Contributor: Lisandra Estevez

**Colson, Jaime**

(b. Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic, 1901- d. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 1975)

One of the founders of the modernist movement in twentieth-century Dominican art, Jaime Colson worked in a variety of media that included drawing and painting. While his style of representation underwent dramatic transformations that assimilated Impressionism, Cubism, and Surrealism, his emphasis on the human figure was central to his *oeuvre*. The subject of the nude, relatively rare in Dominican art at that point in history, was one that he continuously re-interpreted throughout Colson’s prolific career. His eroticised representations of both the male and female body, as seen in his *Figuras Metafisicas* (*Metaphysical Figures*, 1930, oil on board, Museo Bellapart, Santo Domingo), fuse monumental forms with sensual colour and brushwork. Colson is best known for his development of “neohumanismo” (or neohumanism) as he called it. Moreover, Colson introduced the *criollo*, a figure whose diverse origins are rooted in African, European and Amerindian culture, into modern Dominican art. In his celebrated *Merengue* (1938, oil on board, Museo de Arte Bellapart), Colson “[…] speaks directly to a Caribbean sensitivity” according to Sullivan. The picture’s rhythmic composition is populated with figures drawn with strong contours and painted in a vibrant palette that illustrates the festive nature of this music and dance form that is strongly connected to Dominican identity.

Colson’s early works reflected the prevailing style of the Spanish academies where he was trained during the 1920s, first at La Lonja in Barcelona and thereafter at the Academia de San Fernando in Madrid. In his *Untiled* (1922, oil on board, Museo Bellapart, Santo Domingo), Colson painted a luminous river-scape that reflects his academic training. During his stay in Paris from 1924 to 1928, Colson absorbed the idiom of Cubism into his own art, painting works such as *Escuela Catalana* (*Catalan School*, 1928, oil on wood, Museo de Arte Bellapart, Santo Domingo) whose forms are shaped with clear contours and tubular shapes that reflect his affinity for the Purist aesthetic of **Fernand Léger**. In paintings from his neohumanismo period, such as his *Paisaje Metafisico* (*Metaphyiscal Landscape*, 1929, oil on board, Collection Grisolía Family), he re-envisioned the uncanny surrealist compositions of **Giorgio de Chirico**’s metaphysical paintings and the monumentality of **Pablo Picasso**’s classical period.

His travels in Mexico from 1934 to 1938 brought him into contact with its leading artists such as **María Izquierdo**, **Jose Clemente Orozco**, **Diego Rivera**, **David Alfaro Siqueiros**, and **Rufino Tamayo**. The young Cuban artist **Mario Carreño** traveled with him and this trip with Colson marked a turning point in his early career. Colson spent ten years in Barcelona from 1939 to 1949 and returned to Paris in 1949. During these years in Europe, he painted portraits and religious themes. While working in Mallorca, he painted a mural representing Christ’s resurrection for a small church in Cala Murta. He spent most of his later career (from 1950 to 1975) in the Dominican Republic where he continued to express the racial diversity of Dominican society using the pictorial language of Cubism. His *Idolo Azul* (*Blue Idol*, 1956, oil on wood, Museo Bellapart, Santo Domingo) represents the human form using simplified geometric shapes that unfold in planes of bright colour. Colson was also a talented art critic, dramatist, and poet, leaving behind a substantial literary corpus that remains to be understood better in the context of his art.

[](http://www.artmuseumoftheamericas.org/collection/cpg15x/displayimage.php?album=search&cat=0&pid=565#top_display_media)

*Retrato de un joven dominicano (Portrait of a Young Dominican*)

1950

oil on canvas

26 x 20”

Collection OAS Art Museum of the Americas

http://www.artmuseumoftheamericas.org/collection/cpg15x/displayimage.php?album=search&cat=0&pid=565#top\_display\_media

**Further reading:**

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**List of works:**

*Untiled* (1922, oil on board, Museo Bellapart, Santo Domingo)

*Figuras Metafisicas* (*Metaphysical Figures*, 1930, oil on board, Museo Bellapart, Santo Domingo)

*Merengue*, 1937, tempera on board, Museo Juan José Bellapart, Santo Domingo

*Idolo Azul* (*Blue Idol*, 1956, oil on wood, Museo Bellapart, Santo Domingo)