Research, *New School Bulletin-Art: Fine Arts, Applied Arts 1954-1955*, vol. 2 no. 2, September 13, 1954, unpaginated.

⁸⁹ Hilton Kramer quoted in Indych-López, “Making Nueva York Moderna,” 249; Thomas B. Hess quoted in David Craven, *Abstract Expressionism as Cultural Critique: Dissent During the McCarthy Period* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 34.

⁹⁰ Meyer Schapiro, “The Nature of Abstract Art,” *Marxist Quarterly* 1, no. 1, (January-March, 1937): 24.

1940s and early 1950s resonated with many of Schapiro's ideas about art, possibly referring to his inner emotions and uneasy feelings provoked by an accelerated modern world in constant juxtaposition with the ahistorical, timeless condition of the indigenous and the distant land he yearned during exile. Further, as the art historian stated in this later essay on style, one "often observe[s] in civilized as well as primitive art the combination of works of different style into a single whole."⁹¹ These ideas anticipate what Egas would attempt to do in his works presented at the ACA Gallery in 1955, and later in the Museo de Arte Colonial in Quito, Ecuador.

Egas's Paintings at ACA Gallery in 1955

Interestingly, Egas landed an exhibition at the American Contemporary Art Gallery (ACA) that would help him further promote his new artistic expressions within the Surrealist and Semi-Abstracted veins. This exhibition space was founded by Herman Baron in 1932 as one of the few galleries dedicated primarily to the promotion and exhibition of progressive work of "American" artists, which at the time did not refer solely to U.S. artists, but considered people living and working in this country.⁹² Amongst its early members were Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Stuart Davis, both Egas's colleagues at the New School and longtime friends.⁹³ From December 12 to 24, 1955, this gallery hosted an exhibition entitled *Egas Paintings*. The show introduced twenty-one of Egas's latest oil paintings to the public. These works were executed by combining

⁹¹ Meyer Schapiro, *Style* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 293.

⁹² Even though this may refer to artists from the United States, the gallery was not extremely rigid with this definition as it did exhibit works from artist from other countries who were influential in the U.S. or were settled in New York, such as Camilo Egas.

⁹³ "About ACA Galleries," American Contemporary Art Gallery, accessed March 1, 2018, <http://www.acagalleries.com/about-aca>.

different styles and techniques, and encompassed a wide range of subjects such as studio compositions, urban and rural landscapes, and Andean scene paintings. The exhibition brochure reproduced an image of the work *Hex Signs*, from the series of Pennsylvania rural landscapes Egas painted in an “abstract-cubistic” manner (Fig. 13). By presenting paintings in an array of subject-matter relating to the East Coast region and evoking Andean tropes in a burgeoning aesthetic language in this context, Egas provided a link between his artistic precedent and his current stylistic experimentations.

Akin to the energy of abstraction and the rise of the New York School at the time, Egas started blending different modern aesthetics and Andean tropes to create a painting style that would resonate in New York’s cultural environment and reflect his internal feelings of being in an ambiguous position as a “transnational” artist. In his painting, *Goodbye* (translated to *Adiós* when exhibited in Ecuador in 1956) (Fig. 14), Egas conveys powerful emotions through the rendition of non-specific situations that are relatable to a diverse audience. He presents this through a clear and tender representation of an indigenous man and woman locked in an embrace and set on an undefined, frenetic background. These people are carefully rendered paying special attention to volume and the position of their bodies, accentuated by the folds of their ponchos, yet they are juxtaposed with the background and the figures’ ponchos which are painted using rapid brushstrokes and patches of colors divided by geometric compartments and sharp lines, respectively. Furthermore, the combination of red, orange, and purple hues in the man’s poncho evoke angst, yet the soothing white thick poncho of the woman calms this feeling and brings balance to the composition. As the man stands weightless, disheartened and hopeless, the woman leans over him, and places her arms around the back of his head,

offering comfort and support, while he is letting himself go in the moment. This affectionate moment of ease, however, is surrounded by highly-expressive gestural application of advancing and receding pigments traveling frantically in different directions, perhaps in conversation with the works of artists from the New York School such as Elaine de Kooning's portrait of her husband (c.1952) (Fig. 15) and Willem de Kooning's renowned *Woman I* (1950-1952). (Fig. 16). In all three paintings one can distinguish a main figure or figures in the center of the composition, surrounded by a decontextualized, slashing stokes of color that denotes anxiety. Though one might feel compelled to ascribe a socio-political reading to these pieces considering the social struggles at the time and the represented subjects, Egas deliberately chose to exclude explicit references that would guide this type of interpretation.⁹⁴ The overall composition of this work incites a powerful emotional and empathetic response from the viewer, regardless of the context and socio-political references.

As the philosophy behind the work of art detached from its social functionality, his interest in works that purported contentious claims declined as these seemed no longer relevant. At the same time, after living almost thirty years in the world's cultural center, away from the fraught socio-political discourses of his native land, Egas started to portray the modern and rural U.S. settings that had gained a significant place in the definition of his identity. After all, his artistic exploration continued to investigate how to

⁹⁴ It is germane to point out that Egas created most of his work in the New York context before he was invited to return to Ecuador. Even though he might have had Ecuador in his mind, these thoughts were most likely not related to the Indigenous social struggles, and he was probably not thinking about the response of the Ecuadorian audience to the piece while creating it, but to the reception and its relation to his immediate context in New York.

distinguish his own cultural aesthetic while adopting and combining recognizable modern visual idioms.

As was the case with the Acquavella show, the critical reception was not dismissive of his undertaking of these contemporary aesthetics. In fact, he received some praise for liberating himself from the narrative mural style. Writing for the *New York Times*, the art critic Howard Devree announced that “Egas ha[d] succeeded in breaking free from the style developed in his earlier murals for freer use of both color and form; and in his approach to a variety of themes his manner has become more abstract.”⁹⁵ A more skeptical evaluation of his work, however, clearly identified the styles Egas was bringing together in these new compositions, yet recognized the ambitiousness of doing so. The reviewer wrote: “These bold Latin American canvases oscillate between the discipline of cubist analysis and an expressionist style of forced drama, slashing brushwork and lurid colors. They are at their most cohesive when these two extremes are combined (as in *Goodbye* and *Dolls*).”⁹⁶ It is important to note that after quite some time, the label “Latin American” had returned to describe these works, possibly due to the presence of Ecuadorian indigenous people and Andean scenes.

Devree’s review of the exhibition was more substantial as it attempted to classify the paintings into different thematic groups, proving the artist’s incorporation of pressing current discussions regarding art, as well as his ambiguous stance towards his identity resolution. His classification reads as follows:

⁹⁵ Howard Devree, “About Art and Artists; One-Man Show of Paintings by Camilo Egas Opens at the A.C.A. Gallery,” *New York Times*, December 13, 1955, 36.

⁹⁶ R.R., “One-Man Shows: Camilo Egas,” *Arts Magazine* 30, n. 5, February 1955, 58. As one can notice in the artworks’ titles listed on the exhibition’s brochure, there is no work entitled “Dolls.” Thus, I am not clear what he was referring to in this precise example.

The new work falls thematically into three groups—mysteriously portentous figures, dramatically lightened in somewhat Gothic interiors; Pennsylvania landscapes, including a striking design of buildings with the well-known hex marks on the walls and a rose-toned panorama of the rolling countryside; and three of the most recent canvases in which the artist’s thoughts have turned back to his native Ecuador and the natives in bright array amid lush and verdant surroundings.⁹⁷

Interestingly, the reviewer divided these paintings thematically as well as geographically, setting apart the urban landscapes from the rural, and enigmatic settings and figures, ubiquitous in all categories. Although Devree does not label Egas explicitly as an “Ecuadorian” or “Latin American” artist, it seems that by bringing back Andean characters prompted him, perhaps unconsciously, to consider these paintings through the lens of cultural and geographic identity rather than by the experimentation of style. Out of these three groups, the first and the second are worth analyzing further at this point, the discussion of the third group will continue in chapter 4.

The first group Devree mentions, the “mysteriously portentous figures” in Gothic interiors refers to a series of works, most of them entitled “composition” in which Egas experimented with draped mannequins in his studio space, as if integrating the artist’s practice and his labor: a triad of artist at work, the represented subject, and the product itself, as one can observe by looking at *Studio Corner* (Fig. 17). Although Devree only refers to the Pennsylvania landscapes in his writing, the second group embraced the rural as well as the urban depiction of Egas’s surroundings. By presenting these two approaches to landscapes, Egas juxtaposed the accelerated, noisy, and industrial life of New York, portrayed in *Calso* (Fig. 18) with vibrant colors and abraded architectural structures, with the telluric, peaceful pace of rural small towns in Pennsylvania,

⁹⁷ Devree, “About Art and Artists,” 36.

represented in subdued, pastel colors, as perceived in *Untitled* (Fig. 19) and *Pennsylvania* (Fig. 20).

More striking and relevant for this analysis, however, is the presence of a self-portrait in the exhibition's checklist that was not mentioned in any of the reviews. There are at least two 1953 self-portraits that could have been in this show. Unfortunately, the lack of written or photographic documentation of the exhibition makes it impossible to be certain which of these two examples was included. *Self-Portrait 1* (Fig. 21) echoes the studio compositions mentioned earlier, presenting an unconventional portrait of the artist at work in a tilted position that reveals only three fourths of his body. The draped cloth in the background frames the painting, yet it does not convey a sense of elegance but rather demonstrates the artist's dexterity in painting flowing textiles. While alluding to the European Grand Manner portrait tradition, which Egas most likely observed numerous times at New York's museums and galleries, he deliberately undermines it by emphasizing other features of his art school studio. Similarly, the draped mannequin in the background also attests to the painter's recurrent depiction of such figures, however the fact that it is facing the artist's opposite direction suggests he is not using this model for what he is presently painting. Indeed, Egas has rendered himself as if portraying the viewer, alluding perhaps to Velazquez's *Las Meninas*. In an explicit reference to this painting, Egas too has depicted himself in the action of painting, holding a brush on his right hand while leaning over the upper margin of what appears to be a large-scale canvas. He connects with the viewer in a much deeper way than a fortuitous encounter, as if he was intimately observing a sitter's character in order to portray its essence.

Conversely, *Self-Portrait 2* (Fig. 22) proposes a distinctive demeanor of the artist, revealing an emotional state in a convoluted working space. As the artist poses for the viewer in an upright, relaxed, hands-in-pockets position, standing where the sunlight hits his studio from the right-hand window, the contrast of bright and subdued colors and the violent trembling brushstroke evokes a fraught atmosphere. This is further accomplished by the relationship between advancing and receding colors (prevalent in this period's works): while the red floor and wall advances into the viewer's space producing a sense of anxiety, the green pool of light under Egas's feet calms and balances the composition by receding back into space. Additionally, the objects in the background inform the different stages of painting: from large canvas stretchers and stacks of numerous works in progress, to the finished product hanging on the wall. None of these paintings, however, are distinguishable, but allude to a general representation of the practice itself. The brisk brushstrokes, the contrast between warm and cold colors, and the position of the whole body of the artist in his private space reminds the viewer of Edward Munch's *Sleepless Night: Self-Portrait in Inner Turmoil* (1920), (Fig.23). Nonetheless, one thing that is telling about both self-portraits is that Egas did not include cultural references to identify with any country, region, or cultural background: he is an artist painting in his studio. The fact that Egas has stripped his paintings off socio-political narratives and abandoned his attempts to educate or persuade his viewers in lieu of thoughtful depictions about art and his role as an artist, breaking this practice into its elements as a way of moving forward in a new direction.

In the summer of 1955, before Egas's exhibition at the ACA, he met the prominent Ecuadorian writer, Benjamín Carrión, and his friend and colleague, Oswaldo

Guayasamín, while they visited New York for cultural and professional reasons.⁹⁸ The Ecuadorian travelers found Egas as a successful artist directing an influential art school in the world's cultural center, and about to exhibit his later experimentations at a renowned gallery. It was in this context that Carrión, as acting director of Ecuador's main cultural institution, invited Egas to return to his home country and present his artistic trajectory. Considering what Egas had accomplished in New York, Carrión must have been persuaded to recall his name to the Ecuadorian artistic scene, and develop a cultural network between Ecuador and other countries in the hemisphere through New York and Egas.

⁹⁸ Benjamín Carrión, "Camilo Egas, gran heresiarca de nuestra plástica," in *Benjamín Carrión: Ensayos de arte y cultura*, ed. Raúl Pacheco Pérez (Quito: Centro Cultural Benjamín Carrión; Municipio Metropolitano de Quito, 2007), 194.

CHAPTER 3

THE CASA DE LA CULTURA ECUATORIANA AND BENJAMIN CARRION

The decade of the 1950s witnessed several alternatives to the established nationalistic art in Ecuador, which had reigned since the 1930s. While the older generation of artists, with whom Camilo Egas put forward a denunciatory representation of the marginalized in the arts, started to lose momentum in the beginning of the 1950s, young aspiring artists were becoming acquainted with international avant-garde trends such as Informalism, Constructivism, and Geometric and Lyrical Abstraction. In turn, Egas's position seems to fall in between these two generations, initiating a dialogue between these aesthetic languages. As is natural, the shift from one trend to the other did not happen suddenly, but it took years to develop and mature. Hence, the presented alternatives of the 1950s were usually built upon the former generation's legacy. This decade, then, can be regarded as one in which an artistic shift was anticipated by the kind of exhibitions, discussions, and artistic endorsements that were promoted by the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana (or the House of Ecuadorian Culture), a fairly new cultural institution that organized national artists.

The decline of one artistic trend and the emergence of another coalesced during this time, foreshadowing the end of an era. Years after foreign artists had found permanent or temporary base in Ecuador—either fleeing the horrors of war or to further advance their professional explorations—and the local artists had traveled outside of the country to broaden their perspective, the Casa de la Cultura displayed their work in

temporary exhibitions.⁹⁹ Whereas some artists presented abstracted and non-representational pieces, others diverged from the expressionist representation of the oppressed and aspired to appeal to a wider audience by evoking “universal” concerns and artistic idioms.¹⁰⁰ Whether in subject matter or in style, artists in this period experimented with new forms, and ceased to limit Ecuador’s artistic energy to the politically-charged and governmentally-promoted era of Social Realism. This was the context in which Camilo Egas returned to Ecuador to exhibit his artistic production from his New York years, and present his new take on national depictions.

To better understand the cultural context in which Egas presented his works at the Casa de la Cultura in 1956, it is germane to consider the relevant terms of “Ecuadorian art” and modernism. These two factors go hand-in-hand with the idea of the “rebuilding of a nation” after a major territorial loss during a war against Peru in 1942, and the birth of a cultural institution to foster culture and, with it, the country’s national pride. As this institution ripened, so did the ideas of its founder, Benjamín Carrión, who remained an influential Ecuadorian cultural figure throughout his tenure, and even until this day. Although Carrión’s ideas may have seemed innovative and attuned to the regional initiatives at the time (he was a friend and promoter of José Vasconcelos, and admired José Carlos Mariátegui), deeper analysis of his ideas elucidates an anticolonial stance

⁹⁹ Among some of the foreign artists that are known to have arrived to Ecuador fleeing war are Hans Michaelson, Jan Schreuder, and Olga Fisch, while Lloyd Wulf arrived to Quito after being awarded by the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco. Local artists that traveled abroad such as Oswaldo Guayasamín, Eduardo Kingman, Diógenes Paredes, Bolívar Mena Franco, Aníbal Villacís, Estuardo Maldonado, Araceli Gilbert, among others. They traveled to countries such as, but not limited to, the United States, Cuba, Mexico, Chile, Brazil, France, Spain, and Italy.

