

GERMÁN CUETO

(Mexico City, 1893 – 1975)

- 1909-1910 Germán Cueto enters High School and studies chemistry in Mexico.
- 1912 Revolutionary fighting threatens Mexico's economy and social structures. Cueto has to interrupt his studies and live from different jobs as an office worker.
- 1914-1915 Cueto joins a theatre group that performs in the Jalapa region for several months. He then returns to work on the railroads, as well as on his maternal grandfather's farm.
- 1916-1917 The death of Germán Cueto's father puts the family in a delicate financial situation. They decide to send Germán to establish contact with the paternal family in Spain. There he will start a great friendship with his first cousin María Gutiérrez Blanchard, who will introduce him to the avant-garde. He is supposed to study Philosophy and Literature, but he prefers to travel around Spain.
- 1918 Cueto returns to Mexico determined to become an artist and enrolls in the Academy of Fine Arts. This seems crazy to his family, who has been bankrupted by the campaigns of the German general Kloss, in the pay of Venustiano Carranza, in power since 1915. Cueto follows the courses of José Tovar and above all of Fidencio Nava, the latter less of an academician than the others because he comes from symbolism. Disappointed, Cueto prefers to work alone.
- 1919 At the Academy, he met Dolores Velásquez Rivas (1897-1978), who would be known as Lola Cueto. They would have three children, Ana María, Mireya and Jorge. Their daily life is difficult.
- 1922 Cueto works as a trainee for a rather conservative sculptor, Ignacio Asúnsolo, who receives commissions from the Public Education. Like many intellectuals, Cueto is seduced by Vasconcelos' generous cultural policy. He signs the "Social, Political and Aesthetic Declaration", written by Siqueiros for the Union of Technical Workers, Painters and Sculptors.
- 1923 Cueto actively participates in a cultural and educational campaign in the state of Hidalgo, which will earn him an honorary mention. The second Strident manifesto is published in Puebla. **The Stridentists** hold their meetings in the Café de Nadie in Mexico: writers, artists, musicians - such as Arce, Alva, List, Vela, Fermín and Silvestre Revueltas - who will be friends of Cueto throughout his life. Edward Weston and Tina Modotti arrive in Mexico and join them.
- 1924 On April 12, a Strident demonstration (conference, poetry reading, music) takes place at the Café de Nadie, accompanied by an exhibition of paintings (Alva, Charlot, Méndez, Revueltas, etc.), photographs (Weston) and sculptures, including some masks of Cueto in cardboard, plaster, papier-mâché and metal.
- Xavier Guerrero, Rivera and Siqueiros launch the newspaper *El Machete*, in which Cueto will collaborate.
- 1926 **Cueto presents a solo exhibition at the Café de Nadie.** He survives by teaching modeling in various institutes and at the Escuela Normal. List Arzubide founds the magazine *Horizonte* in Jalapa and publishes *El movimiento estridentista*, history of the movement and its protagonists, among which Cueto figures in the foreground.

These are also the funeral chimes for a movement that is drowning in a country that is first and foremost seeking to reorganize itself.

- 1927 In the magazine *Horizonte* Cueto he publishes his play *Comedia sin solución*. The sculptor and his family leave, via Santander, for Paris. Cueto settles down near Montparnasse. He immediately establishes contact with his cousin Maria Blanchard who has left Spain for good in 1919. Thanks to her, he met writers such as André Salmon and Maurice Raynal, the sculptor Lipchitz and many Spaniards in Paris such as Juan Gris, Pablo Gargallo, Julio González, José de Creeft... Cueto took part in demonstrations in favour of Sacco and Vanzetti, who were executed that same year.
- 1928 Cueto spends short periods in Belgium, Holland, Switzerland (with the Van Rees), Italy and Spain. He meets new personalities: Brancusi, Picasso, Henri Laurens, Adam Fischer...
- 1929 Thanks to the Uruguayan Torres-García, Cueto meets the Belgian writer Michel Seuphor and attends artists' meetings at Seuphor's or Mondrian's house, the prelude to Cercle et Carré. The Cueto house, rue des Plantes, is the meeting place for Latin Americans. Maria Blanchard and Gomez de la Serna live nearby. Torres-García is very active and multiplies the **group exhibitions** in which he has Cueto participate: at the **Galerie des Quatre-Chemins** or at the **Salle de La Renaissance in Paris**. Lola Cueto also exhibits her tapestries at La Renaissance, presented by André Salmon. **The Cuetos exhibit in Dalmau, Barcelona.**
- 1930 Appearance of the magazine *Cercle et Carré*, directed by Seuphor and Torres-García. On April 18th, the group, which has around ninety members, holds a large **exhibition in the Galerie 23**. The parallel events take place: talk by Torres-García, concert by Russolo, poetry recital by Seuphor with masks from Cueto. At the same time, the Cueto family takes part in an exhibition of Latin American artists in Paris organised by Torres-García at **Galerie Zak**. Cercle et Carré is dislocated due to lack of means and understanding among its members. The Cueto family meets Angelina Beloff, with whom they will remain united for the rest of their lives.
- 1931 **Cueto exhibits nine sculptures in the Salon des Surindépendants**. He also exhibits, thanks to Van Rees, at the **Galerie Bara in Bellinzona, Ticino**.
- 1932 After the death of his cousin Maria Blanchard, in April, the couple decides to return to Mexico, together with Angelina Beloff, who will live with them for many years.
- 1933 **Cueto forms part of the Constructive Art Group that Torres-García organises in Madrid; he appears in October in the exhibition reserved for this group in Room XVI of the Madrid Autumn Salon Exhibition**. As he cannot claim a leading place in the Mexican artistic world, as he does not accept the reigning realism, and despite his enthusiastic adherence to the principles of the revolution, Cueto devotes himself to theatre and puppetry in the company of Lola and his friend List Arzubide. Ramón and Loló Alva de la Canal and Angelina Beloff join them; later, Mireya Cueto will perpetuate this tradition. In addition to the puppets, Cueto

