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ABSTRACT REFERENCES IN GEOMETRIC ORDER

Tony Monsanto



The recent paintings of Tony Monsanto are the result of two years of research of the structural and textural possibilities of the picture plain. After a period of ten years in which he was expressing himself in other media, Monsanto returned to painting.

When he was settling down in the Caribbean once again, the use of mostly warm colors like the orange of sunrays, different ochres and browns of the earth, the red of roof tiles, the typical yellow of housepaint in the tropics and an oceanic blue came to him as natural as enjoying the warmth of the climate after an absence of many years.

At a certain point in the creative process he was not satisfied any more with color alone as a means of expression; his urge for building up the surface and adding texture resulted in the integration of fabrics, sand and pieces of cardboard. Even though the color fields became the main theme of each painting, the added material has an essential part in the composition and lets the eye touch the surface like reading braille characters with your fingers.

While he was preparing a show in Aruba in the spring of 1986, he left the representational approach of the figure, slowly eliminating different parts of the human body and purifying the emotional expressions of color itself.

Sensually perceptive to all influences of his surroundings and particularly sensitive to human behaviour, Tony Monsanto was not satisfied with depicting solely the human figure but sought for universal ways to express emotions, behaviour and infrastructure. At this stage in the development of his art he arrived at the possibilities of abstraction.

Monsanto paints almost exclusively with acrylics. His working method demands a fast drying medium. An idea for a composition is roughly sketched onto the primed support, and while passing between the several works in process in his studio, adding a line here, a brushful of color there, an interaction takes place between the images in his mind, which are always there, and the actual

work. Between perceiving an image in his mind and actually painting it onto the canvas a constant evolution and reviewing is going on. Older paintings rest against the wall and are at the same time a pictorial conscience and an inspiration to push himself further. For Monsanto a painting is never finished, never ready; he is not reluctant to radically changing older work, once his artistic development has reached another stage.

Tony Monsanto left the academy in 1970 and we are witness to the fact that it took him some time to shed the academic harness. Now he is using the tools of creativity, skill and natural feeling for colors to express the experience of the man and the artist who was moulded by the influences of different countries and cultures.

Impressions of travels in Latinamerica and the Caribbean are as present in his pictures as are the influences undergone while viewing work of for instance the Mexican Tamayo – the latter resulted in the use of certain colors. Monsanto admires the Spaniard Tàpies for superb use of material and texture, even though he himself is not ready to adapt to monochromatic images.

Once he had arrived at an abstract composition, he gradually replaced the last remnants of organic shapes with geometric order, but the underlying composition remains of organic growth. Monsanto's studies in architecture are responsible for the organization and order of the overall design.

In his latest work one senses a certain aggressiveness mainly through the depiction of sharp saw blade lines. The composition seems to cut up the canvas. Green is poisonous now, not the green associated with fertility and hope. In earlier paintings the colors were blended on the pallet or on the paintground. Now paint might be used undiluted, straight from the tube. Worked, almost carved onto the canvas with the pallet-knife or very impasto. Thin washes are reminiscent of earlier work and experiences. Monsanto is searching for the interpretation of reality in abstract images.

