



CONSTELLATIONS

CONSTRUCTIVISM, INTERNATIONALISM, AND THE INTER-AMERICAN AVANT-GARDE

JUNE 21–OCTOBER 7, 2012

ART MUSEUM of the AMERICAS | ORGANIZATION of AMERICAN STATES

A NOTE FROM AMA

We are pleased to exhibit *Constellations*, a fresh look to our permanent collection. This exhibit of geometric abstraction exemplifies the timelessness and value of AMA's iconic works, symbolizing the OAS's forward-thinking modern values while demonstrating the power of art as a unifying force for the Americas.

Andrés Navia, AMA | Art Museum of the Americas

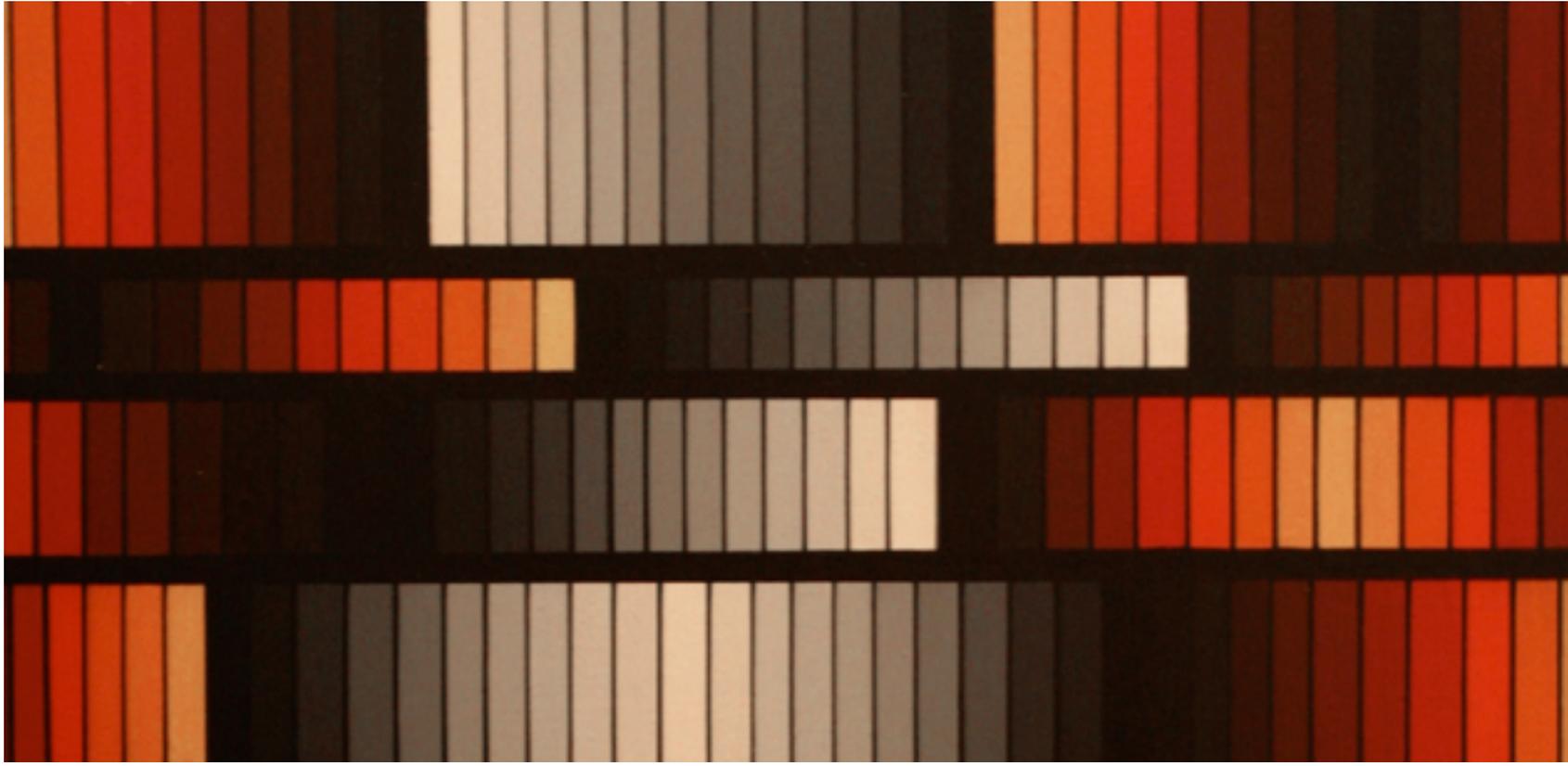
ABOUT THE EXHIBIT

Drawn from the permanent collection of the Art Museum of the Americas, *Constellations* surveys the dynamic, inter-American history of geometric abstraction throughout the twentieth century. The universal and timeless structures of geometric forms and colors took on specific local meanings at different junctures, and *Constellations* suggests the range of values —modern, utopian, collective, transformative— that abstraction embodied across the hemisphere. In line with the broader mission of AMA and the Organization of American States, *Constellations* recognizes the socially constructive role that the arts have played in fostering democracy and freedoms of expression at times of social and political change.