makes masks for Eugene O'Neill's *Lázaro rió*, directed by Julio Bracho at the Teatro Hidalgo.

- 1934 President Lázaro Cárdenas founds the communist-oriented Mexican Revolutionary Party, while under the leadership of Leopoldo Méndez and Pablo O'Higgins, the **League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists (LEAR)** is founded, which Cueto will join. However, because of its aesthetic independence, Cueto is much closer to the Contemporaries. From now on, he will teach in different schools, while continuing his work.

Cueto will write the Spanish text for Angelina's book, *El caballito jorobado* (1943)

- 1936 Germán and Lola Cueto separate. Germán will marry María Fernández Galán, with whom he will have another child, Javier.

When civil war breaks out in Spain, Mexico supports the Republic. Obviously, Cueto takes the side of the Republicans, according to the tradition of the Gutiérrez family.

- 1937 Cueto enters the Museum of Industry to teach for several years. He writes and directs for the Department of Fine Arts a satirical comedy in which he denounces warmongering, *La guerra con Ventripón*, with scenery and costumes by his friend Fernández Ledesma. The newspaper *Izquierdas* publishes again *Comedia sin solución*. **Cueto takes part in the exhibition at the University gallery; Gómez de la Serna presents him in the catalogue.**

- 1939 End of the civil war in Spain. Cueto will become friends with the poets and artists who took refuge in Mexico: León Felipe, Emilio Prados, José Moreno Villa, Manuel Altolaguirre, Enrique Climent, Ramón Gaya, Rodolfo Halffter...

- 1940 Back in Mexico, Vasconcelos commissions Cueto to make a dozen busts of writers and philosophers, a commission that will keep him busy for a long time. Cueto makes the masks for the ballet *La Coronela*, a posthumous work by Silvestre Revueltas, finished by Blas Galindo.

Germany's victory in Europe brings a second wave of refugees (1939-1942) whom Cueto befriends: Remedios Varo, Benjamin Péret, Leonora Carrington, Victor Serge and Vlady.

- 1940-1950 Years of intense creative activity for Cueto. He wrote a theoretical course on *Applied Geometry* for his students (1944). **He exhibits at the Galería de Arte Mexicano (1944) and at the Mont-Orendáin Gallery (1948) in Mexico.** In 1948 he is director of the Institute of Dance of the Palace of Fine Arts.

- 1951 **Exhibition at Clardecor Gallery in Mexico.**

- 1952 Cueto is in correspondence with Karl-Otto Götz who runs *Meta* magazine in Frankfurt. At the request of the architect Mario Pani, he created a sculpture of metal beams for the Multifamiliar Presidente Juárez.

