

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Wall Street International Magazine
Manuel Espinosa
April 2018

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23 Mar – 21 Apr 2018 at the Stephen Friedman Gallery in London, United Kingdom



Manuel Espinosa. Courtesy of Stephen Friedman Gallery

Stephen Friedman Gallery is delighted to present Manuel Espinosa's second exhibition in London. Espinosa (1912-2006) was one of Argentina's most important post-war abstract painters. This is his first survey exhibition in Europe and it features paintings and works on paper dating from the 1950s to the 1980s.

In 1943 Espinosa met Joaquín Torres-García, the founder of Constructive Universalism. This meeting had a profound effect on his approach to painting. Two years later he co-founded the 'Asociación Arte Concreto-Invencion' with Tomás Maldonado, Alfredo Hlito, and Raúl Lozza. Harnessing a post-war optimism, the group stopped painting from life and began painting abstract shapes and symbols.

Espinosa travelled to Europe in the 1950s, forging friendships with members of the 'Movimento di Arte Concreta', 'Forma' and 'De Stijl' movements. These dialogues solidified Espinosa's own practice. Line, colour and the optical sensations of movement and light became his central concerns.

By the late 1950s, Espinosa's work possessed a visual language instructed by the principles of order and repetition. 'Untitled', c.1958 is one of the earliest paintings in the exhibition and embodies Espinosa's work of the time. Hollow squares of varying size and colour are stacked on top of one another to the right of the canvas. Forming a simple colour study of clarity and precision, it recalls the work of 'De Stijl' co-founder Georges Vantongerloo, who Espinosa met in Amsterdam.

In the 1960s Espinosa's exploration of line and colour began to involve the complex multi-layering of shapes to create pronounced depth. Working on larger canvases, he overlaid shapes and colours that elicited a kinetic optical effect. The painting 'Untitled', c.1967 is divided in to two blocks of colour: the top black, the bottom

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blue. Rounded horizontal forms cover the canvas at regular intervals, superimposed with rows of circles in shades of purple and blue. The combination of overlaid deep colours produces a remarkable optical illusion where shapes appear to move as the eye scans the painting's surface. It is dynamic, as if frozen in mid motion.

Music and literature deeply impacted Espinosa's work. He often painted while listening to music and borrowed titles from books, especially James Joyce novels. The painting 'AYAT' from 1979 has a remarkable musicality. Painted with a subtle, transparent quality, it has sixteen squares on a background of spectral squares, all of which appear to be disappearing. During this time, the grid structure he had revisited throughout his career began to formally echo sheet music.

Included in this exhibition is a selection of works on paper that provide a crucial insight into Espinosa's working methods. Rendered in quick-drying inks which Espinosa applied in lines with rollers, these drawings often overlaid single colours and produced variations in hues and density.

Rhythm, colour and poetry defined Espinosa's career. Although he was born in Argentina, European culture had an immeasurable influence on his work. Espinosa was renowned for his ability to manipulate light and colour, as a distillation of complex ideas. And he had a profound influence on a whole generation of contemporary artist some of whom include Bridget Riley, Olafur Eliasson and Spencer Finch. This exhibition confirms Espinosa's standing as one of the most important international post-war abstract painters.

Recent solo exhibitions include: 'Manuel Espinosa - Light, colour and movement', Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Salta, Argentina; toured to Museo Emilio Caraffa, Córdoba, Argentina (2015); 'Manuel Espinosa', Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, England (2014); 'Manuel Espinosa: Geometría en Movimiento', Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina (2013); 'Manuel Espinosa: Paintings and Works on Paper, 1960s and 1970s', Sicardi Gallery, Houston, Texas, USA (2013); 'Manuel Espinosa: Drawings and Paintings, 1950s - 1970s', Sicardi Gallery, Houston, Texas, USA (2010); 'Espinosa', Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Neuquén, Argentina (2009); 'Manuel Espinosa. Anthology on Paper', Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires, Argentina (2003) and 'Manuel Espinosa. Rosario Prize 2001'; Museo Municipal de Bellas Artes, Rosario, Santa Fe, Argentina (2001).

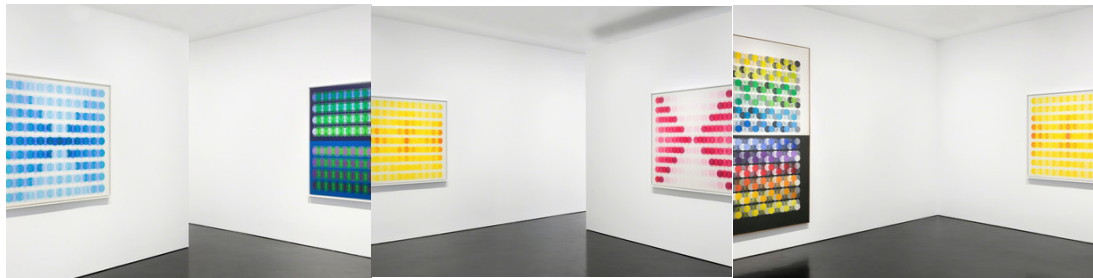
Notable group exhibitions include: 'Crónicas de Solidaridad y Resistencia, colección MSSA', Museo de la Solidaridad Salvador, Allende, Chile (2016-2017); 'The Illusive Eye', El Museo del Barrio, New York, USA (2016); 'Seeing Around Corners', Turner Contemporary, Margate, England (2016); 'Real/Virtual, Arte Cinético argentino de los años sesenta', Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, Argentina (2012); '50 Years of the Asociación Arte Concreto-Invencción', Instituto Cultural Iberoamericano, Buenos Aires, Argentina (1995); 'Abstraction in the XX Century', Museo de Arte Moderno Buenos Aires, Argentina (1985); 'Vanguards of the 1940s', Arte Concreto-Invencción, Arte Madí, Perceptismo, Museo Eduardo Sívori, Buenos Aires, Argentina (1980); 'Two Trends: Geometry— Surrealism', Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, Argentina (1975); 'Manuel O. Espinosa--Tomás Maldonado', Sociedad Argentina de Artistas Plásticos,

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Buenos Aires, Argentina (1947); and 'First Exhibition of the Asociación Arte Concreto-Invención', Salon Peuser, Argentina (1946).

Espinosa's work features in the permanent collections of numerous prominent institutions including the Art Institute of Chicago, USA; Fondo Nacional de los Artes, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, USA; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas Sofía Imber, Caracas, Venezuela; Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Museum of Art at the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, USA; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, USA; Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection, New York, USA.



1. Manuel Espinosa. Courtesy of Stephen Friedman Gallery
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