¹⁰⁰ Artists Araceli Gilbert and Manuel Rendón Seminario were fully immersed in abstract art in the 1950s, while Oswaldo Guayasamín, who still depicted images of the oppressed, aspired to appeal to a broader audience by addressing regional concerns through the use of “universal” artistic language, such as geometric forms, without fully abandoning figurative art.

favoring art that served a nationalistic social function, and thus explains his interest in hosting Egas's exhibition.¹⁰¹ In this chapter I will present the ideas and exhibitions promoted by Carrión at the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana and the notions of art and modernism in Ecuador before and during the 1950s.

Birth of Benjamín Carrión's Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana¹⁰²

During the 1920s and 1930s, the aftermath of the Mexican revolution sparked a new attitude and consciousness toward social structures throughout Latin America. People of the region started to question the practices and power dynamics for the decades that followed. Around this time, José Carlos Mariátegui, an important Peruvian cultural figure, defined *Indigenismo* as a discourse produced by American non-White yet non-Indians, by which they denounced the social conditions and injustices brought onto the Andean Native Americans.¹⁰³ In Ecuador, artists such as Pedro León, Eduardo Kingman, and Diógenes Paredes shifted from representing the Indigenous image as part of the Andean landscape, to include incidents of social denunciation of the natives as well as rural workers exploited by the rich criollos.¹⁰⁴ This tendency, which developed along with Social Realism in the U.S. and the Soviet Union, was quickly associated with

¹⁰¹ Mario Monteforte, *Los signos del hombre* (Quito: Imprenta Mariscal; Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, 1985), 195.

¹⁰² It is not the scope of this thesis to provide an exhaustive study of the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, Benjamín Carrión or the work of artists such Oswaldo Guayasamín, Araceli Gilbert and Manuel Rendón Seminario, whose exhibitions in the 1950s will be mentioned in this section, but to lay out an idea about the cultural context in Ecuador during these years.

¹⁰³ Pérez, "Exoticism, Alterity and the Ecuadorian Elite," 100.

¹⁰⁴ The term "criollo," not as prevalent in recent times, was commonly associated with Latin Americans who distinguished themselves as people who had full or near full Spanish ascendance, and distinguished themselves from the "mestizos," which referred to people with a multi-racial background, mostly Spanish and Indigenous ascendancy.

similar trends such as Mexican Muralism, an artistic movement closely linked with the post-revolutionary government.¹⁰⁵

In the 1940s, however, after losing a long war against their neighboring country, Peru, and with it, more than half of its territory, the Ecuadorian people sought to reconstruct the national identity and sense of national pride. As a response to the war and in a mission to compensate with culture what the country was lacking in military strength, the Ecuadorian writer Benjamín Carrión proposed to place culture as a priority, and the image of “the Indian” as a symbol of national unity.¹⁰⁶ In 1944 with governmental support, he founded the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, a national entity that would promote cultural and scientific activities around the country, and establish Indigenismo as the official visual and literary language. The image of indigenous people, which had been embedded in a Marxist discourse of the plight of the working class and the racially oppressed during the 1930s, returned as a cultural icon, only this time it was co-opted by the government, to stress what was undeniably Ecuadorian.¹⁰⁷ Thus, a second wave of Indigenismo, this time making the social conditions the main subject of the work, emerged in the 1940s, at a time when the international art world, especially in Latin America, was leaning toward the use of pure forms of geometry, formalism, and abstraction to speak a common language without national barriers.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Pérez, “Exoticism, Alterity and the Ecuadorian Elite,” 100.

¹⁰⁶ María Fernanda Cartagena, “Vanguardia, colonialismo y política. Literatura y arte en el Ecuador de la década del sesenta,” *SUR/versión*, 2 (2014):110; Benjamín Carrión in Lermontov Venegas, “Benjamín Carrión y su teoría de la Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana,” *Coleccion Rumichaca*, Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana “Benjamín Carrión” Núcleo del Carchi 35. no. 1 (1997): 52.

¹⁰⁷ Greet, *Beyond National Identity*, 148.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 150. As Greet explains, during the 1930s artists sought “universalism” through the representation of transcendent themes, while in the 1940s they turned to abstract currents,

In August 9, 1944 the president of Ecuador, José María Velasco Ibarra, and the Minister of Education and Culture, Alfredo Vera, signed an official decree for the foundation of the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana stating its objectives and activities. The document specified that the institution, envisioned with a fundamentally patriotic spirit, would support and foster scientific research, stimulate technical professional training, and extol a national sentiment which should nourish from the global culture “so that Ecuador [could] march to the rhythm of modern intellectual life.”¹⁰⁹ As part of its ambitious goals the Casa de la Cultura would “preserve and maintain the country’s cultural heritage, encourage and guide the development of an authentic national culture, projected toward a Latin American cultural integration, in harmony with the universal culture.”¹¹⁰ For artists and intellectuals, the emergence of the Casa de la Cultura provided what was lacking in the national sphere: a gravitational system that would unite and promote the cultural production around the country and cast international recognition, which, according to writer Edmundo Ribadeneira, was non-existent until then.¹¹¹ From its inception, however, Carrión’s ideas of what should be quilted into “Ecuadorian identity” were clearly aligned with autochthonous references—be them ancient, colonial, republican, or

formalism and “art for art’s sake” in order to connect with the international art world using a relatable language.

¹⁰⁹ Carrión in Venegas, “Benjamín Carrión y su teoría,” 59.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Edmundo Ribadeneira M., “La moderna pintura ecuatoriana,” in *Ensayos: Trece años de cultura nacional*, Agosto 1944-57, ed. Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana (Quito: Editorial Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, 1957), 105. With time, the Casa de la Cultura opened various nuclei around the country, offering more opportunities for artists and intellectuals to gather to present and discuss their work. This also exposed more people to the country’s cultural production and created a more consistent understanding of a “national identity.”

contemporary—and kindled a coalition between the different social classes and regions of the country.¹¹²

Since the 1940s, in congruence with the Casa de la Cultura’s mission, Carrión divulged his ideas about art, culture, and mestizaje in Ecuador. In his renowned text “La humanización del arte,” he advocated for a more humanizing, belligerent painting, that served a social function, and was against the “dehumanized,” who only wanted to see paintings of angels and clouds, and against the “inhumane,” who had no desire of finding the Ecuadorian indigenous, mestizos, and criollos in the arts, as blatantly illustrated in a cartoon published in the local newspaper *El Sol* in 1952 (Fig. 24).¹¹³ In other words, tired of dealing with a public that had a proclivity for palatable art, mostly depicting colonial or pastoral subjects, emulating European styles—a vestige of colonial insularity—Carrión pushed for an acknowledgement and representation of the Ecuadorian social reality.¹¹⁴

¹¹² The mission and ideas linked to the Casa de la Cultura, as well as Carrión himself, leaned politically to the left, discouraging alliances with the country’s upper class. However, being this the only official cultural institution, many diplomats harbored a close relationship with its members. Moreover, the Casa de la Cultura also promoted and hosted the popular arts and artisans to include all the cultural expressions from the country, and gallery-goers continued to participate in many openings.

¹¹³ Carrión’s original quotes in Spanish better exemplifies his tone and thoughts regarding the current stance of Ecuadorian culture. Thus, I will include these whenever they may enlighten the argument. In this case, the quote reads “[los artistas deberían producir una] pintura humanizadora, beligerante, en función social, contra los deshumanizados, que quieren que se pinte ángeles y nube solamente, y contra los inhumanos, que quieren que se pinte solo arios puros, dolicocefalos rubios, y no nuestro indio, nuestro mestizo, nuestro criollo... Nosotros, en el Ecuador estamos ya ganando esta batalla.” Benjamín Carrión, Statement read as an opening speech for the II Salón de Artes Plásticas in 1940, and reprinted as Benjamín Carrión, “La humanización del arte,” in *Benjamín Carrión: Ensayos de arte y cultura*, ed. Raúl Pacheco Pérez (Quito: Centro Cultural Benjamín Carrión; Municipio Metropolitano de Quito, 2007), 149.

¹¹⁴ In the opening speech for Eduardo Kingman’s exhibition at the Casa de la Cultura in 1949, Carrión goes to the extent of saying: “This country is run by pretentious, Europeanizing criollos, imitators of all foreign trends in style; the reality, the human reality, has been considered as something to be hidden, as something to be ashamed of.” Benjamín Carrión, “Exposición de Eduardo Kingman,” in *Benjamín Carrión: Ensayos de arte y cultura*, ed. Raúl Pacheco Pérez (Quito: Centro Cultural Benjamín Carrión; Municipio Metropolitano de Quito, 2007), 159.

Similar to Vasconcelos's exaltation of mestizaje as a "cosmic race," Carrión constantly advocated for the embrace of mestizaje as the people's "great hope;" a new identity by which Ecuadorians could proudly recognize themselves, since it offered the best of both worlds.¹¹⁵ For this purpose, he believed that art should be the servant of humanity, and that artists should devote their talent to justice, truth, and piety.¹¹⁶ Thus, Carrión stated that the Casa would be a symbol of the people, and devoted to the people.¹¹⁷

During Carrión's tenure, temporary exhibitions were commonly held at the Museo de Arte Colonial de la Casa de la Cultura, favoring artists working with Indigenismo and Social Expressionism, which echoed the Casa's agenda. Through these exhibitions, Carrión further promoted art that would generate consciousness and could possibly lead to social change, by emphasizing its message rather than its formal

¹¹⁵ Even though Carrión's accomplishments concerning culture, national pride, and national identity are undeniably outstanding and worth recognizing, the paternalistic way in which he often referred to the Indigenous people is problematic. It seems, too, that he believed that the Spanish race was better than the Indigenous, and that they were forever generous because they were willing to mix their race with that of the Indigenous. In a text about the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, originally published in the Colombian newspaper *El Tiempo* in 1957, he states the following: "Porque la gran generosidad humana—y genésica, por cierto—de España, y de los españoles, consistió precisamente en eso: en mezclarse, en hacer dación cachonda de su virilidad, para fecundar a las hembras indias, como macho y hembra, como hombre y mujer, y producir esta gran esperanza nuestra: el mestizaje." Thus, he places the Spanish conqueror as more generous than others, who slashed the natives out of their land and deprived them of a more 'hopeful racial future.' To be sure, Carrión often highlighted to his audience that the Indigenous were also human beings, and that the injustice and abuse should come to an end, but he did not exactly equate the Indigenous to the criollos or the mestizos. As the writer Mario Monteforte Toledo described it, in Ecuador the cultural and intellectual sentiment towards the indigenous condition was defined by the criollos and the mestizos. Carrión, "La Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana," in *Benjamín Carrión: Ensayos de arte y cultura*, ed. Raúl Pacheco Pérez (Quito: Centro Cultural Benjamín Carrión; Municipio Metropolitano de Quito, 2007), 279; Monteforte, *Los signos del hombre*, 190.

¹¹⁶ Carrión, "Exposición de Kingman," 157-158.

¹¹⁷ Carrión, "La Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana," 282.

vocabulary.¹¹⁸ The most visible artists exhibiting in the Casa de la Cultura were Kingman and Paredes in 1949, and Guayasamín in 1952, all working within the framework of Social Realism. It was during the opening remarks of these exhibitions that Carrión conveyed his thoughts regarding the role of art in Ecuadorian culture; these thoughts would permeate the larger scope of what was regarded as “new” Ecuadorian painting. As elucidated in an article about new painters and modern art from Ecuador, the latest wave of Ecuadorian art no longer depicted Indigenous people dressed in clean and lavish garments, far from their reality, but it portrayed them in tremendous misery, submerged in drama and loneliness.¹¹⁹ The discourse, thus, had changed from celebrating the diverse and autochthonous Ecuadorian culture and territory, to denouncing a dramatic and dire injustice from which artists were drawing their inspiration to propel a political discourse against the established power dynamics.

Even though Ecuadorian Expressionism (how Indigenismo and Social Realism came to be known) reigned until the mid 1960s, the emergence of other currents can be traced through the 1950s. These include experimentations of artists who were associated with nationalistic trends. In fact, Guayasamín, an artist who is internationally associated with Indigenismo, developed his renowned series *Huacayñan* (the Trail of Tears) from 1945 to 1952, and ventured to experiment with different idioms.¹²⁰ As one can see in

¹¹⁸ Alejandro Anreus, Diana L. Linden, and Jonathan Weinberg, “Introduction,” in *The Social and the Real: Political Art of the 1930s in the Western Hemisphere* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), XVI.

¹¹⁹ Jorge, Guerrero, “Los nuevos pintores y las formas modernas,” *Revista de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia*, no. 9 (marzo 1949): 104, <https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/revistaun/article/view/13811>

¹²⁰ Carlos A. Jáuregui and Edward F. Fischer, “Of Rage and Redemption. Oswaldo Guayasamín (1919-1999),” in *Of Rage and Redemption. The Art of Oswaldo Guayasamín*, ed. Joseph S. Mella. (Tennessee: Center for the Latin American and Iberian Studies at Vanderbilt University, 2008), 19-30. Composed of 104 paintings categorized into three Latin American racial categories

Ataúd blanco (Fig. 25), painted in the 1950s as part of this series, the image of the oppressed is brought to the foreground in a blatant, pessimistic mode, contrasting the coffin's pale cream color to the dark and tenebrous sky, colors commonly associated with good and evil. As evident in this image, he explored strategies associated with abstraction, such as the employment of geometric shapes, flat colors, and the reduction of figures to thick contoured lines and subtle volumes making the representation appear more suggestive than naturalistic. When he exhibited the series in Ecuador he culminated the show with a piece of interchangeable panels that contained geometric patterns and bright colors, titled *Ecuador* (Fig. 26). Yet the ambivalent reaction of a public that was immersed and accustomed to his figurative depictions prompted his decision to return to Social Realism.¹²¹ A cartoon (Fig. 27) that was published in a local newspaper accurately described the general attitude toward his abstract attempt. It reads: "What is happening to this man? Has he gone mad? None of that, he is looking for the best position to understand Guayasamín's mural 'Ecuador.'"

Indeed, Guayasamín was not the only artist to show works incorporating the new styles of the twentieth century; in 1955 the Casa de la Cultura exhibited works by two artists that had gone full throated into abstraction: Araceli Gilbert (Fig. 28) and Manuel Rendón Seminario.¹²² For these exhibitions, both artists had abandoned figurative

–The Indian, the Mestizo, and the Black-, *Huacayñan* was exhibited in Ecuador, Venezuela, the U.S., Spain, among other countries. While it explored the oppression and suffering brought upon the people of the Americas by the oligarchy, it attempted to present a new approach to Indigenismo by replacing a definite time and place with a non-specific abstract and expressive background. Benjamín Carrión supported Guayasamín financially so that he could finish his series, and it was presented at the Casa de la Cultura in 1952. The piece *Ataúd Blanco* earned Guayasamín the first prize at the III Hispano-American Biennial in Barcelona, Spain in 1956.

¹²¹ Greet, *Beyond National Identity*, 184.

