



Oswaldo Vigas, *Proyecto para Mural en Naranja*, 1953, Oil on paper fixed on Masonite. Image courtesy of Galería RGR and the artist.

Galería RGR at Art Basel, Basel

Oswaldo Vigas: A Sensuous Abstractionism

16 - 19 June 2022

Booth Number: H1, Hall 2.0, Feature sector

Marking the gallery's inaugural participation in Art Basel, Galería RGR presents a selected group of paintings by Venezuelan painter and muralist Oswaldo Vigas (1923–2014) from the 1950s. The works on view offer highlights of his life's artistic practice. Commemorating his participation in the Central University of Venezuela (UCV) murals, the booth will include two of Vigas' preparatory paintings for the famed "Synthesis of the Arts" public art commission, now listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site. The solo presentation joins the Feature sector at Art Basel, showcasing artworks by 20th and 21st-century artists, ranging from solo exhibitions to stimulating juxtapositions.

The 1953 painting *Personaje Naciente* demonstrates the artist's view of his practice: speaking to a journalist for Caracas's newspaper *El Nacional* in 1968, Vigas commented, 'I have never been rigorously abstract or rigorously figurative. I've always

tried to be rigorously Oswaldo Vigas.” Here it is clear the Venezuelan artist had begun to explore a new artistic language; while maintaining a figurative approach, vaguely primitivist in character, there is also a vigorous embodiment of the geometric and constructivist idiom.

Also exhibited is *Proyecto para Mural en Naranja* and *Proyecto para Mural VI*. Both were created in 1953 as preparatory drawings for a public art commission by the architect Carlos Raul Villanueva for his “Synthesis of the Arts” project at the Universidad Central de Venezuela. This project demonstrated Venezuela’s accelerated process of modernization; taking more than 25 years to complete, it would come to represent the highest ideals and proposals of urban planning, architecture, and modern art in the Western Hemisphere. A group of Venezuelan artists, including Alejandro Otero, Gego, and Jesus Rafael Soto, alongside internationally renowned masters like Alexander Calder, Fernand Léger, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Wifredo Lam, and Victor Vasarely, were commissioned to create large-scale public artworks, which were installed in situ throughout the campus. Now listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site, Vigas’s drawings suggest that he was interested in moving beyond figuration, assuming a language of geometric signs in which he tries to create equilibrium, unity, and an equivalent relationship between forms, planes, colors, and all the elements that compose the artworks.

The work *El Encuentro* was included in the XVIII Biennale di Venezia in 1954. Now presented by Galería RGR, it shows thick and black outlines alongside grays, greens, and ochres with symbolic density. Vigas focused on studying lines and space structures and using color to create balance and movement throughout his compositions. The last two masterpieces exhibited are *Gran Objeto Vertical* and *Objeto Negro*, both from 1956; more austere artworks, here Vigas almost renounces the use of color, reducing his chromatic range to blacks, grays, and whites.

An undisputed trailblazer, Vigas played a pivotal role in the history of modern art in Venezuela and Latin America and as an artistic voice of Paris’s legendary avant-garde scene of the mid-20th century. His achievements and legacy are well-established in his country of origin; however, he remains lesser recognized internationally.

Ricardo Gonzalez, Director of Galería RGR, comments, “it’s a proud moment for us to bring the estate of Vigas to an international stage at Art Basel while marking our first participation in this leading fair. He is an artist I have worked with personally since the beginning of my career, and I feel honored to bring some of the works he treasured most to global audiences, to maintain his legacy and global art-historical prominence.” Gonzalez has worked with Vigas since 2009, and Galería RGR has represented his estate since his passing in 2014.

About Oswaldo Vigos

Oswaldo Vigos (1923 – 2014) is a Venezuelan artist best known as a painter and muralist, but his work spanned painting, sculpture, print, drawing, ceramic, and tapestry. Predominantly recognized as a self-taught artist, Vigos avoided the artistic currents of his environment and instead ventured to build his own artistic language, inspired by the magical, the mythical, and the telluric of the Latin American imaginary, a trend that would be the common thread of his oeuvre.

In 1954 Vigos represented Venezuela at the Venice Biennale. In 1992 he participated in the XXVI International Prize of Contemporary Art of Monaco, receiving the first prize, and in 1999, the Iberian-American FIA Art Fair chose him as the honored artist. Oswaldo Vigos died in Caracas in 2014 at the age of 90 years.

Today, his works are part of the collections of important public institutions such as the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Art Museum of the Americas, OAS, in Washington, D.C., the Musée Des Beaux Arts D'Angers, and the Musée Des Beaux-Arts in Reims; the Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá; the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Santiago de Chile to name a few; as well as in numerous important private collections around the world.

About Galería RGR

Galería RGR was founded by Ricardo Gonzalez in Venezuela in 2012 before moving to its current location in Mexico City in 2018. The gallery champions both established and emergent contemporary artists from across the globe, whose practices and research point toward the distinct futures offered by abstractionism.

Covering 260 sq m, the gallery space is located in the San Miguel Chapultepec neighborhood, in a building previously used as the editorial offices of Mexico's youth magazine, *ERES* (1988-2012). Using abstract art as a guiding thread, the gallery unites various artistic fields and lines of thought. Having begun with the representation of key Venezuelan artists of the modern-contemporary art juncture, such as Carlos Cruz-Diez and Jesús Rafael Soto, the gallery's evolution has meant a continuous search for fruitful intersections between the present and the near past, expanding beyond geographical limits.

Through its exhibition program, Galería RGR creates critical dialogues around international contemporary art production, mainly exploring abstraction as the base language, from its roots in the modernist painters and sculptors of the mid-20th century to the most innovative multidisciplinary proposals of our times. Exhibitions include seminal solo shows with artists Carlos Cruz-Diez (2018) and Oswaldo Vigos (2019),

marking the latter's first-ever solo show in Mexico. The gallery's international program represents artists from America, Europe, and Asia; they hosted the first Latin American solo shows for artists, including Jeppe Hein (2021) and Ding Yi (2022).

Notes to Editors

Title: Oswaldo Vigas: A Sensuous Abstractionism | Galería RGR at Art Basel, Basel

Dates: 16 – 19 June 2022 (Media Reception: June 14, 2022, 2 pm – 3 pm)

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