Taking its cue from the work of Joaquín Torres-García, the Uruguayan constructivist who pioneered abstraction in the Southern Cone, *Constellations* shows the evolution of the geometric impulse through four complementary movements. These interrelated “constellations” —Constructivist Americas, Figuring Geometry, Constructive Geometries, and Geometry in Motion— explore the visual and ideological versatility of abstraction and its rich cultural history. The galleries resist linear chronologies and national paradigms, instead describing a history of synergies and encounters across time and space. The AMA's foundational holdings in this area provide an essential touchstone for scholars and artists alike, and *Constellations* recognizes the surging interest in abstraction from Latin America and, no less, the vitality of geometry as a structural and social metaphor.

Curated by Abigail McEwen

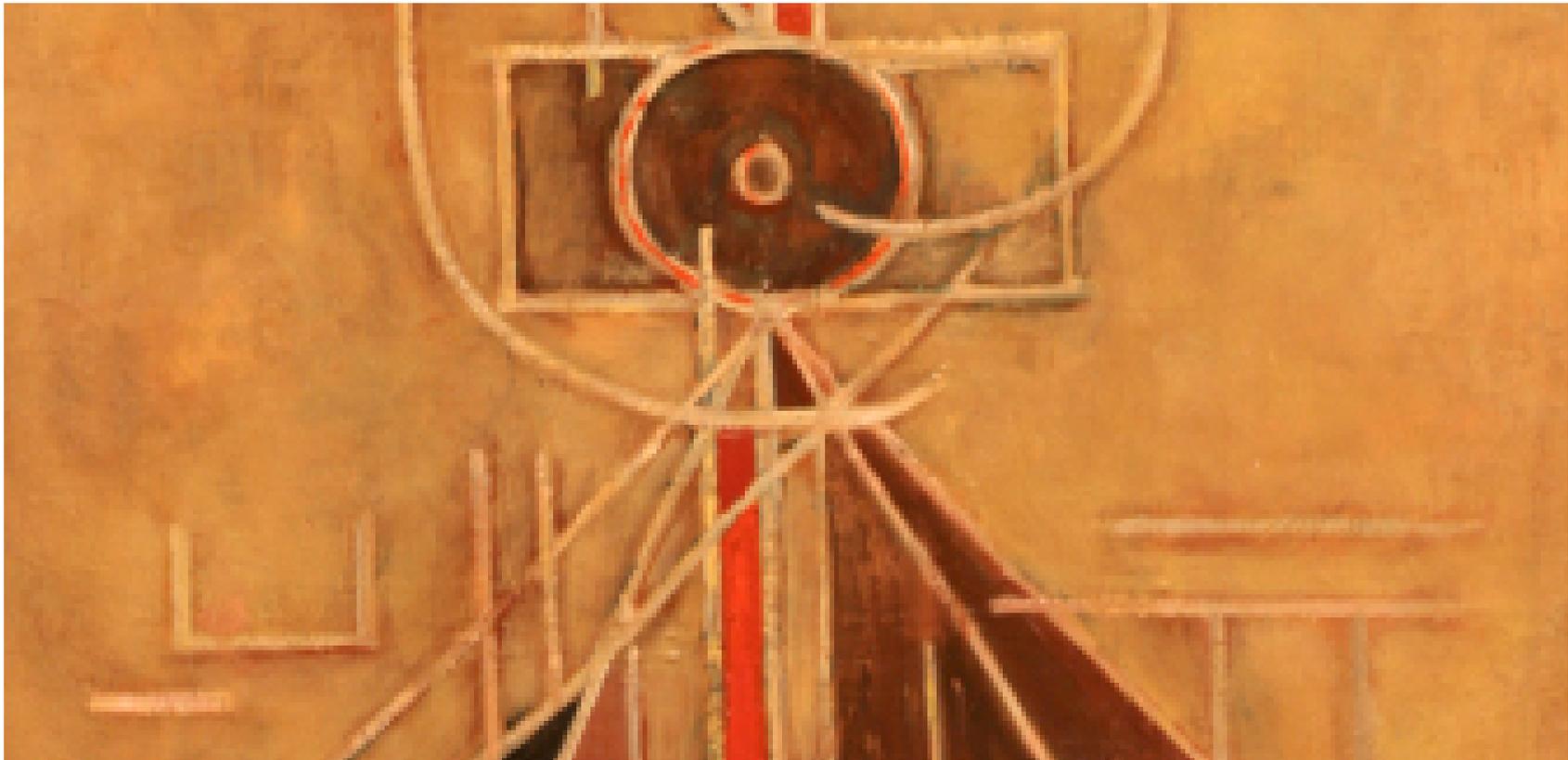
María Freire, *Vibrante*, 1977
Bequest from the Estate of Leonard Jay Horwitz