¹²² The book *Huellas que no cesan*, which encompass the history of cultural initiatives and events at the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana does not include nor mention Rendón Seminario's

painting and delved into form, color, and line by converging geometric and organic forms.¹²³ Though these works rekindled interest in the arts, which for a long time had been stagnant and discursive, the public's unfamiliarity with this formal vocabulary, and the strong nationalist discourse immersed in cultural initiatives delayed its development as an Ecuadorian artistic current into the 1960s, as it was hard for people to relate to it.¹²⁴ In fact, at the opening of Araceli's exhibition in 1955, the writer and art critic Alfredo Pareja Diezcanseco warned the public about how to approach this artistic proposal by saying:

What we have to do is prepare our hearts and our heads, to be ready to receive what is being offered by this fine, vigorous, smiling art that Araceli has brought us (...). Art, it occurs to me, of the instinct and the intelligence wisely brought together, in where the mathematical trick of necessity, of cause and effect, gently leads through sensorial operations seldom handled so well, to give the spectator a high lyrical emotional, not connected to the easy reality of objects (...). If you examine with attention the composition of these paintings, you will soon come to understand the effort, the painful labor, the terrible difficulty involved in obtaining volume without animate bodies, without rhythmic vegetation, without wind, without houses, without earth, and without sky.¹²⁵

Thus, while representational art was still predominantly what most people recognized as "Ecuadorian modern art," and abstraction remained unfamiliar in this cultural context, it becomes clear why subtle approaches to the incorporation of more abstract, formal elements would have to be embedded in figurative depictions that could sway people into a transition from one style to another.

exhibition in 1955, which is very telling about what they consider, even now, what is relevant and what is to be left out in presenting the history of this institution. Patricio Viteri Paredes, ed., *Huellas que no cesan, 70 años: Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana 1944-2014* (Quito: Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana Benjamín Carrión, 2014), 114-123.

¹²³ Monteforte, *Los signos del hombre*, 268.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Alfredo Pareja Diezcanseco in Lenín Oña, *Araceli* (Quito: Imprenta Mariscal, 1995), 156-157.

Art and Modernism in Ecuador in the 1950s

While some artists were experimenting with abstraction, the majority were still fervent about the social goals of Indigenismo or Social Expressionism, and critics kept pushing it forward in writing using the Casa de la Cultura as their main platform. Besides Carrión's aforementioned writings and opening speeches, other cultural writers such as José Alfredo Llerena, Edmundo Ribadeneira, and Jorge Guerrero expressed their ideas regarding art and modernism in Ecuador. Common amongst these writings is the idea of Indigenismo as the consolidation of a national artistic "team" of artists that addressed regional, socially relevant preoccupations. For them, Ecuadorian art would be politically-driven rather than expressive and experimental. Thus, art was still being used to define a "national identity" and consolidate part of this collective endeavor as opposed to a means for self-discovery.

In several of these texts the contributions of Camilo Egas to the development of Ecuadorian modern art were underscored; even after being absent for more than 20 years, Egas's presence lingered in Ecuadorian aesthetics. His contribution, however, was restricted to his 1920s oeuvre, in which he situated the Indigenous in a telluric setting and challenged the customary palatable representation by stressing their severity and execrable state. In 1949, Jorge Guerrero published an article in a Colombian magazine advertising the new painters of Ecuadorian modern art, starting with Egas's audacity to position the Indigenous in high art, breaking away from traditional art. Guerrero described Egas's depictions as hefty, solid, and harsh Indigenous that resembled the mountain range that sustained them, and his work as always pushing fiercely the limits of

this atrocity.¹²⁶ He continued his essay, however, by stressing that according to recent news, Egas had been *contaminated* by the “Super Realistic” novelty, led by Salvador Dalí, referring to the surrealist-inspired works Egas presented at the exhibition in Acquavella Galleries in 1946.¹²⁷ Even though Egas was still recognized by the end of the 1940s, Guerrero’s choice of words denotes a judgmental stance, as if Egas was no longer part of this ongoing project. Other texts further illuminate how these writers conceived of abstract art and what they considered appropriate for the Ecuadorian context in particular.

Carrión directed the Casa de la Cultura until 1957, the same year when a text about the last thirteen years of national culture was published by this same institution. Written two years after the abstract painting exhibitions by Araceli and Rendón, and one year after Egas’s comeback show at the Casa de la Cultura, the writer Edmundo Ribadeneira unabashedly promoted figurative painting that ascribed to solidifying the Ecuadorian cultural identity by addressing its reality and necessities.¹²⁸ Moreover, using the postwar state in Europe as an example, this writer criticizes abstract art by condemning it as vacuous in content and form, and its artists as disloyal and selfish by not stating sincere messages through their art to reconstruct their broken societies. Ribadeneira denounces that “abstraction is nothing more than applied chromatic

¹²⁶ Guerrero, “Los nuevos pintores,” 107. Even though Guerrero does not refer to any specific artwork, this description suggests that he was talking about works that Egas produced while in Paris and thereafter, such as *Raza india* (1925), *Caravana Otavalo* (1925), *Porteurs au repos* (1925), among others.

¹²⁷ Ibid. While it is not entirely clear why Guerrero was opposed to Surrealism at the time, he was not alone. When Egas presented his exhibition in Quito in 1956, where he included eight works under the Surrealist category, a brief note reviewing the exhibition exclaimed: “the paintings of Egas’s second period awake an acute interest, even at a time when Surrealism has a tombstone on top of it.” Thus, it is possible that some art critics were more familiar with European Surrealism of the 1920s and 1930s, than its diasporic later examples. “Breve nota sobre Camilo Egas,” *El Comercio* (Ecuador), August 19, 1956, 12.

¹²⁸ Ribadeneira M., “La moderna pintura ecuatoriana,” 112.

exercises, worthy for skill training purposes only.”¹²⁹ Considering that there are far more texts in which figurative, nationalist art is celebrated and proclaimed as Ecuadorian modern art than texts praising the few abstract-oriented alternatives, it is possible to speculate that the idea of modern art in Ecuador remained attached to the consolidation of a national identity, as opposed to the artistic context in which Egas was working, as was discussed in the previous chapter.

By looking closely at the ideas promoted by the Casa de la Cultura, Benjamín Carrión, and other prominent writers, one can start to fathom the reasons behind the invitation for Camilo Egas to return to Ecuador and present works produced while living abroad. The exhibition to be held in Quito in 1956, and endorsed by Carrión, is pertinent to the discourse of the moment in as much as it pays tribute to the instigator of the modern Ecuadorian art that embraces its reality. In a text written in 1977, Carrión alludes to this painter by acknowledging his subtle protest for the social conditions of the Indigenous, yet recognizing his courage by stating:

Camilo Egas, in love with Paris and subsequently with New York, bluntly initiated the [Indigenist] painting in Ecuador. Perhaps without battle and tragedy, but already addressing the unjust truth by merely depicting it. At no point was his Indigenism meant for tourists or postal cards; it was either painted as a component of the local landscape, or as a character of farce and tragedy.¹³⁰

Yet in the 1956 exhibition, which will be discussed in the next chapter, Egas presented very few paintings addressing Indigenous people and the Ecuadorian setting.

Additionally, these works were substantially different from the ones constantly lauded by the Ecuadorian writers and public, as they do not denounce any social conditions, but

¹²⁹ Ibid, 113.

¹³⁰ Carrión, “Breve trayectoria cultural del Ecuador,” in *Benjamín Carrión: Ensayos de arte y cultura*, ed. Raúl Pacheco Pérez (Quito: Centro Cultural Benjamín Carrión; Municipio Metropolitano de Quito, 2007), 228.

rather communicate a nostalgic feeling of belonging to this scenic environment of the Andes. Whether the cited writers perceived these works as contributions to their national identity project, or whether they viewed them as works “made for tourists or postal cards” is unclear.

CHAPTER 4

CAMILO EGAS'S EXHIBITION AT THE CASA DE LA CULTURA ECUATORIANA IN 1956

On Wednesday, August 15, 1956, the audience's expectations and the artist's intentions collided in the inauguration of Camilo Egas's exhibition at Museo de Arte Colonial de la Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana. Benjamín Carrión presented the artist to the public by exclaiming in his opening speech: "Here we wanted to have him. Here. Because he signifies and reminds us of the battle that we have not yet won, for being ourselves. The great aesthetic battle –as part of the political and economic battles– to find within ourselves an essence, a form, akin to our sky and our soil."¹³¹ Meanwhile in the catalogue that was presented and distributed along with this exhibition, a text authored by Raúl Andrade suggested what Egas might have wanted to state to the Ecuadorian people with this show: "This is what I am and this is what I have done in my forced exile, imposed by a rigid, slow to change art scene: judge for yourselves..."¹³² These opposing statements, one claiming him as an artist that initiated a quest for a national aesthetic identity, and the other advocating for his versatility and drive as a transnational artist adapting to incessant global changes, elucidate a confrontation that persisted throughout the course of the exhibition.

¹³¹ Carrión, "Camilo Egas, gran heresiarca de nuestra plástica," in *Benjamín Carrión: Ensayos de arte y cultura*, ed. Raúl Pacheco Pérez (Quito: Centro Cultural Benjamín Carrión; Municipio Metropolitano de Quito, 2007), 191. "Aquí lo hemos querido tener. Aquí. Porque él significa y recuerda la batalla que aún no hemos ganado, por ser nosotros mismos. La gran batalla estética – que es una parte de la batalla política y de la batalla económica– por encontrar, dentro de nosotros mismos, una esencia, una forma, que sean consustanciales a nuestro aire y a nuestro suelo."

¹³² Raúl Andrade in *Exposición de Egas*, Quito: Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, 1956, exhibition catalogue. "Esto soy y esto es lo que he hecho en mi forzoso destierro, impuesto por una crítica impermeable y un medio incomprensivo: juzguen ustedes..."

In his opening speech for Egas's exhibition, Carrión provides a sort of timeline that attests to the artist's trajectory during his almost thirty-year absence from his native country, yet his choice of words suggest certain contention (Fig. 29). He evokes Egas's contributions to Ecuadorian art before and after his absence. First he reminded the audience that Egas introduced the "American men and landscape," the indigenous, to local Ecuadorian paintings, and then he highlighted his artistic development that emphasized his astonishment with the colors of Matisse and Derain, and the use of geometric figures with Picasso, Braque and Gris. Later in his speech, Carrión referred to Egas as a soldier fighting for the new battle of Surrealism, "Sigmund Freud's diabolic mandate," and finally he spoke about Egas's last "battle," opposing abstract art against art of human testimony or, as Carrión claims, art that is "disdainfully called figurative." By structuring his speech chronologically—emphasizing and bolstering Egas's contributions to Indigenismo, and disavowing Surrealism and abstract art—Carrión reminded the audience of the importance of Egas in Ecuadorian historiography and set expectations in order to look at Egas's new work through the lens of his past accomplishments. He ended his inaugural remarks by stating "Camilo, you are deeply rooted in your country, yet your hands go in search of other constellations."¹³³ Hence, the discourse chosen by Carrión, grounded in a battle analogy, sets forth a contradicting atmosphere in the arts' field, positioning the Indigenous vs. the European, figurative art vs. abstract art, the local vs. the global, revealing the contentious artistic context in Ecuador at the time, as discussed in chapter 3.

¹³³ Carrión, "Camilo Egas," 193-194. "Muy sembrado aquí estás, Camilo, pero tus manos se van en busca de todas las constelaciones."

In this chapter, I propose that while Camilo Egas returned to his country to present works that appealed to a broader, more universal audience focusing in emotionality and non-specificity, the local audience, in general, was startled by the exhibition and clung to their former perceptions of him as a precursory figure of a nationalist art devoted to social criticism. I will first present the exhibition, using its catalogue as my main source in order to highlight the way in which different cultural agents regarded Egas and his work. Taking into account that the majority of paintings in this exhibition were also presented at the ACA gallery in 1955, discussed in chapter 2, I will center my analysis on those that are more relevant for the Ecuadorian audience due to the cultural and geographic context; namely the works that contain Indigenous figures. The formal elements, style, and feelings of anxiety and uncertainty commonly found amongst these works elucidate Egas's stylistic change through these years, which is also apparent on other non-indigenous paintings discussed in chapter 2. Finally, I will consider this exhibition's reception through the lens of contemporary critical reviews, to indicate how people involved in the Ecuadorian combative art scene responded differently to Egas's production. The consideration of critical responses, as well as the different contexts in conversation—one where Egas is producing his work and the other where he is presenting it—allows an understanding of an artist working in a non-space, as Marc Augé famously coined in 1992, neither here nor there, but caught in-between, both.

Works of Camilo Egas at the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, 1956

Inaugurated in August 15, and open through August 31, the exhibition presented 35 artworks (Fig. 30). Categorized into three groups – “Expressionism,” comprised of

two Social Realism works from the 1930s; “Surrealism,” which included 8 works from the 1940s, and “Latest Works,” which featured 25 of his semi-abstracted, multi-perspective paintings of the 1950s including landscapes, studio studies, harlequins, and indigenous figures. The subject matter, color palette, style, dimensions, and painting surfaces varied, proving the artist’s versatility and experimental process. The dominance of the third category, “Latest Works,” indicates that Egas not only intended to provide a survey of his artistic development, but also aimed to showcase more abstracted and avant-gardist work to his compatriots. Of the latter 25 paintings, at least seven were urban and rural landscapes of Egas’s quotidian surroundings in the U.S., 9 were studio compositions and portraits, and 8 were depictions of indigenous people of the Andes. This last set provided a link to Egas’s nationalist precedents, yet it offered the spectators a different approach to the subject by conveying strong, universal emotions (unrelated to ethnic backgrounds) set in unspecified locations, as opposed to the highly accurate representations of Ecuadorian natives and land. The paintings addressing indigenous imagery were *Hora temprana*, *Después del rejo*, *Día de fiesta*, *Al mercado*, *El coraje*, *Caravana*, *Adiós* (Goodbye)¹³⁴, and *Trabajadores*.¹³⁵ As reflected in their titles, these do not address any specific setting or ethnic group as opposed to his 1920’s works such as *Caravana Otavalo* or *Caravana* (1922-23), discussed in the thesis’s introduction.

In several, if not all of these artworks, timeless and non-specific depictions of quotidian activities in the mountains, such as gathering a herd or going to the market, are

¹³⁴ This is the same work described in chapter 2, Fig. 14.

¹³⁵ These works are most likely in private collections, and I have not been able to acquire high-resolution, color representations for this analysis, except for two pieces: *Adiós* and *Caravana*. However, in a visit to Eric Egas I was granted access to black and white photographs of some of Camilo Egas’s later works, which are the ones I am using in this research.

shown as symbolic representations as opposed to faithful renditions of the contemporary social issues in the country. As these representations of indigenous people were created in exile, they are imbued with nostalgia and longing, as if he had immortalized his memories in time. In *Después del refo* (Fig. 31), for example, a group of indigenous people are distinguished by their traditional attire, with hats, long skirts and ponchos, and a baby tucked into a women's back, a popular way of carrying infants while doing chores. These figures are reduced to quick brushstrokes defined by volume acquired by contrasting dark and light pigments. A few subtle contour lines are scattered amongst the subjects, mostly defining the flow of their garments along with their movements. The play of light and shadow on the people's faces, especially seen with the figure on the furthest left side of the composition (Fig. 32), denotes an emotionally-charged impression of the portrayed situation, yet this sentiment is merely suggestive as the figures have been stripped of any distinguishable narrative. A similar situation surrounds the tender yet desolate image of an embrace in *Adiós* (Goodbye) (Fig. 14), in which an emotion of despair and uncertainty is conveyed through the application of frantic brushstrokes, contrasting colors, and the figures' action rather than facial features or information gathered from a specific situation. The fact that these subjects have no defined facial features and are reduced to gestural smudges of color signify a quest to transmit the sensation of a place or an emotional state, rather than a mimicry of a specific territory or culture. The specificity of the subjects and their context is no longer relevant. Neither is the reason to part ways. It is a strong feeling of hopelessness and desolation, relatable and directed to a wider audience that is conveyed that characterize Egas's artistic intentions.

