**iContributor: Lisandra Estevez**

**Suro, Darío**

(b. La Vega, Dominican Republic, 1918 – d. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 1997)

One of the Dominican Republic’s foremost modern painters, Darío Suro’s heterodox style of painting encompassed a wide range of styles from the Impressionist mood of his early paintings, to the neo-realism of his maturity, and finally to the abstraction of his later works. Like his contemporaries **Yoryi Morel** and **Jaime Colson**, Suro was concerned with portraying themes that expressed his Dominican identity and sought to create an authentic language for painting. His early landscapes of horses and rainy scenes such as *Lluvia en el Mercado* (*Rain in the Market*, 1942, Museo Bellapart, 1942) captured the shifting effects of light on colour in the tropical landscape of the Cibao region where he was raised. Like Colson, Suro was concerned with issues of national identity. He developed a type of painting termed “Negroide” that was part of a greater artistic and literary project addressing the island’s multiracial heritage and cultural diversity. His images directly confronted these themes and did not shy away from the controversy they generated at a time when Dominicans erroneously white-washed their own history. On another hand, his mature and late career paintings reflect an “abstract-figurative” manner, as the artist himself called it.

Suro’s life-long interest in art and art history began in his youth. The artist was born to a family of intellectuals and artists. His first painting teacher was his uncle, the academic painter Enrique Garcia Godoy. He worked as a diplomat throughout his career with his first appointment in 1943 as the cultural attaché of the Dominican Republic to Mexico. In the same year, he spent several weeks in Havana where he met the young Cuban art critic Jose Gomez-Sicre and befriended artists Fidelio Ponce, **Carlos Enríquez**, and **Amelia Peláez**. During his stay in Mexico, Suro studied with **Diego Rivera**, Jesus Guerrero Galván, and Agustín Lazo. According to Suro, Rivera taught him “a very formal way of composing a picture, but not much about content. […] [Rivera’s] theories and wide-ranging knowledge of art history were more interesting, more so than the process of putting together an easel or mural work.”

Suro resided in Spain during the 1940s and 1950s where he became fascinated with the art of  **El Greco, Velázquez** and **Goya** and resulted in a series of abstract works in homage to them such as the *Tribute to Velázquez* [tempera (and gouache) on paper, 1959, OAS Art Museum of the Americas, Washington, D.C.]. In the 1950s, Suro left the Dominican Republican for New York where he was forced into temporary exile because he refused to paint the portrait of the dictator Rafael Trujillo. Four years after Trujillo’s assassination, Suro returned to the Dominican Republic in 1965 where he resumed his career as a diplomat serving in various embassies and ultimately culminating in a post in the Dominican embassy in Washington, D.C. In the 1980s Suro produced a series of works, respectively entitled *Figuras* (*Figures*) (1984) and *Guiñapo I* (1985), that represent torn bodies using ripped sheets of paper to indicate the torment and despair of the human condition. His female nudes of the 1990s, furthered his earlier eroticized figures of the 1970s, being even more graphic in their close-up views of female genitalia. Art historian Alejandro Anreus further noted that “Suro states that his concepts lack any concrete definition throughout this time because his pictorial ideas flow like apparitions or ghosts. Style, organic or conscious, is not important for Suro, he is interested in the conditions of the existence of the object – be this the human figure or landscape.”

In addition to a career as a prolific painter, Suro wrote extensively on art and frequently contributed to Dominican and international art magazines. In 1969, Suro also produced a survey of modern Dominican painting consisting of brief monographs of the country’s major artists. Throughout his long career, Suro was recognized with many honors and he was the first artist to receive the “Premio Nacional de Artes Plasticas” awarded by President Joaquin Balaguer in 1993.



*Tribute to Velázquez*

tempera (and gouache) on paper

1959

23 1/4 x 34"

Collection OAS Art Museum of the Americas

http://www.artmuseumoftheamericas.org/collection/cpg15x/displayimage.php?pid=193

**Further reading:**

Anreus, A. (1992) *3 Hispanic-American Masters:* *Darío Suro, Roberto Estopiñan, Juan Sánchez*. Montclair, NJ: The Montclair Art Museum

Ferrer, E. and E. Sullivan (eds.) (1996) *Modern and Contemporary of the Dominican Republic,* New York: The Americas Society and The Spanish Institute

Izquierdo, M. (1946). *Darío Suro.* Exhibition catalogue. Mexico City: Palacio de Bellas Artes, October 24 – November 4, 1946.

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Sullivan, E. (ed.) (1996) *Latin American Art in the Twentieth Century.* London: Phaidon.

Suro, D. (1969). *Arte dominicano: monografía de las artes plásticas dominicanas*. vol. 1. Santo Domingo: Publicaciones Ahora

(2001) *Suro. Metamorfosis and transmigraciones (1917-1997)*

**List of works:**

*Lluvia en el Mercado* (*Rain in the Market*, 1942, Museo Bellapart, 1942)

*Figuras* (*Figures*), 1984, mixed media, formerly in the artist’s collection

*Guiñapo I,* 1985, mixed media, formerly in the artist’s collection