CONSTRUCTIVIST AMERICAS

In 1943, the year in which he painted *Constructivist Composition*, Torres-García founded a teaching workshop in Montevideo. A creative nexus of abstraction, the Taller Torres-García promoted his theory of Universal Constructivism, which called for the integration of pre-Hispanic (“universal”) motifs within the structuring form of the grid. This gallery traces constructivism through the Taller (Manuel Pailós, José Gurvich), the Grupo de Arte No Figurativo (María Freire, José Pedro Costigliolo), and a North American contemporary (Carlos Mérida).

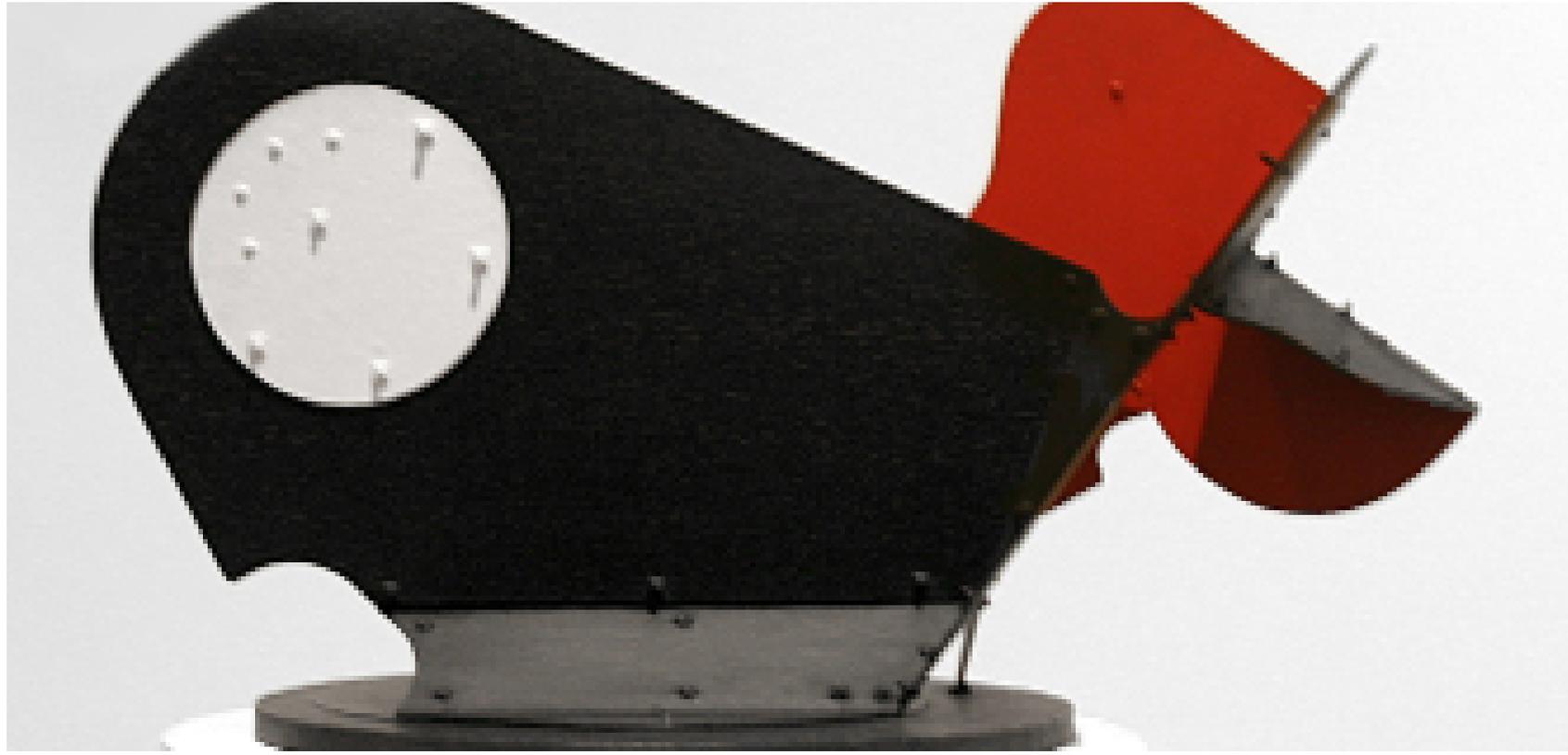
René Portocarrero, *Figures In Yellow*, 1952
Gift of Joseph Cantor