In other examples of these works in which Egas combines the semi-abstract, geometric figures, gestural brushstrokes, and an oneiric quality to structure, such as *Al mercado* and *Caravana*, obscure faceless depictions of indigenous figures remain more enigmatic and ambiguous, surpassing powerful emotions to also echo contemporary artistic styles. In a shrewd yet hard to read composition, *Al mercado* (Fig. 33) Egas combines geometrized figures and multiple perspectives converging on a focal point. Standing in the center of the composition, a group of three people capture the viewer's attention. On the background, several diagonal lines—a formal element frequently found in Surrealist artworks—guide one's eyes to these figures, while provoking an uncomfortable sensation of anxiety. Light and shadow provides clues for understanding what is being depicted, such as the dark-colored skin tones used to characterize the figures and their garments. Further, the juxtaposition of flowing drapes, the hard-edged lines, and sudden change in perspectives make the image ambiguous, yet it is enough to reveal the three indigenous people depicted in this scene. An adult woman, distinguished by her apparent breasts, is centered in the composition holding what appears to be a basket on her back. Another figure looms behind her covered with a blanket or poncho that falls heavily over three fourths of the body. In front of the central indigenous woman, a child wearing a long poncho and showing dark-toned, small legs and feet, stands before the mountain cliff. The title of this work prompts a reference to an earlier painting, *Camino al mercado* (1922-23) (Fig. 34), commissioned by Jacinto Jijón y Caamaño for his Americanist library, in which a group of Indigenous people carrying water vases or baskets are scattered in a theatrical composition, standing in different positions as if they were waiting to be portrayed. Contrasting to the 1920s theatrical yet exoticizing depiction

of Ecuadorian natives, the diagonal lines employed in the background of the 1950s work delineate a mountain peak, presumably from where they are descending to go to the market, foreshortening the presence of the indigenous group in the spectator's space, and forcing a sense of invasive presence that is too close to comfort. Thus, amidst geometric figures and gestural brushstrokes, echoing the New York School and Post-Cubism; and the intense use of diagonal lines relating to Surrealism, Egas demonstrates his versatility and style awareness in another indigenous composition set in a non-descript yet telluric atmosphere.

In *Caravana* (Fig. 35), conversely, the figures are easily noticeable from the background, and though the energetic brushstrokes prevail, an arid mountain is visible, providing a more specific setting for the enigmatic characters. Four figures dressed in heavy, colorful drapes alluding to ponchos are placed in the foreground. In fact, it is not clear if these are bodies or sculptural objects covered with textiles, reducing the figures, thus, to signifiers of a culture. Their traditional attire is no longer accurately detailed, but still bears some resemblance to the 1925 *Caravana Otavalo* (Fig. 5) in its selection of patterns and balance between white and colored fields. Nonetheless, these textiles on the former are covered by geometric patches of solid to gradient hues that reference the contemporaneous language of geometric abstraction (with which Egas was familiar through numerous encounters and outings in New York) rather than highlighting the cultural authenticity of Indigenous' designs of the latter. Egas chose to represent this caravan in a horizontal manner, alluding the 1922-1923 painting commissioned by Jijón y Caamaño by the same title, (Fig. 7), in which Indigenous people walk through the mountain ranges carrying goods. Positioned in a theatrical setting in the peak of the

mountains looking over a city, their specific ethnic ground as well as the activity they are undertaking is explicit, yet the use of lights and shadows and the character's demeanor is highly expressive. In the 1953 account of *Caravana*, however, detailed and expressive facial features are replaced by masks or ambiguous smudges of color, and there is no indication of a specific ritual or activity taking place. The presence of masks in some cases and the absences of faces in others suggests the artist's intention to alienate these characters in order to convey emotions that are relatable to any one, regardless of their cultural identity. In a more introspective reading, perhaps Egas intended to explicate how he sometimes had to borrow the identity of the "Other" to convey a sense of cultural authenticity while not entirely belonging to this culture. Thus, the absence of naturalistic, expressive figures in a didactic mode of representation, as rendered in the 1923 *Caravana* or *Caravana Otavalo*, alludes to the artist's intention to underscore the power of gestural painting to convey emotions and meaning rather than socio-political messages, while still conjuring a strong sense of identity; one that does not stress differences between race and class, but humanizes the Indigenous people and places them in a wider, transnational dialogue regarding humanitarian concerns.

Furthermore, by comparing *Caravana's* composition with *Las floristas* (Fig.2), one can see how Egas has reduced the former's figures to powerful symbolic representations of his own identity and sense of national pride, rather than an exoticized account of the Others in a site-specific and nationalist depiction of the Andean region, as depicted in the 1916 painting. In *Caravana*, as in most of the paintings in the exhibition, the faces of the depicted figures are mostly indistinguishable or distilled to geometric forms, as opposed to Egas's detailed portrayal of indigenous women from the 1910s,

1920s and 1930s. Moreover, while *Las floristas* recalls a ritual from a certain community in a distinguishable location, attempting to configure a national aesthetic that recognizes the autochthonous,¹³⁶ *Caravana* evokes emotions of uncertainty, despair, and angst, rather than romantic representations, and are set in a generic setting. By attempting this symbolic, generalized representations Egas returned to place the Indigenous figure in a Costumbrista position, depicting it out of context and references, only this time these paintings are not made with the intention to classify, categorize and exoticize, but to appeal to universal emotions related to a common sentiment of annihilation brought by wars and atomic weapons, in a transnational platform. In this sense, Egas shifted from a process of cultural appropriation, which allowed him to speak on behalf of Indigenous peoples against social injustices, to a process of masquerade, using the Indigenous cultures as a means to depict powerful and emotional images to reflect many people's anxieties around the globe. Thus, by appealing to emotions and combining different stylistic idioms, Egas's indigenous works from the 1950s are both transnational and inherently domestic.

Egas application of his new semi-abstracted style to Indigenous figures did not attempt to present a new approach to Indigenismo, but was probably a desire to integrate these familiar figures in the transnational conversations of Gestural Abstraction, Abstract Expressionism, and Surrealism by dressing them up in different styles according to how he wanted the work to connect rather than the message of its content. Nevertheless, the lack of specificity in depicting the local emblematic settings, which were so recurrent in his early work from the 1910s and 1920s, could have been problematic to critics in

¹³⁶ See Pérez, "La construcción del campo moderno," 226-251.

Ecuador, prompting accusations of him as an artist who could no longer recall these surroundings due to his absence. Additionally, the inscrutability of these semi-abstracted figures and its settings, as well as the lack of social criticism provoked a schism between these works and the critics' reception; a reaction that Egas could have anticipated even before returning to Ecuador. In paintings such as *Al Mercado*, *Caravana*, and *Después del refo*, while at first glance the figures hint some sort of movement or leap forward, closer observation reveals that they are actually planted firmly amidst the swift winds of the Andes. In *Caravana* specifically, the application of pink and cream pigments in the background run loosely from left to right and upwards, prompting energetic movement in opposing direction to the stolid sculptural figures, conveying the strength of the gushing winds of the Andean tundra that push against this caravan. This friction could represent the waves of stylistic changes that confronted established and comfortable artistic currents, producing resistance in the course of artistic development. In other words, this symbolic clash could attest Egas's fear that his audience would be reluctant to embrace his stylistic transition by comparing his new production with his former work. It could also depict how he viewed the Ecuadorian artistic scene, represented by a monolithic indigenous figure that is challenges experimental and spontaneous styles, such as gestural abstraction. Perhaps because the audience identified with and favored art that conveyed a social message or function, the paintings from this exhibition that gained notoriety and remain the most renowned work of Egas's later period in Ecuador is *Calle 14* (Fig. 36), a work that speaks the language of Social Realism.

The Exhibition Catalogue

Besides the categorization and the titles of the exhibited artworks, the catalogue that accompanied this 1956 show provides little information to help one understand how the artist or the Casa de la Cultura framed Egas's return to Ecuador. Three Ecuadorian writers who had been connected in one way or another to Egas in the past contributed with texts for the catalogue, admitting, however, that they had not yet seen what the artist was to present in this exhibition. Gonzalo Zaldumbide, who had written for Egas's 1920s show in Paris and acquired several of his works, assured that whatever Egas presented would still be grounded in the principles of figuration, which he "could not have thrown into oblivion or disdain."¹³⁷ Jorge Reyes, who constantly found inspiration in urban Ecuadorian characters for his texts, described Egas assertively as a "restless and dissatisfied man who constantly searched for new forms of expression to draw from and master," and recognized New York as a perfect milieu for him to do so.¹³⁸ Unaware of Egas's later works, however, Reyes acknowledged that he would without exception remain a leader and revolutionary artist for his elevation of the Indigenous figure in the

¹³⁷ Gonzalo Zaldumbide in *Exposición de Egas*, Quito: Museo de Arte Colonial de la Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, 1956, exhibition catalogue. Archives at the biblioteca y centro de documentación Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana. "Sean cualesquiera las innovaciones que nos traiga en su nueva manera de ver y de pintar, un pintor de garra tan objetiva como fue siempre Camilo Egas, habrá de ser, indefectiblemente, más o menos figurativo, para sosiego de quien gusta morar un cuadro como tal, sin tener que hundirse y perderse en cavilaciones interpretativas improbables."

¹³⁸ Jorge Reyes in *Exposición de Egas*, Quito: Museo de Arte Colonial de la Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, 1956, exhibition catalogue. Archives at the biblioteca y centro de documentación Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana. "Metido en Nueva York, la ciudad bárbara donde cada día visitan los museos millares de personas y otros millares se recogen en las bibliotecas y acuden a las exposiciones, y donde se sientan cada noche en los cafés de Greenwich Village centenares de escritores, artistas y simples jóvenes inquietos, procedentes de distintos lugares de la tierra, para exponer sus ideas, para hallar compañía o meramente para callar y soñar."

realm of high art and culture. Even though it is uncertain whether Carrión or Egas chose the people who would write for this catalogue, the fact that these texts do not build an argument nor position the artist in a different artistic context than the one he left behind in 1927 reveal a penchant to maintain an image of what Egas signified for the Ecuadorian artistic discourse.

As a close friend and frequent follower of his development as an artist, in his text for this catalogue Raúl Andrade emphasized Egas's personality, exile, and the experiences and external forces that could have influenced his constant evolution of styles. Andrade highlights two important observations to consider when trying to understand the difficult position in which Egas presented this show. The first one is that Egas's voluntary exile resulted in a collective oblivion, as people recalled his name and his works only with vagueness.¹³⁹ This explains why, when talking about Egas again in 1956, writers and critics were constantly recalling his important contributions in the 1920s. The second observation attempted to clarify how Egas's condition of displacement, in addition to his unstable and changing temperament informed his mature stylistic experiments. Possibly driven by fear that the local audience would not understand and accept his new work, Andrade's tone in this text is one that excuses and simultaneously mediates a dissonance between the artist and his audience. Andrade not only contributed to this catalogue, but also wrote a myriad of press articles about Egas's stylistic changes well after this exhibition, serving as a local messenger that stressed and

¹³⁹ Andrade, in *Exposición de Egas*. While talking about Egas's voluntary exile and its results, Andrade claimed, "La proscripción por voluntaria que sea, es la antesala del desasimiento. Su norma casi era ya una leyenda nebulosa y su figura un recuerdo que los días opacaban con su tela de olvido."

reminded others of the artist's versatility and aptitude to understand each style according to its time and place.

The Contemporary Critical Reception: A Review of the Artist or of His Artwork?

Local newspapers, especially *El Comercio*, published articles and notes regarding Egas's show in the Casa de la Cultura, in which some critics focused on the artist's homecoming rather than the work he was presenting. Most of the brief notes are explanatory, accounting for Egas's artistic trajectory –especially his achievements in the 1920s and 1930s– and the details of the current exhibition. Similar to Carrión in his opening speech, by turning the spotlight on Egas's past in Ecuador, critics simultaneously revealed their inclination towards this predominant style of painting (more attuned to the national artistic scene described in chapter 3) and their unfamiliarity with Egas's current trajectory or stylistic development. This decision, thus, not only evidences the critics' attitudes in favor of nationalist didactic artworks and resistant to abstracted styles, but also predisposes their readers to a similar mindset when visiting or evaluating the exhibition in question. Additionally, by abstaining from commenting, analyzing, and essentially criticizing Egas's works, many of these reviews are indicative of the indifference towards an artistic style that hinted a distancing from the established Indigenismo as a national current.

The works Egas exhibited, which established a conversation between the prevalent didactic style and the emerging abstract alternatives were overlooked by a group of critics who mostly focused on the artist's personality and the meaning of his return to his native country. Though one reviewer accurately highlighted that Egas

developed a perennial quest for his soul and the soul of others, and the meaning and mystery of art making, he failed to locate these queries within the artist's production showcased in the exhibition.¹⁴⁰ The critic was aware of Egas's acute sensibility, yet he found his works to be unsubstantial and lacking. Indeed, he bashed Egas for focusing on trivial modes of expression to recruit followers, as opposed to finding himself in his art.¹⁴¹ With such a claim, he insinuated that Egas had adopted a foreign style that was irrelevant to the quest and his identity in order to fit in a new artistic milieu, as opposed to understanding the artist's ability to communicate in different artistic languages while simultaneously conveying authenticity and emotion. Another critic started his review by complaining that it was a shame that there were no samples of his "expressionist" artworks, usually charged with content in which the "Indians" appeared with the grotesque, dramatic and entire truth of their condition.¹⁴² Although the writer was referring to Egas's work in tune with Indigenismo and Social Realism from the 1920s through the 1930s, the fact that he underscored the absence of this type of works from the exhibition discloses that Ecuadorians were most likely hoping to find Egas as the

¹⁴⁰ "Un artista que regresa," *El Comercio* (Ecuador), August 19, 1956. Trinidad Pérez's private archives. "En esta tierra y de esta tierra nace la inquietud vigilante de Egas, ese insomnio artístico que le mantiene en perpetua búsqueda de su alma y del alma de los seres y las cosas, del sentido de la acción plástica, de los misterios de la creación pictórica y del don inefable de ver y hacer ver a los demás, desgarrado sus sentidos, su intelección y sus sentimientos."

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* "Él ha traído varias telas suyas de varias épocas y en todas ellas se puede ver la llama quemante y trémula de su espíritu en busca de qué consumir, el hurgar desesperado de su propia maestría en pos de resultados triviales de expresión, de sugestión, de espolazo místico. ¿Se ha hallado a sí mismo Camilo Egas? Ni él podría decirlo. El afán de encontrar discípulos tiene como principal raíz la desazón de no haberse encontrado a sí mismo, desazón que florece en el ardor del forjador de almas."

¹⁴² Jaime Valencia, "Camilo Egas," *El Diario* (Ecuador) August, 1956. Trinidad Pérez's private archive. The article, in general, is laudatory of Egas's exhibited works. However, the presence of this statement is relevant to understand the type of art people were hoping to find in the exhibition; a style akin to what was functioning as the national tendency at the time.

standing artistic figure of this nationalist style.¹⁴³ This camp of critics, therefore, abstained from commenting on Egas's new works vis-à-vis the pervasive nationalist style in the local scene, with which he had been recurrently associated, perhaps unwilling to disassociate one of the precursors of Indigenismo from this established current.

