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| de Zayas, Marius (1880-1961) |
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| Marius de Zayas was a Mexican caricaturist, writer, collector, dealer, and curator who formed part of the New York avant-garde, and did much to promote European modernism in the United States. Through his writings, curatorial, and creative work, de Zayas helped to lay the foundations of American modernism, and to assert the centrality of primitive art to the modernist aesthetic. Exhibited for the first time in 1913, de Zayas’ abstract portraits are some of the earliest examples of avant-garde production the United States. These drawings reflect his engagement with the aesthetic explorations of the European avant-gardes, and the challenges posed by photography to the tradition of naturalism in Western art. Marius de Zayas’ work was instrumental in promoting a transnational exchange of art and ideas between Europe and the Americas. In his conception of modernism, primitive art was the source of formal experimentation, but also of spirituality and transcendence. His contribution to the history of modern art in the United States remains to be appropriately acknowledged, but it is there for anyone who cares to read his *How, When and Why Modern Art Came to New York* written for Alfred Barr towards the end of his life. |
| Marius de Zayas was a Mexican caricaturist, writer, collector, dealer, and curator who formed part of the New York avant-garde, and did much to promote European modernism in the United States. Through his writings, curatorial, and creative work, de Zayas helped to lay the foundations of American modernism, and to assert the centrality of primitive art to the modernist aesthetic. Exhibited for the first time in 1913, de Zayas’ abstract portraits are some of the earliest examples of avant-garde production the United States. These drawings reflect his engagement with the aesthetic explorations of the European avant-gardes, and the challenges posed by photography to the tradition of naturalism in Western art. Marius de Zayas’ work was instrumental in promoting a transnational exchange of art and ideas between Europe and the Americas. In his conception of modernism, primitive art was the source of formal experimentation, but also of spirituality and transcendence. His contribution to the history of modern art in the United States remains to be appropriately acknowledged, but it is there for anyone who cares to read his *How, When and Why Modern Art Came to New York* written for Alfred Barr towards the end of his life.  While he was born in Mexico, de Zayas was from an European background. He spoke several languages and moved comfortably between Europe and the Americas. His father was a prominent Mexican lawyer, writer and politician who held various positions in Europe, and the United States before settling in New York in 1907. While still in Mexico, Marius de Zayas started to collaborate in newspapers with caricatures and satirical cartoons. His work matured in the United States, where he developed a stylized shorthand that gave his caricatures a refined modernist look. His depictions of New York socialites and political satire appeared in publications such as *The World, The Evening World Daily Magazine, The New York Evening Call* and *Puck.* This work caught the attention of Alfred Stieglitz who offered him an exhibition at The Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession, better known as ‘291’. This was the start of a fruitful collaboration, bringing de Zayas into the core of Stieglitz’ select group. From Paris, de Zayas helped to organize the first exhibition of Picasso in the United States, shown at Stieglitz’ gallery in April 1911. His writings also started to appear in *Camera Work.* During this period de Zayas became close to Francis Picabia and Guillaume Apollinaire, and established important connections with French dealers and the Parisian avant-garde. With the support of Agnes Meyer, Picabia, and Paul Haviland, de Zayas opened The Modern Gallery in 1915, which continued to pair modernism with primitive art, and to promote modernist trends in the United States. This galley closed in 1918, but his endeavors continued, this time supported by Walter Arensberg, with his De Zayas Gallery, which operated between 1919 and 1921. After that Marius de Zayas moved to France, where he lived until 1948.  De Zayas’ idiosyncratic interpretation of Cubism and Futurism produced hermetic abstractions which combine an interplay of lines and mathematical equations with soft and diffused tonalities. This gives a particular ‘painterly’ quality to his work that emphasizes craftsmanship over mechanical reproduction – a quality which has been related to Stieglitz’ pictorialist aesthetic. His use of numbers reveal de Zayas’ belief that spirituality had been replaced by science, and the equations relate to the complexity of his sitters (see Hayland 1981). They are psychographic depictions that reflect his close relationship with Stieglitz and his circle. In collaboration with Picabia, Haviland and Agnes Meyer, de Zayas produced *291,* a journal dedicated to the promotion of avant-garde trends and meant as a eulogy to Stieglitz and his influential gallery. The journal was short lived (only twelve issues were released), but it worked as a catalyst for the experimental pursuits of the New York Dada, and as a platform for radical thinking about modern art. List of Works: Marius de Zayas, *Max Weber*, ca. 1910, watercolor on paper, 46.4 x 39.7 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art  Marius de Zayas, *John Marin and Alfred Stieglitz*, ca. 1912, charcoal on paper, 59.1 x 44.8 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art  Marius de Zayas, *Francis Picabia*, ca. 1913, photogravure, 24.8 x 20.1 cm, de Zayas family, Seville.  Marius de Zayas, *291 Throws Back Its Forelock*, 1915, ink and wash on paper, 72.4 x 56.8 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. |
| Further reading:  (Hyland)  (De Zayas)  (De Zayas, Crónicas y ensayos Nueva York y Paris 1909-1911)  (Bohn)  (Aurrecoechea, Reaves and Naumann) |