- 1953 **Mathias Goeritz invites Cueto to collaborate in the new interdisciplinary museum *El Eco*.** Henry Moore, passing through Mexico, asks to visit Cueto in his workshop.
- 1954 **Cueto exhibits at the Salon de Plastica Mexicana.** He is invited to travel to Sweden.
- 1954-1955 In Sweden, at the Gustavsberg ceramics factory, Cueto creates ceramics and glazes according to a personal procedure. He becomes friends with the young painter Gunnar Larson in Stockholm. He also goes to the Arabia Workshop in Helsinki and the Royal Porcelain Manufacture in Copenhagen. **In December 1954 he exhibits at the Svensk-Franska Konstgalleriet in Stockholm, and later, in January-February 1955, at the Aveny Gallery in Göteborg.**
- 1955-1956 **Back in Mexico, Cueto exhibits his new works: ceramics in the Proteo gallery, and glazes and sculptures in the Excelsior galleries.** He resumes teaching the plastic arts at the La Esmeralda school.
- 1960 He is appointed professor of enameled metal at the School of Artisans in the Citadel. The French Institute of Latin America presents paintings, enamels and sculptures by Germán Cueto.
- 1964 **Cueto sees his work recognized; in the second Biennial of Sculpture of Mexico he receives an honorable mention.**
- 1965 **Homage exhibition to Cueto at the Museum of Modern Art in June-July, whose catalogue, *Works by Germán Cueto*, is presented by Margarita Nelken.**
- 1967-1968 **He is awarded in the third Biennial of Sculpture for his bronze *Circumvolution*. He works on *El Sagitario*, a monumental lead sculpture and iron frame for the Mixcoac Towers, Lomas de Plateros, and on the *Corredor*, commissioned by the Olympic Committee for the University City of Mexico. At the suggestion of Luis Mario Schneider, the former stridentists organize a meeting: Alva, List, Maples Arce, Méndez, Gallardo, Vela and Cueto.**
- 1970 Cueto, sick, has to decrease his activity. Not being able to execute more works of effort, he devotes himself above all to the painting of easel.
- 1974 Cueto's last public appearance at an exhibition of photographs by his old friend Manuel Álvarez Bravo, in July.
- 1975 On February 14, Germán Cueto dies in Mexico. A tribute exhibition is planned that will only be held six years later.
- 1981 **From May to July the first posthumous retrospective of Germán Cueto's work is presented at the Museo de Arte Moderno de México; Fernando Gamboa and Xavier Moyssén write the catalogue.**
- 1986 His work is included in the group exhibition *Futurismo & Futurismi* at Palazzo Grassi in Venice, Italy.

- 1998 French expert Serge Fauchereau curates a group exhibition, *Forjar el espacio (Forging Space)*, where he dedicates a special chapter to the work of Germán Cueto, illustrating the cover with *Tehuana*, Cueto's work, owned by MAM (Museo de Arte Moderno de México). It is presented in three museum spaces: **Museum of Modern Art of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain; IVAM, Valencia, Spain; Museum of Modern Art of Calais, France.**
- 2005 The solo exhibition *Germán Cueto* is shown from February to May at the **Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (MNCARS) in Madrid, Spain**, curated by Serge Fauchereau.
- 2006 **Germán Cueto's solo exhibition takes place at the Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil in Mexico City**, curated by Ester Echeverría and Sylvia Navarrete.
- 2010 **With the exhibition *Iron and Shadow*, a solo show of Germán Cueto's work, Freijo Gallery opened its doors in Madrid, Spain.** A monographic catalogue was published on certain works by Germán Cueto.

WORK IN MUSEUMS AND PUBLIC SPACES

- Two bronze masks placed on the doors of the Prado cinema, disappeared during the 1986 earthquake, Mexico City.
- Six meter sculpture, made with an iron base, "Human couple", placed in the building "A" of the multi-family house President Benito Juárez in Mexico City, also disappeared during the earthquake of 1985.
- "Beisbolista", a concrete sculpture that functioned as a ball gobbler in the garden of the Social Security building on Paseo de la Reforma, Mexico City, removed by "superior orders".
- Mural of abstract figures in iron on vinelite, placed in the offices of the Barras y Perfil rolling mill, Mexico City.
- "Tehuana", sculpture in various metals: iron, copper, brass and aluminum, collection of the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico City.
- "The Altar of Peace", Chiluca stone carving, collection of the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico City.
- Medallion with the profile of Manuel M. Ponce, placed at the entrance of the room of the same name in the Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City.
- "Miner", a three-meter concrete sculpture located in Zacualpan, State of Mexico.
- The "Actor" appears in particular for the facade of the Teatro Regina, which was never placed due to problems between the Ministry of Finance and the National Institute of Fine Arts.
- Twelve busts of illustrious men located in the Mexico City Library, commissioned by José Vasconcelos, Mexico City.

- Portrait of Guadalupe Posada in chiluca stone, National Museum of Art Collection, Mexico City.
- "Allegory," a stained glass window acquired by an American company.
- "Sagittarius", monumental lead sculpture and iron frame for the Mixcoac Towers, Lomas de Plateros, Mexico City.
- "Ancestral head", large mask carved in red American stone, acquired by the Modern Museum of Sculpture in Amsterdam, Holland.
- "The Runner", an eight-meter bronze sculpture, located in the place of honor of the Route of Friendship, in front of the Olympic Stadium of Ciudad Universitaria, for the XIX Olympiad in 1968, Mexico City.
- "Napoleon", white stone sculpture from Reims, acquired by the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain.
- "Model for the Monument to the Mexican Revolution", in wood, acquired by the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain.
- "Mikoito", iron plate sculpture, acquired by the Musée d'Art Moderne de Lille Métropole, France.
- "Abstract head", made in pencil on paper, acquired by the Musée d'Art Moderne de Lille Métropole, France.

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