Another group of people produced more extended and detailed reviews regarding the works exhibited at the Casa de la Cultura, providing possible factors, either personal or professional, to explain Egas's shift in styles, while pushing an introspective reading of his new work. On one hand, the artist Jaime Valencia identified how Egas was cunning in transferring his numerous seminal experiences gathered while living abroad through the combination of different styles and tendencies in his later production. Additionally, he assertively points out how memory plays a significant role in the depiction of Indigenous figures of the 1950s and, at times, how these depictions conflate two different contexts, referring to the artist's present milieu in New York and his country of origin, Ecuador. This is evident, for example, when looking at the draped, sculptural, and faceless indigenous figures walking through a gestural Andean setting in the 1950s version of *Caravana*, which recalls Egas's mannequin in his New York *Studio Corner* (Fig. 17). Further, he states that these Ecuadorian-themed compositions "are of a distant time where the elements appear as vague memories, and some even seem to be from other latitudes."¹⁴⁴ Even though the critic fails to specify which painting he is referring to, the reading of these works as personal contemplations of unresolved places and temporalities drawn from memory, allude to the enigmatic depiction of uncertainty that is prevalent in many of the exhibited works. On the other hand, Raúl Andrade, who had written for the

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

exhibition's catalogue before looking at these pieces, presents an informed review attesting for Egas's complete trajectory, including the development of his Surrealist and semi-abstracted styles. When analyzing the indigenous figures of Egas's latest paintings, Andrade also evokes memory and distance as crucial factors that informed his shift in style and purpose.¹⁴⁵ In his description of the Indigenous paintings, Andrade restricts himself to refer to color, simplicity and drawing, which resonates with a more formal language of abstraction. In this way, Andrade elucidates Egas's transition from one style to the other, and ascribes an intimate, introspective reading to these paintings emphasizing Egas's emotional experiences produced by exile and nostalgia. Perhaps because they knew Egas personally, they had worked together, or they were able to understand the particularities of artists' experimentations, these writers were able to see and comprehend what Egas was attempting to do with this comeback exhibition: present to his compatriots, a gamut of styles, interests, experimentations, and inquiries that laid out his lifelong quest of self-discovery as a cosmopolitan artist.

The latter rather appreciative receptions, when compared to the former reviews, indicate the argumentative artistic context in which this exhibition was presented. As discussed in chapter 3, during the 1950s several exhibitions, besides the one discussed in this thesis, started to challenge the established national current of Indigenismo, promoted by the government through the Casa de la Cultura. As artists returned to Ecuador from sojourns in major artistic centers, namely Paris, New York and Madrid, the ubiquitous depictions of naturalist and didactic works that were socio-politically inclined, appeared

¹⁴⁵ Raúl Andrade, "La evolución pictórica de Camilo Egas," *El Comercio*, Suplemento Dominical (Ecuador), August 26, 1956. Eric Egas's private archive. "Los indios de Egas se han espiritualizado en la distancia, envueltos en sus colores brillantes, con armónica simplicidad y dibujo sobrio."

outmoded and extemporal in relation to international experimentations with form, color, and styles. The fact that Egas, an artist who had been recurrently labeled as Indigenist, was now experimenting with automatic, spontaneous and more imaginative modes of expression, and delving into the idiom of gestural and geometric abstraction, was disquieting for people who had subscribed to this national current. At the same time, the presentation of semi-abstracted works, which still played with local tropes of national identity and the Indigenous figure, yet employed contemporary international styles, positioned Egas as a transitional artist, providing an example of a possible way to smoothly shift or consider venturing into other modes of expression without completely abandoning the national attempt to configure a local aesthetic. Though these critics did not fully comprehend the complexity of pervasive emotions in a time of war and uncertainty, and the alienation of the “pure” indigenous figure to convey these emotions to a wider audience in Egas’s works, it was evident for them that Egas was alluding to earlier works to accentuate a shift in the purpose/functionality of his work: one that was more expressive and less didactic. Moreover, while some critics expressed their contempt for Egas’s later works, others lauded his endeavors and viewed this comeback exhibition as an event that promoted and helped to pave the way for younger artists to explore different alternatives in subsequent years.

In a 1977 text about Egas by prominent Ecuadorian writer Alfredo Pareja Diezcanezo, he recalled a conversation with the artist, presumably in 1956, in which Egas questioned the significance of the documentary aspect in art.¹⁴⁶ Coming from a

¹⁴⁶ Alfredo Pareja Diezcanezo, “Camilo Egas analizado por Alfredo Pareja Diezcanezo,” in *Camilo Egas*, Quito: Museo Camilo Egas, 1977, exhibition catalogue. Special archives at the New School. “Durante uno de esos viajes en que traía la gran confusión de Nueva York para extinguirla por unos días en su Quito lleno de indios y blanduras celestes ¿Qué importancia tiene

context in the U.S. in which Abstract Expressionism, and Geometric and Gestural Abstraction were increasingly dominant over other styles, Egas might have felt inclined to start this conversation or even challenge his acquaintances who were well-versed in cultural affairs, to initiate thought-provoking discussions regarding the state of Ecuadorian art. Undoubtedly, he had been exposed to art that was imaginative, spontaneous, unconscious and automatic, and at times, non-representational, and naturally delved into these experimentations. His return to Quito might have struck him as returning to a place that had changed little to nothing from the moment he left, still clinging to naturalist social representations that served as political discourses and were bound to remain within the confines of the country's boundaries. As an artist who was in constant search of an exchange of ideas and had experienced the continuous flux within the arts, Egas was eager to transcend these boundaries and to dialogue with the world using the transnational language of abstraction and geometry.

Considering that Egas's later works found a place in Ecuadorian art in the 1950s mediating a shift between the figurative and documentary to the abstracted and imaginative by alluding to both tendencies, and that the audience's response to this exhibition was not entirely negative, it is unclear why the collective social memory does not recall this works when including him in the national historiography. Perhaps the artist's stimulating yet temporary visit to his home country was not enough for his works to linger in people's minds years after the exhibition, even when the national artistic

lo documental del arte?, se preguntaba. Así lo hacían los grandes observadores como Chagall o Matisse, Picasso o Braque, alejándose de la modelación de contornos exactos y construyendo espacios imaginarios, por manera que el corazón del artista desbordaba en conocimientos nuevos y en luces inventadas, para mezclar, no ciertas tonalidades como el claroscuro, sino lo cálido y lo frío de los colores.”

currents started to lean over abstraction and Informalism after his departure.¹⁴⁷ However, his recurrent absence from this artistic milieu accentuated Ecuadorians confrontational ideas of him as the precursor and revolutionary artist of the 1920s and the versatile transnational artist in constant flux.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Egas returned to Quito in 1958 to present a lecture regarding New York's art education system, and to promote a traveling exhibition of Panamerican art to be presented along with a the XI Interamerican Conference in Quito in 1959. A paper clipping found in Trinidad Pérez's private archival collection invites people to come to a lecture prepared by the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana and the Universidad Central's Facultad de Filosofía y Letras and the School of Fine Arts, to be held at the university's campus on August 1, 1958. It reads: "Se proyecta presentar exposición de pintura de E.U., en Quito para cuando se reúna la Conferencia Panamericana," *El Comercio* (Ecuador), August, 1958, 7. According to this newspaper article, Egas intended to amass works by artists from four universities in New York to be exhibited in Panama, Caracas, Bogotá, Quito, Lima, and La Paz. Similarly, Egas proposed these six countries to select paintings to represent themselves in an exhibition that in turn would travel to New York. Unfortunately, this project did not come to fruition.

¹⁴⁸ In fact, the book *Huellas que no cesan*, cited earlier, presents this exhibition alongside of a representation of *Calle 14* and *Grupo de Indios* (1926), a work that belongs to the Casa de la Cultura's Collection but was not presented as part of this exhibition. None of the Surrealist or semi-abstracted works presented in this exhibition were reproduced in this historical book.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis, I discussed the different contexts in which Camilo Egas presented his work of the 1940s and 1950s, which signaled a turning point in his artistic career. In 1956, after nearly thirty years of absence from his country, Egas returned to Ecuador with an invitation from Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana to present his artistic trajectory since he had been living in New York. While his work changed considerably during these years in response to the incessant mutability of a modern and diverse city in a time of postwar existentialism, the Ecuadorian art scene had remained true to its longstanding and homogenous dedication to Indigenismo and Social Realism. When the Casa de la Cultura opened this exhibition to the public, it essentially prompted the Ecuadorian spectators to choose between considering Egas as a versatile artist who constantly experimented with innovative aesthetic languages, or as the precursor of an artistic effort to reconfigure a national aesthetic. Though more recent publications in newspapers and popular magazines continue to conceive of Egas as a complex and prolific artist, scholars in the field, both locally and international, have preferred to emphasize the latter.¹⁴⁹ I hope that through this thesis I have proved that Egas, as many other artists, should not be circumscribed to a period that best resonates with or fits in a common national discourse, but should be regarded as someone who constantly experimented and reflected about his practice and his role as an artist.

¹⁴⁹ Adela Egas, "Camilo Egas, un gran valor. El romántico iniciador del indigenismo ecuatoriano," *El Comercio*, October 26, 1969; Fernando Villaroel, "La valiosa obra de Camilo Egas," n.d. paper clipping in the archives of the biblioteca y centro de documentación de la Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana; Hernán Rodríguez, "Camilo Egas," *Revista Diners*, 137, October, 1993, 66-72; "Egas, el pintor prolífico," *Metro Hoy* (Ecuador), October 29, 2003. 2, amongst others.

During most of his life, Egas was an immigrant who actively participated in the art world scenes of major cultural centers, such as New York, yet maintained a connection to his cultural identity by depicting Indigenous people as a recurrent subject matter. Although his work of the 1940s and 1950s responded to a collective sentiment among Ecuadorians of uncertainty and uneasiness, a product of years of wars and violence, in his continuing career he reflected upon what it meant to be an artist living and working in exile. In negotiating how one adapts to a new culture, what does one choose to leave behind and what to hold on to? What does one integrate to partake of one's existing identity? What does one resist or reject? These become relevant questions when considering the circulation of artists during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and their ever hybrid identities. These questions become even more complex when analyzing Egas's later works, in particular those he selected to showcase in la Casa de la Cultura in 1956, which no doubt were considered in light of how he wanted to be perceived in his native country. With these paintings, Egas returned to the representation of indigenous figures, a symbol of his national identity, yet he rendered them in the semi-abstracted aesthetic language akin to burgeoning idioms in New York.

In order to fully comprehend Egas's return to Ecuador in 1956 it is germane to take into account the socio-political and historical context in which he produced the work that he exhibited to his fellow Ecuadorians. His paintings of social struggles, surrealist perplexing scenes and studio compositions, and abstracted portraits and landscapes establish a continuous dialogue with New York's cultural scene and mirrored the artist's life. His long tenure as the director of the Art Workshops at the New School for Social Research encouraged Egas to delve into artistic experimentations in light of progressive

conversations held with the faculty he assembled. Moreover, while Egas had been known in New York as a muralist and a Latin American artist associated with Social Realism, two major solo shows in 1946 and 1955, at the Acquavella Galleries and at the ACA respectively, bolstered his intentions to find alternative veins of expression, especially given their warm reception. These efforts investigated ways to distinguish his own complex identity while adopting and coalescing recognizable modern idioms as his new style.

Although Egas left behind little documentation of his ideas and intentions regarding his art during his years in New York, crucial facts regarding socio-political conditions during the 1940s and 1950s, as well as the dissemination of ideas by well-known figures in the art world allow me to conjecturalize about some possibilities. For example, the juxtaposition of rural land and urbanization, the accelerated pace of modernity, industrialization, cultural, and social movement, and his yearning for his country prompted Egas to inquire about the ephemerality of life, the fragility of memory, and the fluidity of identity. What is not obvious is what may have prompted the sudden return and the role of the indigenous figures in his 1950s paintings. Why, after many years of absence, did they return to his oeuvre? How does this relate to his personal identity in a condition of exile?

On one hand, by incorporating the image of the natives of Ecuador –an engagement with Indigenismo that established him at the forefront of the New York scene in the 1930s– with the new styles and codes of contemporary art, Egas could assert his position as an avant-garde artist while at the same time claiming his cultural authenticity and originality, as noted in examples such as *Adiós* (Fig. 14), *Al Mercado*

(Fig. 33), and *Caravana* (Fig.35). On the other hand, the writings and ideas of renowned lecturers in New York, such as Meyer Schapiro, resonated in the artist's mind and work. Perhaps not coincidentally, in 1953 Schapiro published a text with ideas that developed over years of lectures, regarding style. In this text, the scholar talks rather significantly about the power of "primitive art." He stated:

Much in the new styles recall primitive art. Modern artists were, in fact, among the first to appreciate the works of natives as true art. The development of Cubism and Abstraction made the form problem exciting and helped to refine the perception of the creative in primitive work. Expressionism, with its high pathos, disposed our eyes to the simpler, more intense modes of expression, and together with Surrealism, which valued, above all, the irrational and instinctive in the imagination, gave a fresh interest to the products of primitive fantasy. (...) What in primitive art belongs to an established world of collective beliefs and symbols arises in modern art as an individual expression, bearing the marks of a free, experimental attitude to forms. Modern artists feel, nevertheless, a spiritual kinship with the primitive, who is now closer to them than in the past because of their ideal of frankness and intensity of expression and their desire for simple life, with more effective participation of the artists in collective occasions than modern society allows.¹⁵⁰

Given that artists recurrently attended Schapiro's lectures at the New School, and that Egas, as the director of the Art Workshops, had to be aware of the events happening at the school, it is highly likely that he heard Schapiro's lectures. Thus, it is possible that the semi-abstracted Indigenous figures in Egas's later works responded to ideas that connected the expressionist power of abstraction and geometry to the spirituality and sense of collectivity of Indigenous people. Akin to the artistic scene in this city, Egas started blending modern aesthetic languages and Andean tropes to create an authentic style that would resonate in New York's cultural environment and, at the same time, reflect his ambiguous position as a "transnational" artist. In fact, Schapiro's juxtaposition

¹⁵⁰ Schapiro, *Style*, 291.

between the modern and the primitive positioned Egas at the forefront of this cultural scene, making him an advanced rather than a folkloric or traditional artist.

The other context to analyze in preparation for the 1956 exhibition is the cultural and artistic scene in Ecuador during Egas's absence, especially the 1940s and the 1950s. Since the 1930s and well into the 1960s, Indigenismo reigned in Ecuador as an established national current, backed by the government through their endorsement of the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana. Founded and directed by the writer Benjamín Carrión, this institution was grounded in the patriotic promotion of mestizaje as the Ecuadorian identity, and the idea that art should serve a social function, depicting the country's social realities and struggles. Even when in the 1950s several artists, amongst them Camilo Egas, presented alternatives to the representational and politically-oriented trend, they encountered resistance from the critics and the public, who preferred messages delivered via content rather than form and color, either because it was familiar, or because they believed in art serving an explicit social cause.

At this point it is important to consider the following: if Carrión and the Casa de la Cultura favored Indigenismo over other artistic trends, why did he invite Egas to present his later work, which he saw while visiting the artist in New York a year prior to the exhibition? What were Carrión's intentions by presenting these aesthetic alternatives? Perhaps by showcasing an exhibition of unconventional semi-abstracted art by a renowned artist, known as the initiator of a so called "Ecuadorian art" and for his dedication to the plight of social struggles and inequality, Carrión thought he could persuade critics and spectators that an aesthetic transition was imminent in Ecuador.

After all, the Casa de la Cultura aspired to promote the development of culture focused on an integration of Latin America in harmony with universal culture.

Egas's exhibition at the Casa de la Cultura in 1956 indicated that the New York context that informed his artistic experimentations and the Ecuadorian art scene in which he presented his latest work did not necessarily ascribe to the same ideas of modernism and art's role in society. The exhibition's staging through Carrión's speech and the written accounts in the catalogue, along with subsequent critical reception reveals the audience's penchant for the predominant style of nationalist figurative art, namely Indigenismo, and predisposed the public's consideration of Egas's new paintings through the lens of his artistic precedents. However, several of his followers, including younger artists and friends, who were trying to present aesthetic alternatives in Ecuador noticed and praised Egas's endeavors to transition into a different style that was more expressive and less didactic. While Egas's latest works presented at this exhibition contain representational elements, such as human figures, buildings, studio corners, mannequins, amongst others, these are rendered in a highly abstracted and suggestive manner, establishing a conversation between figurative and non-figurative styles. By conflating local tropes of national identity, such as the Indigenous people of Ecuador, with transnational artistic styles that appealed to a broader audience through the language of geometry, abstraction, and emotions, Egas contributed to the transition between representational to non-representational art in Ecuador, without abandoning his efforts to denote his cultural authenticity.

