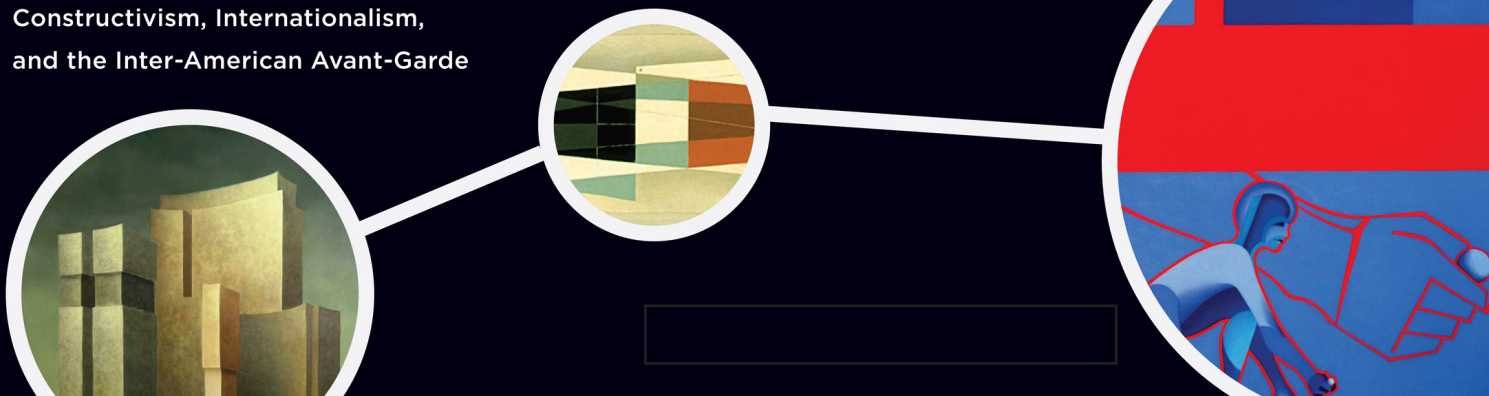


# CONSTELLATIONS

Constructivism, Internationalism,  
and the Inter-American Avant-Garde



AMA | Art Museum of the Americas  
201 18th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006  
Hours: TUE - SUN | 10AM - 5PM

**Exhibition on view:** June 22 - September 23, 2012  
**Opening Reception:** Thursday, June 21 at 6PM

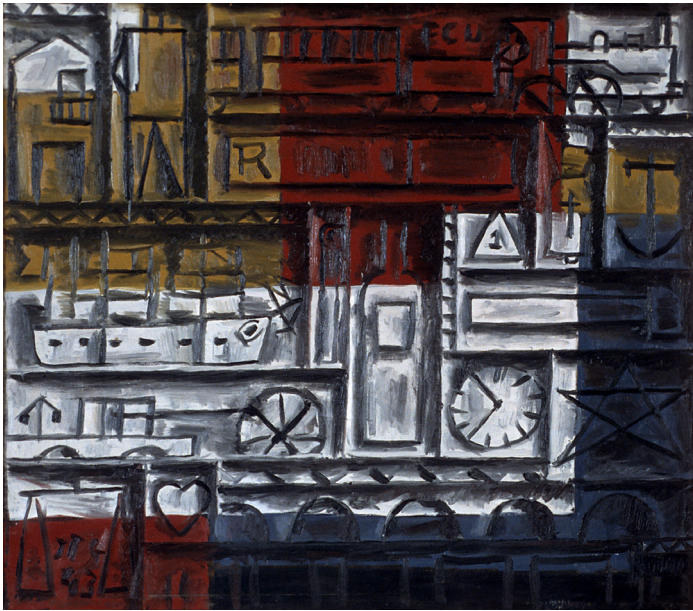
As interest in geometric abstraction continues to surge, AMA | Art Museum of the Americas' new Constellations exhibition provides an essential overview that surveys the dynamic, inter-American history of geometric abstraction across the twentieth century. The works of AMA's permanent collection on display illustrate the rich cultural and visual history of geometric abstraction as it evolved into a range of expressive and divergent practices across the Americas. In line with the broader mission of AMA and the Organization of American States, Constellations recognizes the socially constructive role that the arts have played in fostering democracy and freedom of expression at intense historical moments of social and political change.