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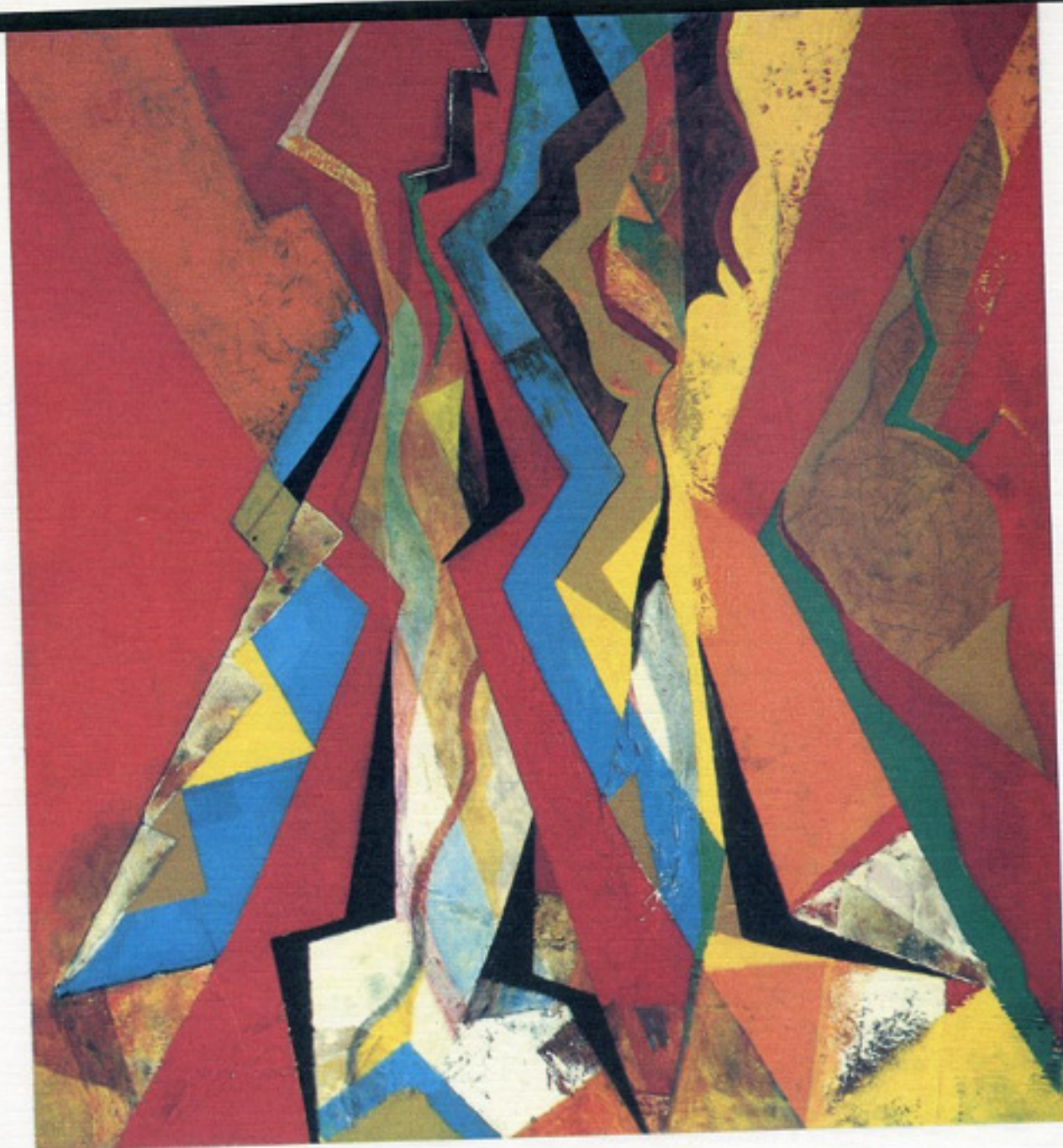
THE UNIVERSALITY OF PAINTING

From times immemorial peoples all over this world have used pictures to record special events and even the history of the tribe. Pictures have also been used as a means of communication.

Different types of material and tools have been used as well as a great variety of surfaces. Pictures have been found on flat rocks, in caves and in tombs.

This great medium can be a binding force between peoples of all nations and stimulate friendship and peace all over the world. Expositions are a means to publicize this thought and as such deserve every kind of support.

Curaçao Cultural Center.



above — Intermezzo
1986 — acrylic/mixed media/canvas — 126 x 116 cm

left — from the series "Triangles"
1986 — acrylic/mixed media/plywood — 50 x 50 cm

cover — No. 1 from the series "Open Doors"
1986 — acrylic/mixed media/canvas — 220 x 144 cm



Tony Monsanto was born in 1946 in Curaçao, Netherlands Antilles. Due to illness of his father the family moved to the Netherlands in 1955. He received his art education at Academie Artibus, Utrecht (one year) and from 1965 to 1970 attended the Rijksacademie voor Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam. He holds also a degree in architecture from TH Delft. In 1981 he returned to his native island Curaçao.

- 1987 Cultural Center Curaçao (CCC)
- 1986 Cultural Center Aruba (CCA)
- 1985 "Blue Virgin" won third place in the Emerald City Classic, Wichita KS, USA
- 1984 Casa Candina, San Juan, Puerto Rico
- 1984 Museo de Arte e Historia, San Juan, Puerto Rico
- 1984 Grote Kerk, Amsterdam, group show of artists from the Netherlands Antilles
- 1983 Museum Curaçao
- 1981 Galerie PloemP, Delft, Netherlands
- 1975 Galerie 66, Hofheim, Federal Republic of Germany, group show of artists from the Netherlands, including Appel, Corneille
- 1970 City Hall, Weesp, Netherlands

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