Besides thinking about Egas's contribution in both contexts and art scenes, the works and the 1956 exhibition discussed in this thesis prompt other questions regarding

the artist's fluid identity, caught in between two places, two zones, and two temporalities. Egas migrated to New York and was frequently adapting and reconfiguring his practice in relation to the fast pace and ever-evolving city, while at the same time finding his own presence in it. The analysis of his 1950s works, resonates with what Homi Bhabha has eloquently stated regarding the situation of artists in exile,

The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with “newness” that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent “in-between” space that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The “past-present” becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living.¹⁵¹

Even before returning to Ecuador for the exhibition, Egas was figuring out the contingent “in-between” space where he was operating, which he conveyed through his compelling work of the 1950s echoing New York styles and, at the same time, representing the Ecuadorian indigenous culture symbolically.

Moreover, thinking of Egas as a Latin American artist, another in-between space comes to mind. In a book published in 1973, the influential art critic Marta Traba divided Latin America into opened and closed zones. Opened zones referred to countries, such as Argentina or Venezuela, that “imported” artistic references from Europe or the U.S., and as a result, had lost their local identity. Closed zones, on the other hand, referred to countries that did not have as much contact with foreign references, such as Ecuador and Bolivia, and therefore remained representative of their autochthonous culture.¹⁵² In respect to this binary structure to understand art from Latin America, Egas is again caught in the middle. While he came from a “closed zone,” and strived to represent his

¹⁵¹ Homi Bhabha, “In Between Cultures,” *New Perspectives Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2013): 107-109.

¹⁵² Marta Traba, *Dos décadas vulnerables en las artes plásticas latinoamericanas, 1950-1970* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1973).

region and identity throughout his career, he was exposed to a myriad of cultural references that informed his work through his extensive travels and residency in the U.S. and welcomed these exchanges in his practice. Lastly, when considering his own identity, Egas might have also felt in-between two temporalities, and this continues to hold true. While Ecuadorians include Egas as an active contributor to Ecuadorian modernism in the beginning of the twentieth century, the historiography does not traditionally incorporate his later artistic endeavors from the 1940s forward.¹⁵³ Meanwhile, in the U.S., Egas is commonly perceived as an artist from Ecuador who also contributed enormously to the art community in New York through his work at the New School for Social Research, but his works from the 1940s and 1950s are not included in relation to other Latin American, Latino, or other U.S. artist's works. Nevertheless, when dealing with artists in a constant process of mobility and adaptability, one should avoid labels, categorizations, and limited understanding of artists' practice as "theirs is a world that is not circumscribed by any absolutist identity or territory."¹⁵⁴

The interest and research on his earlier work has limited our understanding of Egas as a precursor of art dealing with nationalist concerns of the 1920s and 1930s. Whilst his earlier paintings should be lauded and underscored as major contributions to the history of art of the Americas, it is crucial to bear in mind that artists should not be

¹⁵³ Monteforte, *Los signos del hombre*, 252. Monteforte explicitly claims that Egas was one of the great Ecuadorian "absent" painters who, since he left, depicted life in a big city, and was no longer connected to the processes of the Ecuadorian society. "Egas fue, típicamente, un desarraigado, uno de los grandes pintores "ausentes"; un poderoso creador en quien, como es lógico, se refleja el pulso de la vida internacional a través de la mayor urbe cultural de la época; pero no el proceso de la sociedad ecuatoriana del último medio siglo."

¹⁵⁴ Okwui Enwezor, "Between Localism and Worldliness," In *Global Encounters in the World of Art: Collisions of tradition and modernity*, ed. Ria Lavrijsen (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 1998), 39.

defined by what they accomplished in a specific time and place of their careers as most of the time their body of work is much more multifaceted. As I have presented throughout this thesis, Egas was an artist who learned to adapt and move forward with the cultural avant-garde, constantly reflecting about his role as an artist and his practice in a certain time and place. I hope that analyzing Egas's work from this point of view provides a broader understanding of him as a transnational artist and encourages the reader to contemplate other possible approaches to artists who worked in similar conditions of cultural negotiation and adaptability.

FIGURES



Figure 1. Camilo Egas, *Ecuadorian Festival*, 1935, oil on canvas. The New School, New York



Figure 2. Camilo Egas, *Las floristas*, 1916, oil on canvas. Museo Camilo Egas, Ecuador

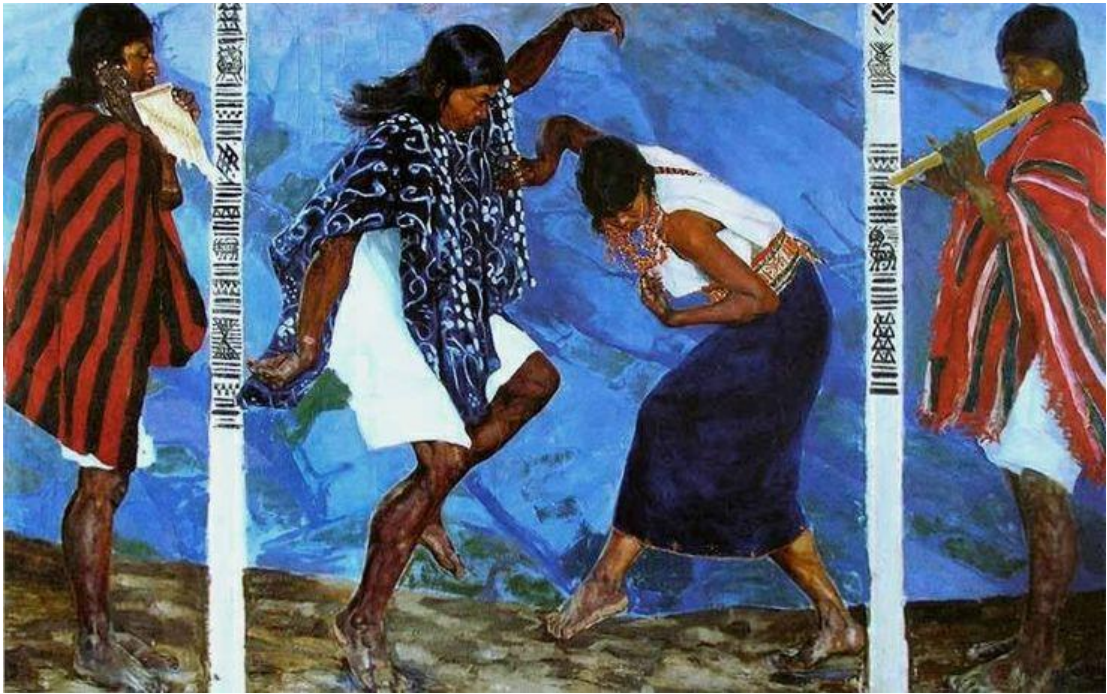


Figure 3. Camilo Egas, *El Sanjuanito*. 1917, oil on canvas. Private collection, Ecuador

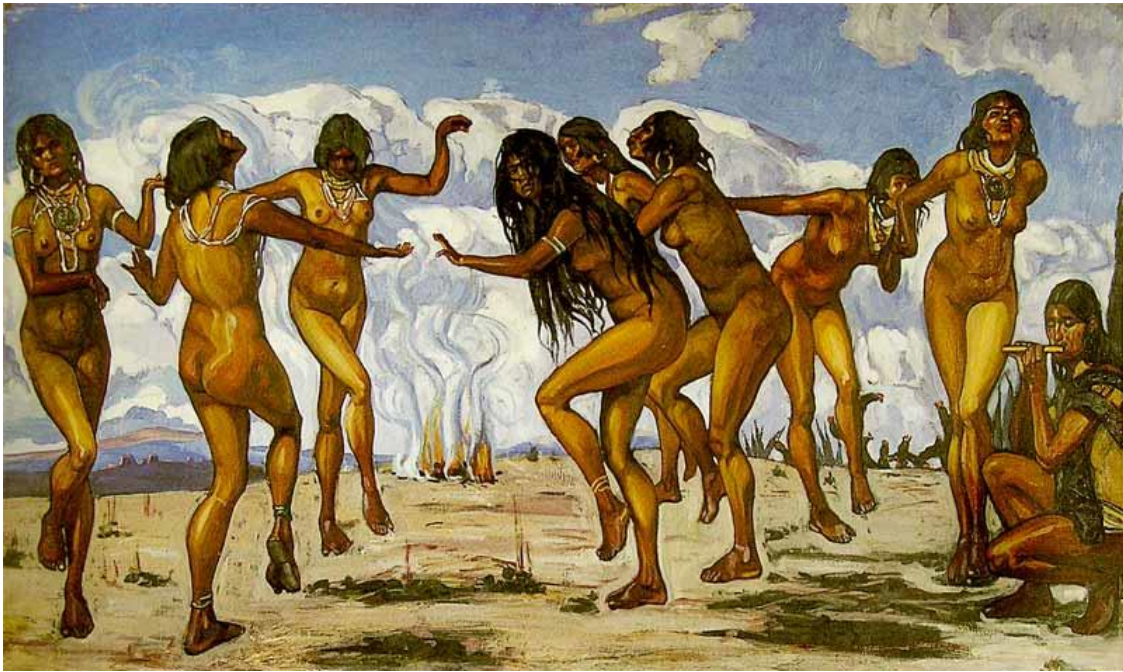


Figure 4. Camilo Egas, *Danza ceremonial*, 1922-1923, oil on canvas. Museo Nacional del Ministerio de Cultura, Ecuador



Figure 5. Camilo Egas, *Caravane Otavalo*, 1925, oil on canvas. Location unknown



Figure 6. Camilo Egas, *Porteur au Repos*, 1925, oil on canvas. Barbara and John Duncan collection, United States



Figure 7. Camilo Egas, *Caravana*, 1922-1923, oil on canvas. Museo Nacional del Ministerio de Cultura, Ecuador



Figure 8. Camilo Egas, *Media tarde*, 1925, Private collection

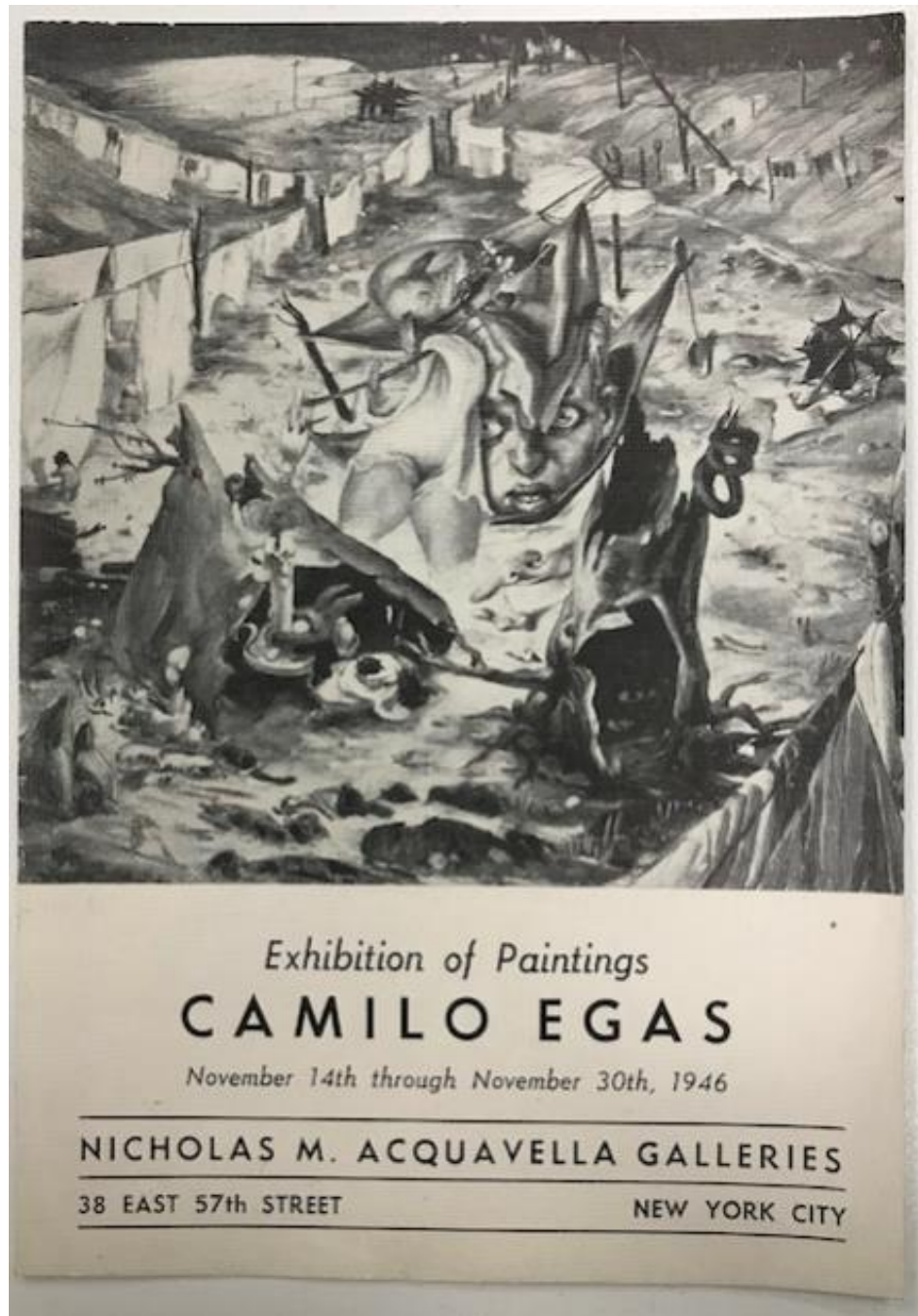


Figure 9. Catalogue's cover for *Exhibition of Paintings Camilo Egas* at the Nicholas M. Acquavella Galleries Exhibition, 1946

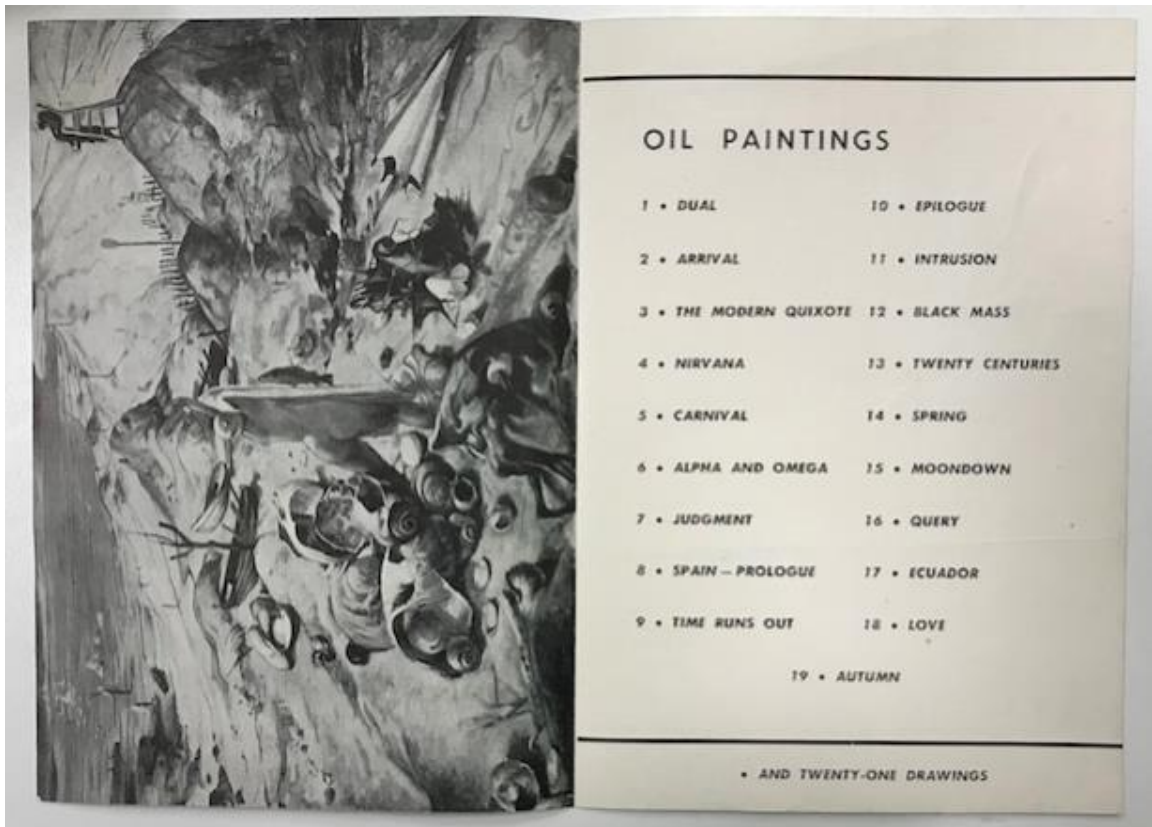


Figure 10. List of paintings by Camilo Egas at the Nicholas M. Acquavella Galleries, exhibition catalogue, 1946. The work *Arrival* to the left



