

Ivan Lin

ARS154 - Drawing

Museum Report: The Museum of Modern Art and Tarsila de Amaral

For this report, I chose to visit the Museum of Modern Art located in Midtown Manhattan. I had a number of reasons for choosing to visit it; firstly, I have never been to the museum despite having living an hour's subway ride away. Another reason was that I wanted to get a better appreciation for modern art - my first experience with modern art was an extremely confusing student exhibition where I had little connection or understanding of the works. I hoped that the Museum of Modern Art would help me appreciate the more abstract, interpretive forms by showcasing a transition from more traditional styles to the arrangements of random items I saw from the student artists.

I believe that the Museum of Modern Art was successful in showing an array of art with that varied from traditionally representational art to absurdly abstract. One room showcased works of Seurat, van Gogh, Cezanne, and several incarnations of Monet's *Water Lilies*. As we transitioned to later time periods and more modern styles, I saw other familiar names - Matisse, Picasso, Magritte, Mondrian, Warhol, and Pollock. Among the new names that stood out to me were Agnes Martin's almost blank canvases and Roy Lichtenstein's bright, clean comic-book-like illustrations. Easily the most prominent figure at the museum was nearly an entire floor dedicated to tracking the development of Stephen Shore's career in photography.

While a significant amount of the works were abstract and defied what I learned about proper representation of form and light, others showed elements of the fundamentals we discussed in class. The one that most struck me as representative of what we learned in class

came from the special exhibition of Tarsila do Amaral's work - most specifically, here 1929 work, *Calmaria II* (*Calmness II*). The painting is a roughly 5-by-5 foot oil-on-canvas painting of an array of geometric figures spaced apart on a body of water. Several polyhedral figures placed towards the back invokes an image of mountains backdropping a clear lake. This work was one of the more unique ones in her exhibit, considering it differed in subject matter from most of her other works. As a leading figure in Brazil's anthropophagic movement and Latin American modern art, Tarsila sought to combine cannibalistic native traditions with external beliefs about art and civilization. As a result, most of her earlier works featured disfigured caricatures of human figures placed in a geometrically simplified backdrop of Brazil's rolling hills, fields, and verdure. This trend in her works contributed my intuitive interpretation of *Calmaria II* as displaying an imaginary landscape of mountains overlooking a calm lake. Unlike most of her preceding and succeeding works, *Calmaria II* stood out to me because it did not depict and human or wildlife.

The geometric forms in the painting are all thin prisms that rise from the water at roughly half the page's height and continues to nearly the top of the page. The reflections in the water creates the image of vertically symmetric geometric objects spanning the height of the page. While the items were clustered, it still felt like there was a lot of open space in the scenery. The image spoke out to me because it reminded me of our first drawing assignment - geometric forms drawn with particular care paid to value and light.

My visit to the Museum of Modern Art has given me a better understanding of how modern art has developed to the forms I see today. Furthermore, it has introduced me to new styles and artists that I will be paying attention to in the future, so I appreciate the experience.