Contributor: Rosa Berland

**Del Prete, Juan**

Born: 1897 –Vasto, Chieti, Italy; Died: – Buenos Aires, 1987



Juan Del Prete

*Abstracción*. 1932

Oil on canvas

142.3 x 114 cm

Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires

<http://www.buenosaires.gob.ar/areas/cultura/arteargentino/02dossiers/concretos/gr2_histo1_12.php>

The primary legacy of the self-taught artist Juan Del Prete is the introduction of visual abstraction to Argentina through two exhibitions of his work in 1933 and 1934 at the Asociación Amigos del Arte in Buenos Aires. However, Del Prete’s oeuvre of over 40 years is characterised by experimentation in a variety of modernist styles. Born in Italy, Del Prete immigrated to Argentina in 1909 and studied briefly at the Academia Perugino and Mutualidad de Estudiantes de Bellas Artes in Buenos Aires, participating in the *El Bermellón* Group. Much of the early work was representational and included landscapes such as *Nota campestre (1925).* In 1926, Del Prete exhibited with the progressive organisation the Asociación Amigos del Arte and the Asociación provided him with a scholarship to study abroad in France (1929-33). The artist was one of many Latin American artists who lived and worked in Paris; and as such was part of a rich artistic exchange with Hans Arp, Massimo Campigli, Rachel Forner, Joaquín Torres García, Jean Hélion, and Georges Vantongerloo. Del Prete joined the Abstraction-Création group in 1932. In Paris, Del Prete exhibited with the Salon des Surindépendants (1930-33), Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, Huit artistes du Rio de la Plata, Galerie Castelucho-Diana and the Première Exposition du Groupe Latino-Americain de Paris (1930). Gallery Zak would hold an exhibition of Del Prete’s work (1930) as would Galerie Vavin (1931). Work of this period includes geometric colorful compositions such as *Abstracción* (1932).

Del Prete returned to Argentina in 1933, and the seminal debut of his abstract paintings and sculpture at *Los Amigos del Arte* included non-figural paintings, plaster carvings, and wire works such as *Estructura en alamabre* (1933) as well as maquettes for stage sets and masks. The 1940s saw experimentation in various stylistic languages from neo-cubist works to the graphic *Composición Geométrica Triangulares* (1942) and *Composición geométrica* (1949) in the artist’s work. In 1950, the artist returned to Europe and exhibited in the Venice Biennale (1952 /1958). Del Prete’s work in the 1950s includes *Abstracción tropical* (1957) and *Composición en rojo* (1959). In the second half of the 20th century, Del Prete was honored with a number of retrospectives: including one organized by the Secretaría de Cultura de la Nación, Buenos Aires (1950), Museo de Artes Plásticas Eduardo Sívori, Buenos Aires (1951), Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires (1961), the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago de Chile (1963) as well as at the Lorenzutti Artes Antigüedades, Buenos Aires (1963). The artist’s work was also included in an exhibition highlighting national art in the honorable mention category at the Guggenheim Foundation, New York (1960), the “International Art Exhibition” in Punta del Este, Uruguay (1959), “150 años de arte argentino”, Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires (1960). Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the artist continued to produce work such as *Festival* (1963). Influenced by the painterly texture of Art Informel, the artist introduced drips and impasto to his work. In 1981, Del Prete received the Cavalliere nell'Ordine al Mérito from the Italian government and in 2007, a posthumous retrospective was held at the Centro Cultural Recoleta, Buenos Aires.

**Further Reading:**

Del Prete, Juan. (1998) *Del Prete: el legado de un maestro*. Buenos Aires: Banco Ciudad de Buenos Aires.

Squirru, Rafael F., and Juan Del Prete (1984) *Juan Del Prete*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Ediciones de Arte Gaglianone.

Merli, Juan. 1946. *Juan del Prete. 71 reproducciones en negro y 4 en color*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Poseidón.

Del Prete, Juan (1974) *Juan Del Prete: retrospectiva 1927-1974*. Buenos Aires: LAASA.

Museo de Arte Moderno (1961) D*el Prete, retrospectiva.* Buenos Aires: Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires.

**List of Works:**

*Nota campestre* (1925)

*Abstracción* (1932), oil on canvas, 142.3 x 114 cm, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires

*Estructura en alamabre* (1933), bicycle wire, 33 x 45x 63 cm,Collection of Liliana Crenovich, Buenos Aires

*Composición geométrica* (1949), tempera on cardboard, 72 x 50 cm, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires

*Composición con elementos geométricos*, 1949, oil on canvas, 69 x 50 cm, Private Collection

*Abstracción tropical* (1957), oil on canvas, 120 x 220 cm, Museo de Artes Plásticas Eduardo Sívor, Buenos Aires

*Composición en rojo* (1959), oil on cardboard, 71 x 53 cm, Colección de Arte Amalia Lacroze de Fortabat, Buenos Aires

*Festival* (1963), oil on canvas, 200 x 165 cm, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires