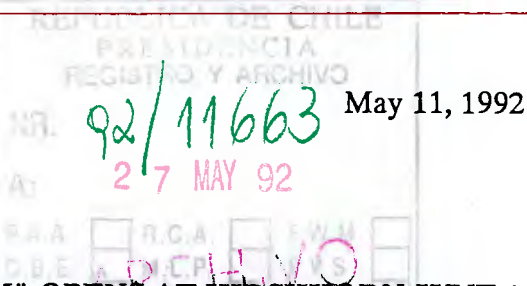


# Smithsonian Institution NEWS

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## "CROSSCURRENTS OF MODERNISM" OPENS AT HIRSHHORN, JUNE 11 WITH WORKS BY RIVERA, TORRES-GARCÍA, LAM, MATTA

**PRESS PREVIEW:** Wednesday, June 10, 10 a.m.-noon.  
Hirshhorn's third floor. Presentation at 11 a.m. by Valerie Fletcher.  
Refreshments will be served. R.S.V.P. (202) 357-1618.

"Crosscurrents of Modernism: Four Latin American Pioneers/Intercambios del Modernismo: Cuatro Precursores Latinamericanos," an exhibition of some 90 works, mostly paintings, by Diego Rivera, Joaquín Torres-García, Wifredo Lam and Matta, will open on Thursday, June 11, at the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, and continue through Sept. 7.

The exhibition, organized for the Columbus Quincentenary by Hirshhorn Curator Valerie J. Fletcher, underscores yet another New World contribution to global culture. The works on view, which date from the 1910s to the 1940s, reveal how these four artists--born in Mexico, Uruguay, Cuba and Chile--fueled and ultimately enriched modern art with diverse themes and sources from Latin America.

In Rivera's "Zapatist Landscape (The Guerrilla)" of 1915, for instance, fragmentary images of a serape, sombrero and ammunition belt create an abstract Cubist portrait of the Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata. Themes from Pre-Columbian civilization, an influence on Rivera's later figure paintings in the exhibition, also appear as signs and symbols in Torres-García's bold geometric abstractions.

Lam's paintings meld Surrealism with mask faces, animal attributes and other visions from Afro-Caribbean religions. And Matta's biomorphic abstractions and phosphorescent organisms in illogical spaces evoke a world of fantasy and the primordial Andean landscape.

The exhibition will include 20 to 25 examples--many never before or seldom exhibited in this

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country--from each artist's primary period of discovery and innovation. The assembled works will provide the first significant United States exposure in several decades for Torres-García, Lam and Matta, and a rare, focused overview of easel paintings by Rivera, known most widely for his murals.

Rivera (1886-1957), who received a traditional art education in Mexico City, assimilated Cubism on a European sojourn that was a rite of passage for many North and South American artists of the day. But the Mexican artist broke with the style--it was not for his purposes sufficiently communicative--and resettled in his homeland in 1921 to help launch the "Mexican Renaissance" of large-scale public murals. Imprinted by the bold forms of modernism, his work now looked to Pre-Columbian cultures, along with the simple life of Mexican peasant workers.

Torres-García (1874-1949), born and raised to age 15 in Uruguay, began his career in Spain, New York and elsewhere. Hitting his stride in his 50s in Paris, where he moved in 1926, the artist became a co-founder of the "Circle and Square" group of abstractionists committed to a utopian painting of pure geometry and color. But the Uruguayan's work soon incorporated ideograms and symbolic motifs inspired by Pre-Columbian art. Torres-García resettled in Montevideo in 1934 after an absence of more than 40 years and founded a highly influential studio school there.

Lam (1902-1982), born and educated in Cuba, pursued a career first in Madrid and then Paris, where he was influenced by African sculpture (an interest fostered by Picasso) and the fecund, open-ended imagery of Surrealism. Leaving Nazi-occupied France for Cuba in the early 1940s, the artist, who was half Chinese and part African, re-immersed himself in Afro-Caribbean traditions, especially the Santería religion fusing Catholic and Yoruba beliefs. Lam ultimately found it difficult to make a living in Cuba and spent the last 30 years of his life in Paris.

Matta, the Chilean-born painter now 80 years old, created Surrealist "Inscapes" in Paris in the 1930s echoing the exaggerated metaphors of Spanish author Federico García Lorca and Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. Exiled to New York, Matta became Surrealism's emissary for nascent Abstract Expressionists. A volcanic eruption and the experience of Mayan cultures on a trip to Mexico in 1941 profoundly affected his work. Eschewing any nationality, Matta resettled in Paris--still his home--in 1948, making brief visits to Chile that year, in 1954 and in the 1960s.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated, bilingual catalog available at the Hirshhorn Museum shop for \$29.95. Co-published by Smithsonian Institution Press, the catalog will include an introduction by Fletcher and essays on each artist by the curator and four guest essayists.

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These include scholar Rivera Olivier Debroise (*A Cubist at the Crossroads: The Evolution of Diego Rivera, 1914-1935*), architect/collector Adolfo Maslach of Venezuela (*On the Esoteric in the Art of Joaquín Torres-García*), New York curator and art historian Lowery Sims (*Syncretism and Syntax in the Work of Wifredo Lam*), and the Mexican Nobel laureate Octavio Paz (*Vestibule* and *The House of Glances*, an essay and poem on Matta).

In conjunction with the exhibition, an all-day symposium on Saturday, June 27, and a family day on Saturday, Sept. 5, will be presented free at the museum. For details, the public may call the Hirshhorn's Education Department at (202) 357-3235.

The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Independence Avenue at Seventh Street S.W., is open seven days a week from 10 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. The nearest Metro stop is L'Enfant Plaza, Smithsonian museums exit. Admission is free.

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