Figure 11. Camilo Egas, reproduction of *The Modern Don Quixote* in *The New School Bulletin*, 1946-1947



Figure 12. Camilo Egas, *Civil War in Spain*, oil on canvas, 1940. Location unknown



Figure 13. Camilo Egas, black and white reproduction of *Hex Signs*, material, date and location unknown

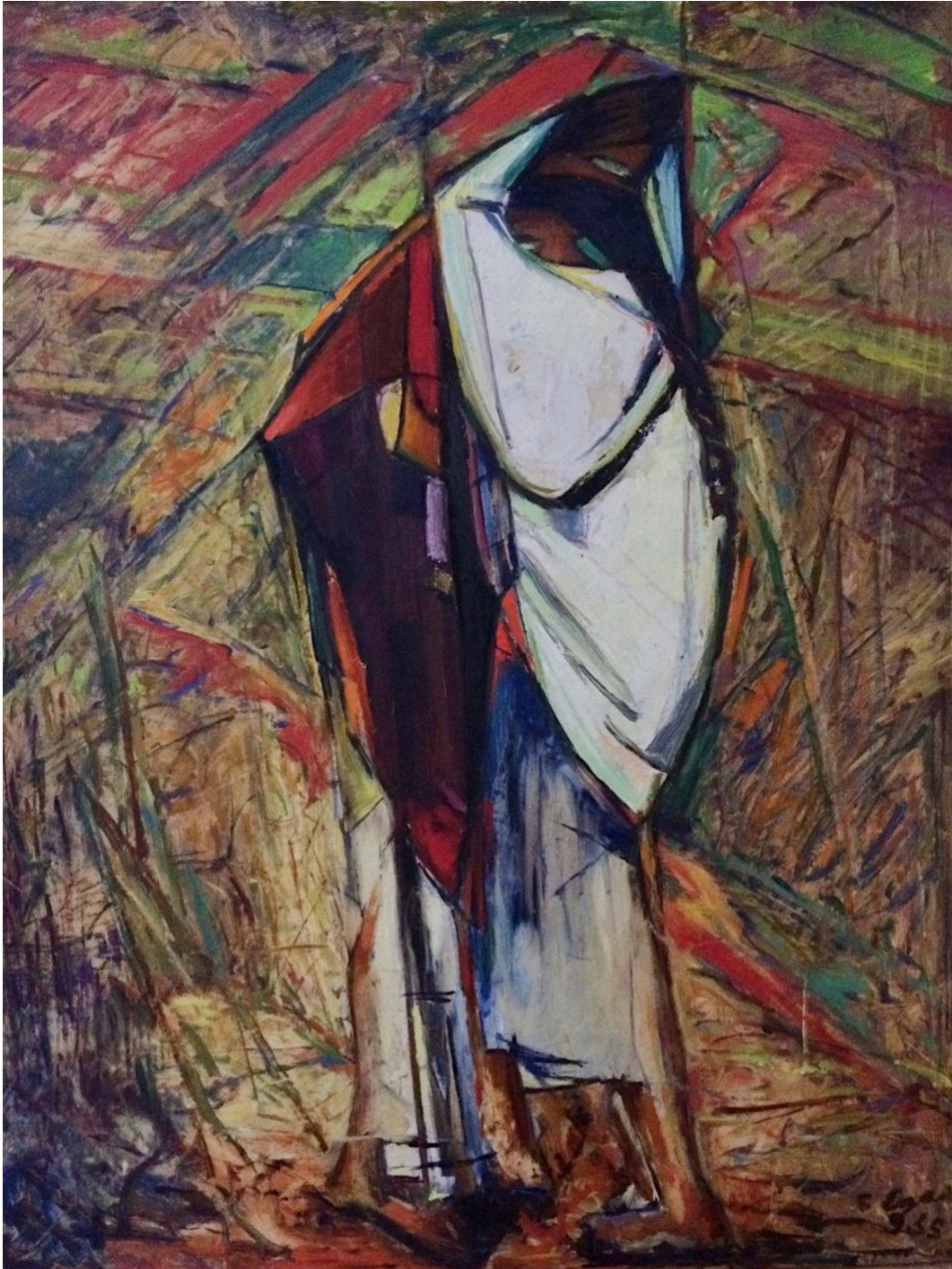


Figure 14. Camilo Egas, *Goodbye (Adiós)*, 1954, oil on Masonite. Private collection, Ecuador



Figure 15. Elaine de Kooning, *Willem de Kooning*, c.1952, oil on panel. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C



Figure 16. Willem de Kooning, *Woman I*, 1950-1952, oil on canvas. Museum of Modern Art, New York



Figure 17. Camilo Egas, *Studio Corner*, 1953, oil on Masonite. Museo Antropológico y de Arte Contemporáneo, Guayaquil, Ecuador

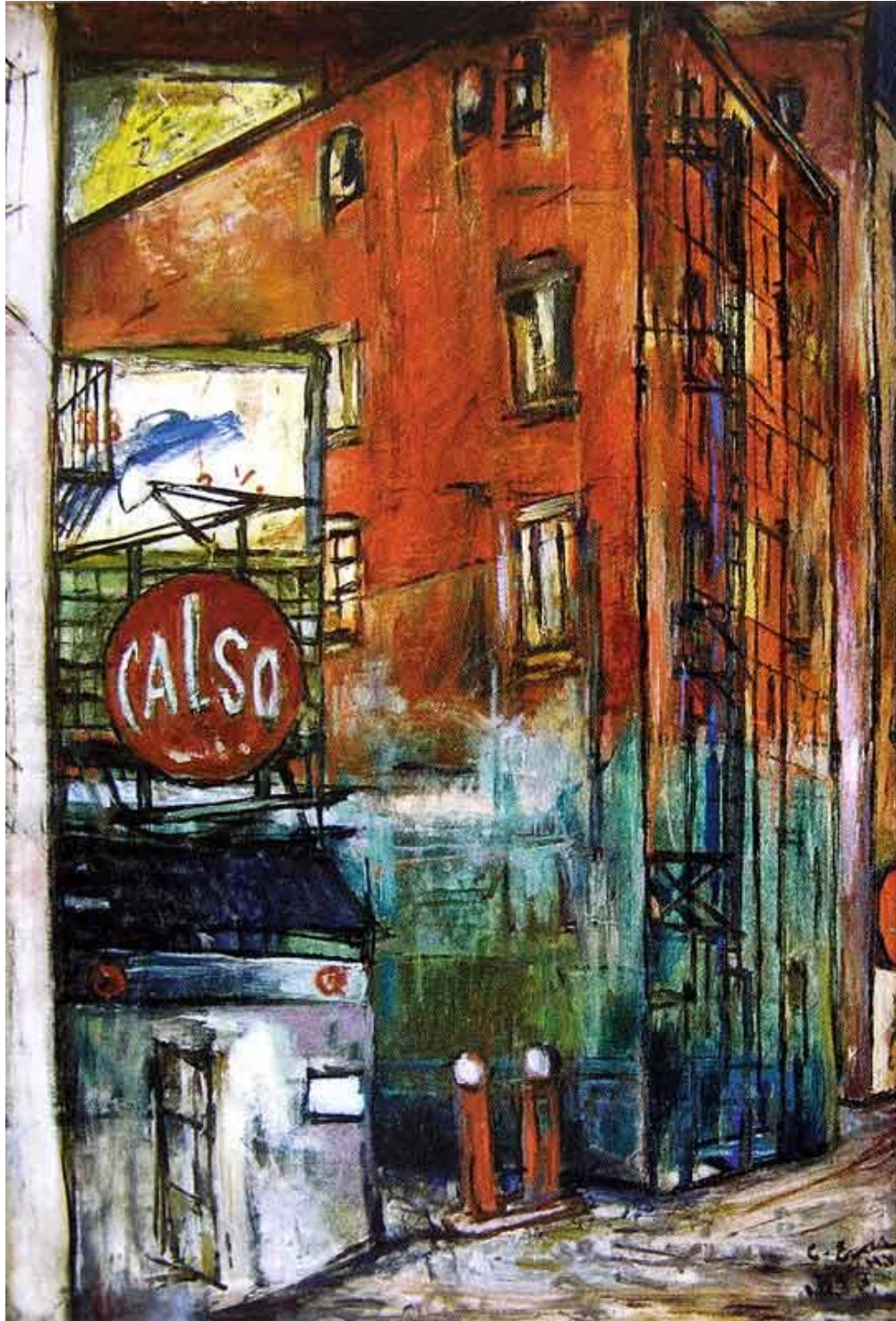


Figure 18. Camilo Egas, *Calso* (New York), 1953, oil on Masonite. Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana



Figure 19. Camilo Egas, *Untitled*, oil on canvas, 1953. Collection of the New School, New York



Figure 20. Camilo Egas, *Pennsylvania*, material, date, and location unknown



Figure 21. Camilo Egas, *Self-Portrait*, 1953, oil on canvas. Location unknown



Figure 22. Camilo Egas, *Self-Portrait*, 1953, oil on canvas. Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana



Figure 23. Edward Munch. *Sleepless Night: Self-Portrait in Inner Turmoil*, oil on canvas, 1920. Munch Museum, Oslo, Norway



Figure 24: Cartoon published by Asdrubal in the newspaper *El Sol* (Ecuador), in 1952. Archive at the Art Museum of the Americas



Figure 25: Oswaldo Guayasamín, *Ataúd blanco*, 1950s, oil on canvas.



Figure 26: Oswaldo Guayasamín, *Huacayñan: Ecuador*, portable mural, oil on wood, 1951. Private collection, Ecuador

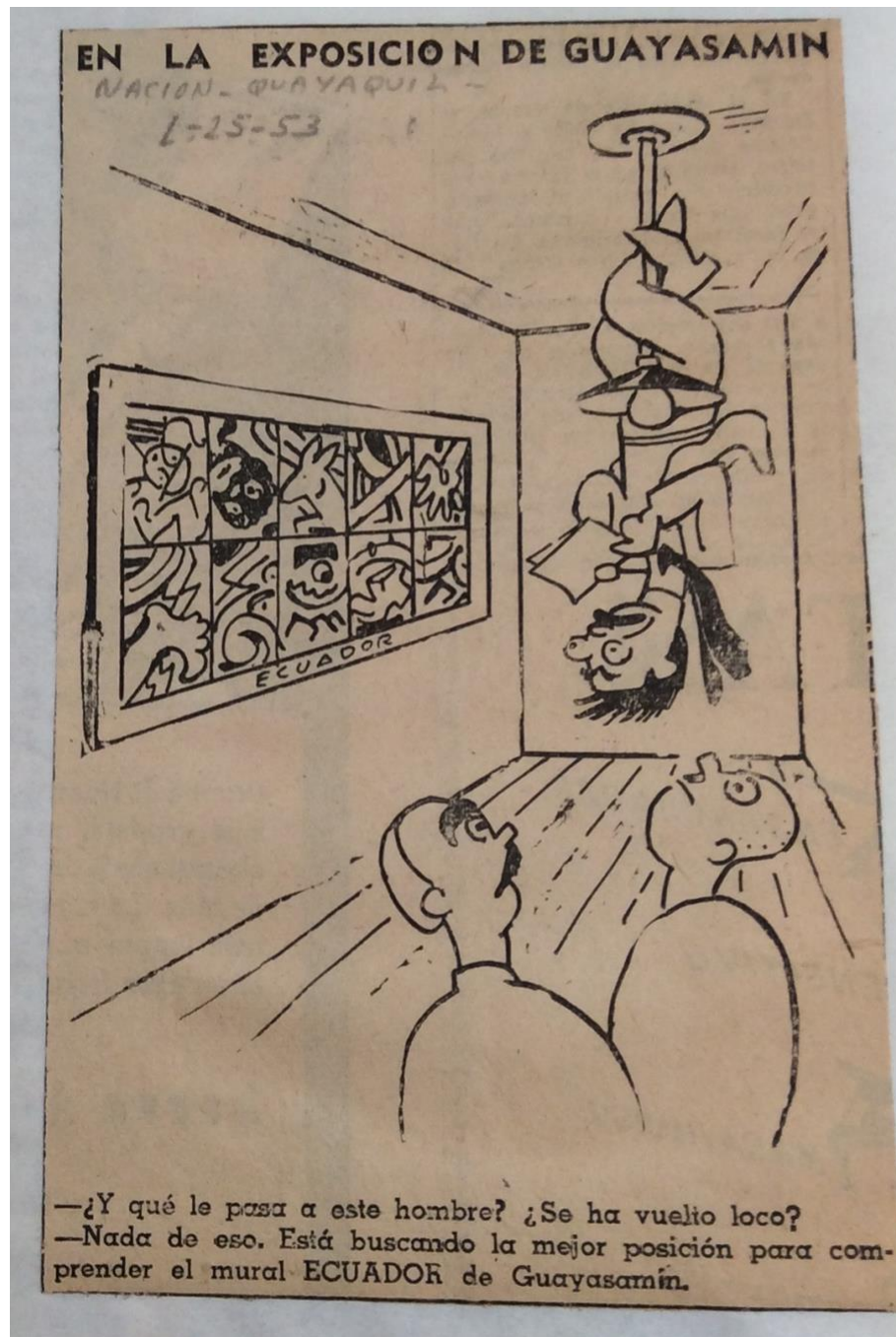


Figure 27: Cartoon published in the newspaper *La Nación* (Ecuador), in 1952. Archive at the Art Museum of the Americas.