FIGURING GEOMETRY

Abstraction and figuration were not always mutually exclusive practices, and the artists in this constellation engage a figural presence vis-à-vis geometric forms. Elder-generation artists such as Mario Carreño and René Portocarrero found their way to abstraction through a gradual distillation of representational imagery. Others, including Agustín Fernández, Miguel Ocampo and Tomie Ohtake, were more apt to take the precepts of geometry as a point of departure for subtle intimations of the body, landscape, and architecture.

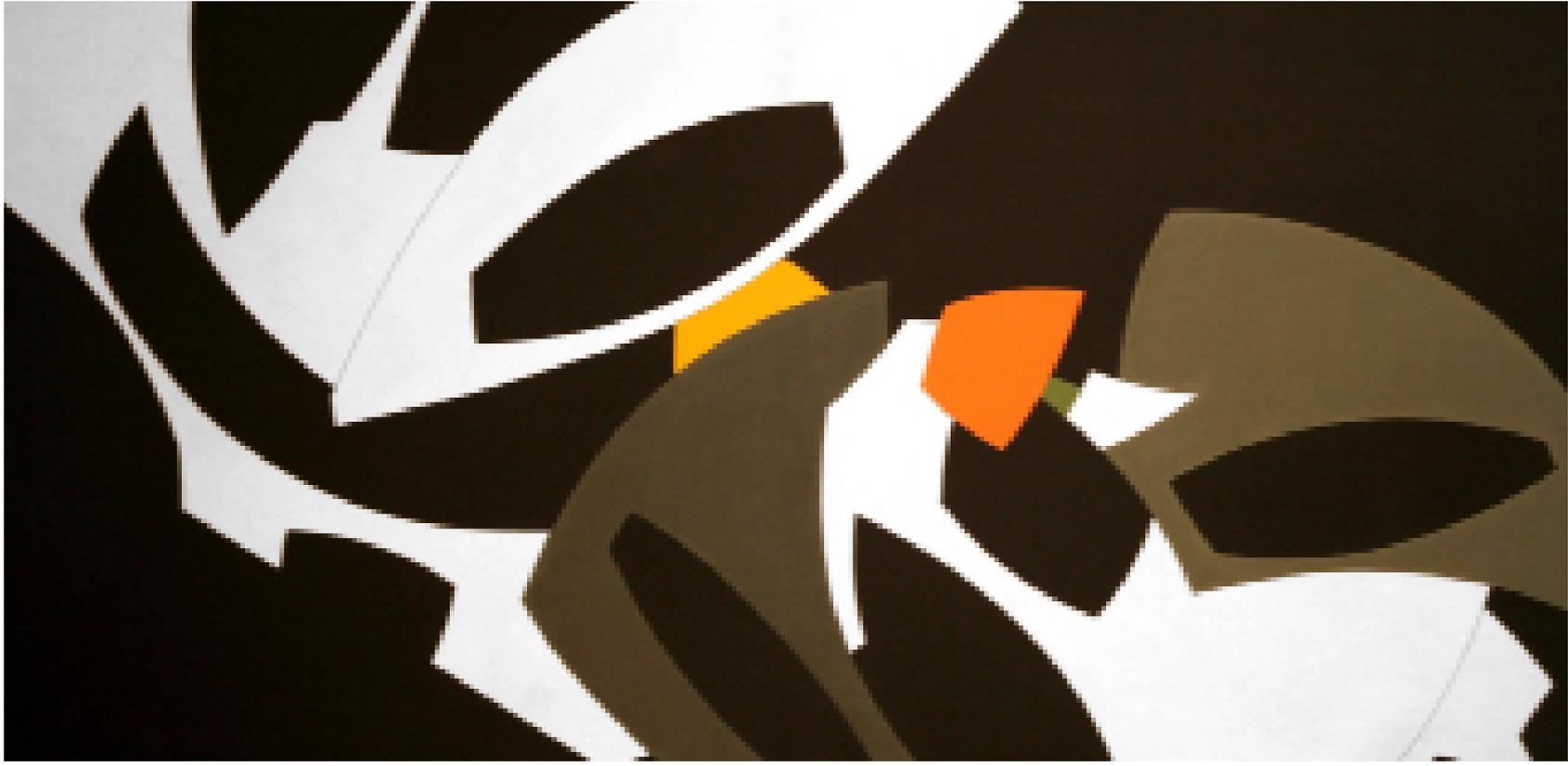
Edgar Negret, *Aparato Mágico*, 1959
Gift of the International Petroleum Company



CONSTRUCTIVE GEOMETRIES

Co-founded by Gyula Kosice, Argentina's groundbreaking Madí movement ranks among Latin America's most innovative, interdisciplinary and international expressions of geometric abstraction. The utopian dynamism of the Madí movement, seen in works by Kosice and the Cuban artist Sandú Darié, is here contrasted with the spartan sobriety of constructivism in Colombia. Fanny Sanín, Edgar Negret, Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar and Omar Rayo deployed elemental, planar geometries in works that explore striking contrasts of color and spatial relief.

Elsa Gramcko, *Composition 20*, 1958



GEOMETRY IN MOTION