Taking its cue from the work of Joaquín Torres-García, the Uruguayan constructivist who pioneered abstraction in the Southern Cone, Constellations shows the evolution of the geometric impulse through four complementary movements. These interrelated "constellations" - Constructivist Americas, Figuring Geometry, Constructive Geometries, and Geometry in Motion - explore the visual and ideological versatility of abstraction from the 1930s through the 1950s and '60s. The four constellations resist linear chronologies and national paradigms, instead describing a history of synergies and encounters across time and space:

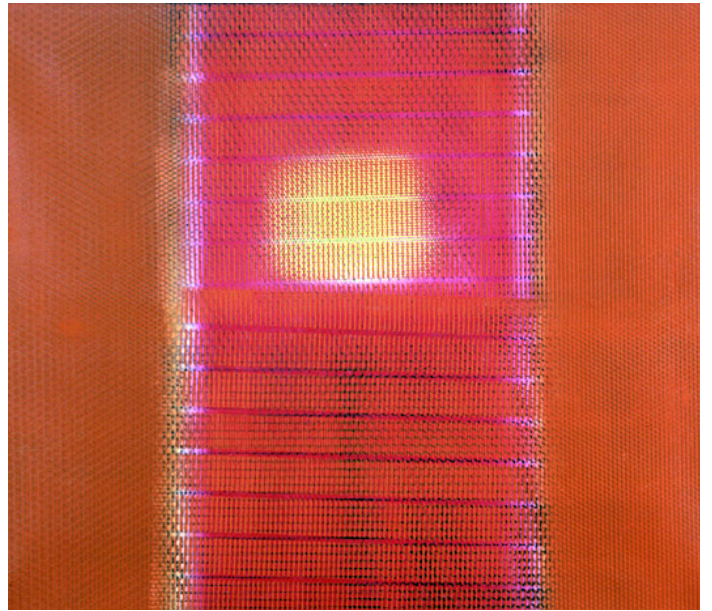
**Constructivist Americas:** In 1943, the year in which he painted AMA's iconic Constructivist Composition, Torres-García founded the Taller Torres García in Montevideo. A prolific teaching workshop, the Taller became a creative nexus of abstraction in the Americas, disseminating Torres-García's theory of Universal Constructivism through pedagogy and print media. The evolution of this constructivist thread is seen here in the practice of Uruguayan artists José Gurvich, Maria Freire and José Pedro Costigliolo, whose work forms a productive dialogue with North American counterparts including Gunther Gerzso and Carlos Mérida.

**Figuring Geometry:** Abstraction and figuration were not always mutually exclusive practices, and the artists in this constellation engage a figural, or somatic, presence vis-à-vis geometric form. Elder-generation artists such as the Cubans Mario Carreño and René Portocarrero found their way to abstraction through a gradual distillation of earlier, representative forms, while younger contemporaries including Gaston Garreaud and Miguel Ocampo worked in