Figure 28: Araceli Gilbert, *Litografía #5*, 1955, material and location unknown



Figure 29. Benjamín Carrión, Claire Egas, and Camilo Egas (center) at the inauguration of his exhibition *Exposición de Egas* (August 15- August 30, 1956) at the Museo de Arte Colonial of the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, in Quito, Ecuador. Trinidad Pérez's private archive

<p><i>Primera Epoca (Expresionismo)</i></p> <p>1. ESTACION 14 NEW YORK</p> <p>2. DESOCUPADOS</p>	<p><i>Segunda Epoca (Surrealismo)</i></p> <p>3. EL TRIUNFO DE LA GUERRA CIVIL DE ESPAÑA</p> <p>4. EL VACIO EN ESPAÑA</p> <p>5. OSCURA HORA</p> <p>6. PESADILLA</p> <p>7. MASA NEGRA</p> <p>8. LA CONQUISTA</p> <p>9. INTERROGACION</p> <p>10. IDILIO</p>	<p><i>Ultimas Obras</i></p> <p>11. HORA TEMPRANA</p> <p>12. DESPUES DEL REJO</p> <p>13. DIA DE FIESTA</p> <p>14. AL MERCADO</p> <p>15. EL CORAJE</p> <p>16. CARAVANA</p> <p>17. ADIOS</p> <p>18. TRABAJADORES</p> <p>19. HEX SIGNS</p> <p>20. PENNSYLVANIA</p> <p>21. SCHURLKILL HAVEN</p> <p>22. PASATIEMPO</p> <p>23. MUÑECAS</p> <p>24. ANGULO DEL ESTUDIO</p> <p>25. JANE STREET</p> <p>26. FOURTEENTH STREET</p> <p>27. PAUSA</p> <p>28. COMPOSICION NUMERO 1</p> <p>29. " " 2</p> <p>30. " " 3</p> <p>31. NEW YORK</p> <p>32. CAMBIOS</p> <p>33. CIRCO</p> <p>34. AUTORETRATO</p> <p>35. ENIGMA</p>
--	--	---

Figure 30. List of exhibited works in the 1956 *Exposición de Egas* at the Museo de Arte Colonial of the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana. Exhibition catalogue



Figure 31. Camilo Egas, *Después del Rejo*, 1950s, material and location unknown



Figure 32: Detail of Camilo Egas's *Después del Rejo*, 1956



Figure 33: Camilo Egas, *Al Mercado*, 1955, material and location unknown



Figure 34: Camilo Egas, *Camino al mercado*, 1922-1923, oil on canvas. Museo Nacional del Ministerio de Cultura, Ecuador

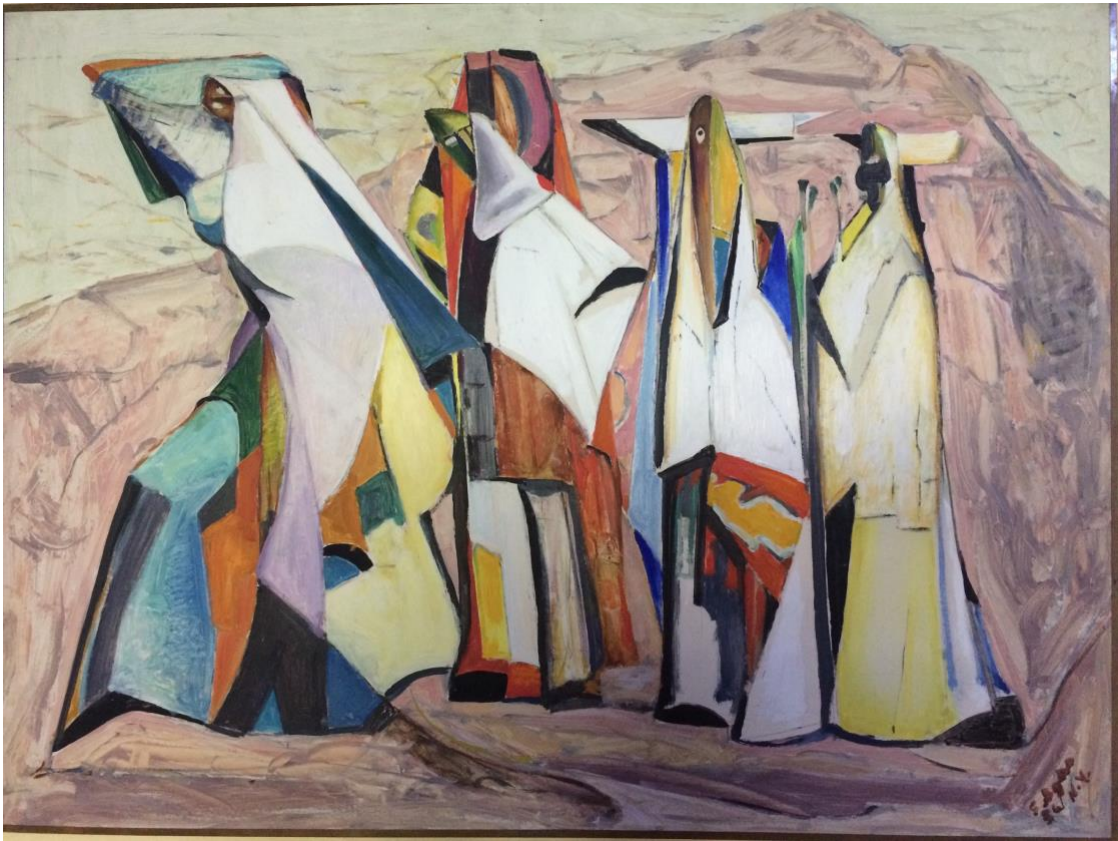


Figure 35: Camilo Egas, *Caravana*, 1956, oil on Masonite. Private collection, Ecuador



Figure 36: Camilo Egas, *Calle 14*, 1937, oil on canvas. Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- “About ACA Galleries.” American Contemporary Art Gallery. Accessed March, 1, 2018. <http://www.acagalleries.com/about-aca>.
- “Egas, el pintor prolífico.” *Metro Hoy* (Ecuador). October 29, 2003.
- “Mural at The New School of Social Research.” *The American Art Magazine*, 26, (1933).
- “Reviews & Previews; Camilo Egas.” *Art News*, December, 1946.
- “Un artista que regresa.” *El Comercio* (Ecuador), August 19, 1956.
- Andrade, Raúl. *Camilo Egas: Agosto-October 1978*. Quito, Ecuador: Museo del Banco Central del Ecuador, 1978. Exhibition catalogue.
- . “Dos escorazos de Egas.” In *Egas*. Quito, Ecuador: Museo Camilo Egas, 1979. Exhibition catalogue.
- . “La evolución pictórica de Camilo Egas.” *El Comercio*, Suplemento Dominical (Ecuador). August 26, 1956.
- Anreus, Alejandro, Diana L. Linden, and Jonathan Weinberg. “Introduction,” *The Social and the Real: Political Art of the 1930s in the Western Hemisphere*, XIII-XVIII. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press. 2006.
- Bhabha, Homi. “In Between Cultures.” *New Perspectives Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2013): 107-109.
- Barrera Agarwal, María Helena. “En busca del mural de Camilo Egas en la feria mundial de 1939.” *Procesos* 31 (2010): 79-102.
- Camilo Egas Commemorative Exhibition*, New York: New School for Social Research, 1963, exhibition catalogue.
- Cartagena, María Fernanda, “Vanguardia, colonialismo y política. Literatura y arte en el Ecuador de la década del sesenta.” *SUR/versión 2* (2014): 104-132.
- Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana. *Exposición de Egas*. Quito: Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, 1956. Exhibition catalogue.
- Castro y Velázquez, Juan. “La pintura costumbrista del siglo XIX.” *El Arquitecto* 1, no.5 (1981).
- Cordero de Landívar, María Fernanda. *Cuadernos de Cultura Popular: El Corpus Christi*. Cuenca: Centro Interamericano de Artesanías y Artes Populares, 2009.

- Craven, David. *Abstract Expressionism as Cultural Critique: Dissent During the McCarthy Period*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Devree, Howard. "About Art and Artists; One-Man Show of Paintings by Camilo Egas Opens at the A.C.A. Gallery." *New York Times*, December 13, 1955.
- Egas, Adela. "Camilo Egas, un gran valor. El romántico iniciador del indigenismo ecuatoriano." *El Comercio* (Ecuador), October 26, 1969.
- Enwezor, Okwui. "Between Localism and Worldliness." In *Global Encounters in the World of Art: Collisions of tradition and modernity*, edited by Ria Lavrijsen, 31-40. Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 1998.
- Fort, Ilene Susan. "American Social Surrealism." *Archives of American Art Journal* 22 no. 3 (1982): 8-20.
- Giordano, Mariana. "Memoria de una Alteridad Periférica. Imaginario del Indígena Chaqueño en la Fotografía Contemporánea." In *Arte Latinoamericano del Siglo XX. Otras Historias de la Historia*, edited by Rodrigo Gutiérrez Viñuales, 285-311. Zaragoza: Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, 2005.
- Greet, Michele. *Beyond National Identity: Pictorial Indigenism as a Modernist Strategy in Andean Art, 1920-1960*. University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009.
- . "From Indigenism to Surrealism: Camilo Egas in New York: 1927 – 1946." In *Nexus New York: Latin/American Artists in the Modern Metropolis*, edited by Deborah Cullen, 168-179. New York: Museo del Barrio, 2009.
- . "Painting the Indian Nation: Pictorial Indigenism as a Modernist Strategy in Ecuadorian Art, 1920-1960." PhD diss., New York University, 2004.
- Guerrero, Jorge. "Los nuevos pintores y las formas modernas." *Revista de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia*, no. 9 (marzo 1949): 93-114
<https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/revistaun/article/view/13811>
- Indych-López, Anna. "Making Nueva York Moderna: Latin American Art, the International Avant-Gardes, and the New School." In *Nueva York, 1613-1945*, edited by Edward J. Sullivan, 234-255. London: Scala, 2010.
- Jáuregui, Carlos A., and Edward F. Fischer. "Of Rage and Redemption. Oswaldo Guayasamín (1919-1999)." In *Of Rage and Redemption. The Art of Oswaldo Guayasamín*, edited by Joseph S. Mella, 17-38. Tennessee: Center for the Latin American and Iberian Studies at Vanderbilt University, 2008.

- Jewell, Edward Alden. "New School Offers a Variety of Exhibitions Including Egas's Completed Mural." *New York Times*, February 9, 1933.
- . "Surrealism and Mystery." *New York Times*, November, 24, 1946.
- Johnson, Alvin, S. *Camilo Egas: Commemorative Exhibition*. New York: New School for Social Research, 1963. Exhibition catalogue.
- . *Notes on The New School Murals*. New York: The New School for Social Research, ca. 1934. The New School Archives Digital Collection. <http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/collections/NS010101>
- Joselit, David. *American Art Since 1945*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2003.
- Lansford, Alonzo. "Presenting Camilo Egas." *Art Digest*, November 15, 1946.
- Llerena, José Alfredo. *La pintura ecuatoriana del siglo XX: Primer registro bibliográfico de artes plásticas en el Ecuador*. Quito, Ecuador: Imprenta de la Universidad, 1942.
- Majluf, Natalia. "'Ce N'est Pas Le Pérou,' Or, the Failure of Authenticity: Marginal Cosmopolitans at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1855." *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 4 (1997): 868-93.
- . "On the Margins of Painting: Nature in the Andean Imagination, c.1800-1900." In *Picturing the Americas – Landscape Painting from Tierra del Fuego to the Arctic*. Edited by Peter John Brownlee, Valeria Piccoli and Giorgiana Uhlyarik, 138-143. New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2015.
- Manthorne, Katherine. "The Latin American Landscape in a Global Context." In *Traveler Artists: Landscapes of Latin American from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection*. Edited by Katherine Manthorne, 15-23. Seattle: Marquand Book, 2015.
- Monteforte, Mario. *Los signos del hombre*. Quito: Imprenta Mariscal; Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, 1985.
- New York Times*. "At of Egas Sets Motif for Ecuador: Colorful Pavilion Dominated by Work of Nation's Leading Artist." June 12, 1939.
- Oña, Lenin. *Araceli*. Quito: Imprenta Mariscal, 1995.
- Pacheco Pérez, Raúl, ed. *Benjamín Carrión: Ensayos de arte y cultura*. Quito: Centro Cultural Benjamín Carrión; Municipio Metropolitano de Quito, 2007.

- Pareja Diezcanseco, Alfredo. "Camilo Egas analizado por Alfreda Pareja Diezcanseco." In *Camilo Egas*. Quito: Museo Camile Egas, 1977. Exhibition catalogue.
- Pereira Valarezo, José. *La Fiesta Popular Tradicional del Ecuador*. Quito, Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales-FLACSO, 2012.
- Pérez, Trinidad. "Exoticism, Alterity and the Ecuadorian Elite: The Work of Camilo Egas." Translated by Philip Derbyshire. In *Images of Power: Iconography, culture, and the State in Latin America*. Edited by Jens Andermann and William Rowe, 99, 126. New York: Berghahn Books, 2005.
- . "La Apropiación de lo Indígena Popular en el Arte Ecuatoriano del Primer Cuarto de Siglo: Camilo Egas (1915-1923)." In *I Simposio de Historia del Arte: Artes "Académicas" y Populares del Ecuador*, edited by Alexandra Kennedy-Troya, 143-160. Cuenca: Abya-Yala and Fundación Paul Rivet, 1995.
- . "La construcción del campo moderno del arte en el Ecuador, 1860-1925: Geopolíticas del arte y eurocentrismo." PhD diss., Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, 2012.
- . "Modos de aprender y tecnologías de la creatividad: El establecimiento de la formación artística académica en Quito, 1849-1930" in *Academias y Arte en Quito, 1849-1930*, Museo de Arte Colonial de la Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, Quito: Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, 2017.
- . "The Indian in the 1920's Painting of the Ecuadorian Painter Camilo Egas." M.A Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1987.
- Pini, Ivonne. *En busca de lo propio: inicios de la modernidad en el arte de Cuba, México, Uruguay y Colombia 1920-1930*. Bogotá, Colombia: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2000.
- R.R. "One-Man Shows: Camilo Egas." *Arts Magazine* 30, no. 5 (February, 1955): 58-59.
- Ribadeneira M., Edmundo. "La moderna pintura ecuatoriana." In *Ensayos: Trece años de cultura nacional*, Agosto 1944-57. Edited by Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, 101-112. Quito: Editorial Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, 1957.
- Rocha, Susan. "Investigación_ La crítica sobre Camilo Egas (1917-1940)." *Paralaje.xyz*, September 17, 2016, http://www.paralaje.xyz/investigacion_la-nocion-de-vanguardia-a-traves-de-la-recepcion-de-la-obra-de-camilo-egas-1917-1940-2/.
- Rodríguez Castelo, Hernán. "Camilo Egas." *Revista Diners*, 137, October, 1993.
- . *El Siglo XX de las Artes Visuales en el Ecuador*. Guayaquil: Museo de Arte del Banco Central del Ecuador; Cromos S.A., 1988.

- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1978.
- Schapiro, Meyer. "The Nature of Abstract Art." *Marxist Quarterly* 1, no. 1, (January-March, 1937): 4-97.
- . *Style*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953.
- Scott, William B. and Peter M. Rutkoff. *New School: A History of The New School for Social Research*. New York: Free Press, 1986.
- . *New York Modern: The Arts and the City*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999.
- T.J Demos, *The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary during Global Crisis*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013.
- The New School for Social Research. *New School Bulletin-Art: Fine Arts, Applied Arts 1954-1955* 2 no. 2 (September 13, 1954): unpaginated.
- . *New School Bulletin-Art Classes 1946-1947*, 4, no. 2 (September 9, 1946): unpaginated.
- Traba, Marta. *Dos décadas vulnerables en las artes plásticas latinoamericanas, 1950-1970*. Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1973.
- Valencia, Jaime. "Camilo Egas." *El Diario* (Ecuador). August, 1956.
- Varela, Xiro. "Camilo A. Egas," *Caricatura: Seminario Humorístico de la Vida Nacional*. (1918): 7-8.
- Venegas, Lermontov. "Benjamín Carrión y su teoría de la Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana." *Coleccion Rumichaca*, Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana "Benjamín Carrión" Núcleo del Carchi 35, no. 1 (1997): 7-69.
- Villaroel, Fernando. "La valiosa obra de Camilo Egas." n.d. paper clipping in the Archives of the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana.
- Viteri Paredes, Patricio, ed. *Huellas que no cesan, 70 años: Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana 1944-2014*. Quito: Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana Benjamín Carrión, 2014.