Among the treasures of AMA's collection are classic examples of geometric and optical art from Venezuela and Argentina. Works by Alejandro Otero, Jesús Soto, and Carlos Cruz-Diez invite sensorial experience through essences of color, space, and light. This gallery suggests a dialogue with the American Alexander Calder and the Arte Generativo group (Eduardo Mac Entyre, Miguel Angel Vidal, Ary Brizzi), which contemplated the cosmic energies and visual dynamism of lines and color in motion.

VISIT US

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| Location | 201 18th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006 |
| Hours | TUE-SUN 10AM-5PM |
| Closed | Mondays, Federal Holidays, and Good Friday. |
| Phone | 202.458.6016 |
| Admission | Free |
| Group Tours | TUE-FRI 10AM-4PM, please call 202.458.3362. |
| Parking | Limited, metered street parking in the area. |
| Metro | Take the 18th street exit on Farragut West Metro Station, walk towards Constitution Avenue for 6 blocks. We are on the corner of 18th and Virginia Avenue, just past C Street. |

EVENTS

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| Family Workshop | September 15th 10AM-12PM |
| Roundtable Conversation | September 18th 6:30PM |

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Organization of
American States



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SPECIAL THANKS TO Cernuda Arte (Miami), TRESART (Miami), Arévalo Gallery (Miami), Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (Washington, D.C.)

Front: Joaquin Torres-Garcia, Constructive Composition, 1943