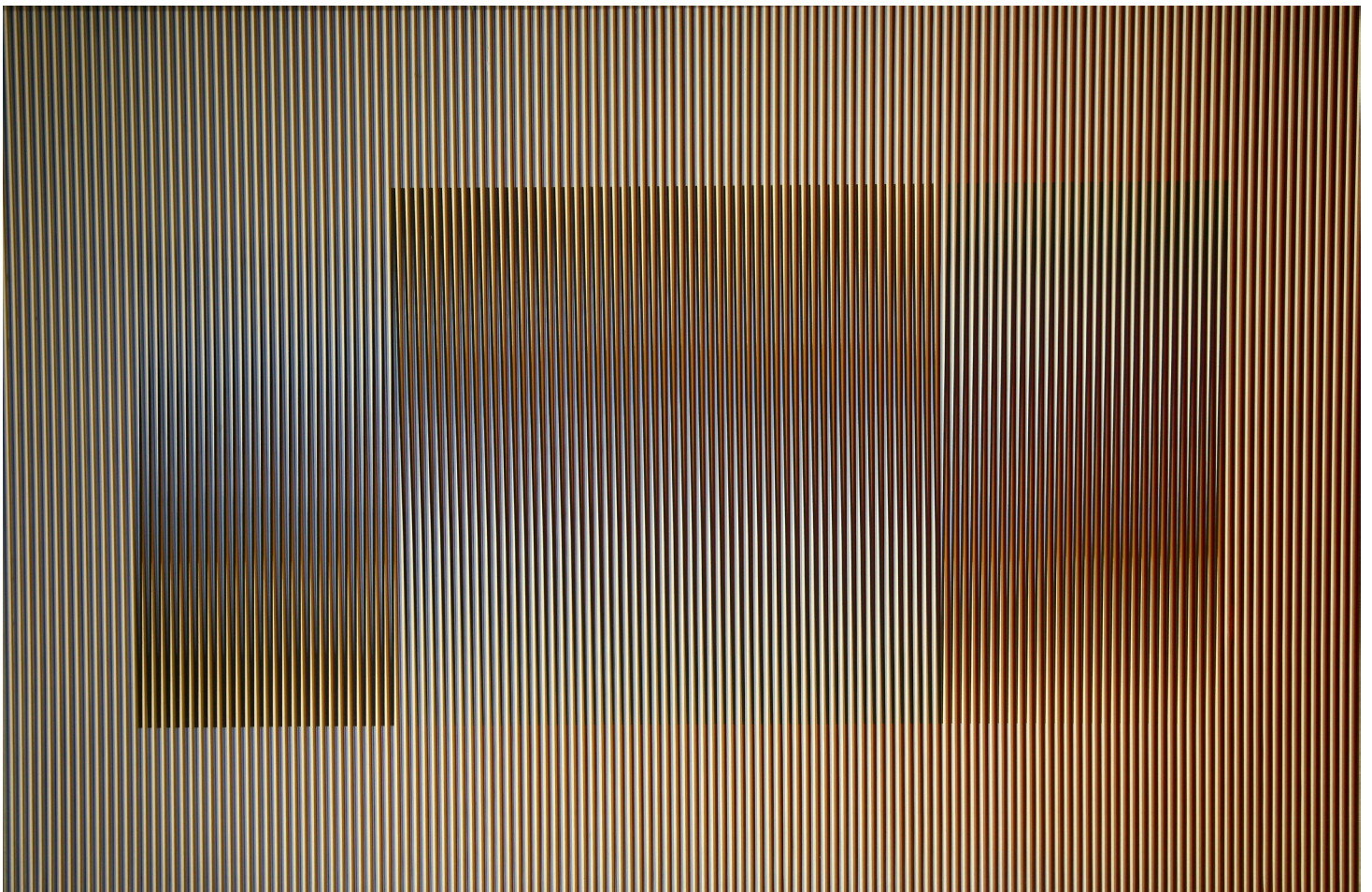




**Joaquín Torres-García** (Uruguay)  
*Constructive Composition*, 1943



**Rogelio Polesello** (Argentina)  
*Naranja sobre Magenta (Orange on Magenta)*, 1961



**Carlos Cruz-Diez** (Venezuela)  
*Physichromie No. 965*, 1977

reverse, infusing geometry with suggestively bodily associations. Paintings by Tomie Ohtake and Venancio Shinki represent the existential dimension of geometry and its expressive possibilities.

**Constructive Geometries:** Co-founded by Gyula Kosice, Argentina's groundbreaking Madí movement ranks among Latin America's most innovative, interdisciplinary and international expressions of geometric abstraction. The euphoric, postwar utopianism of the Madí movement is here contrasted with the comparative sobriety and spartan feeling of constructivism in Colombia. Working through a time of civil conflict known as La Violencia, artists including Edgar Negret, Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar and Omar Rayo plied elemental, planar geometries in works that explored stark contrasts of color and spatial relief. Works by Loló Soldevilla and Fanny Sanín suggest the lesser known but important place of women artists in the constructivist movement.

**Geometry in Motion:** Among the highlights of AMA's collection are classic examples of geometric and optical art from Venezuela and Argentina. Alejandro Otero and others embraced the universality of geometric forms as a means of transcending nativist nationalism, and the optical vibrations of his *Colorritmos*, Jesús Rafael Soto's *Escrituras*, and Carlos Cruz-Diez's *Fisicromías* invite sensorial experience and viewer participation through essences of color, space, and light. Argentine kineticism evolved out of the concrete and Madí movements of the 1940s, and this second wave of geometric abstraction is represented by the optical experiments of Rogelio Polesello and the cosmic pursuits of Eduardo Mac Entyre, Ary Brizzi, and Miguel Angel Vidal.

From the Taller Torres-García and the Argentine Madí group to Colombian Constructivism, Cuban Concretismo, and Venezuelan Kineticism, abstraction encompassed optics and technology, political activism and dissent, and inter-American dialogue and exchange. The artworks featured in *Constellations* suggest the multifaceted aspirations and motivations of avant-gardes across the Americas and the vitality of geometry as a structural and social metaphor.

*Constellations* is curated by Abigail McEwen, Assistant Professor of Latin American Art, University of Maryland.

#### ARTIST LIST

Rudy Ayoroa	Jose Gurvich	Rogelio Polesello
Ary Brizzi	Jose Paulo Ifanger	Rene Portocarrero
Coqui Calderon	Gyula Kosice	Lincoln Presno
Jorge Camacho	Juan Carlos Liberti	Eduardo Ramirez Villamizar
Enrique Careaga	Eduardo MacEntyre	Omar Rayo
Mario Carreño	Estuardo Maldonado	Fanny Sanin
Jose Pedro Costigliolo	María Martorell	Venancio Shinki
Sandú Dariá	Enrique Medina Ramela	Cristina Sicardi
Carlos Cruz-Diez	Carlos Merida	Lolo Soldevilla
María Freire	Edgar Negret	Jesus Rafael Soto
Agustín Fernández	Miguel Ocampo	Joaquin Torres-Garcia
Gaston Garreaud	Miguel Ocampo	Miguel Angel Vidal
Gunther Gerzso	Tomie Ohtake	
Elsa Gramcko	Alejandro Otero	
Sarah Grilo	Manuel Pailos	

Special thanks to the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and Cernuda, Tresart, Arévalo galleries, Miami.