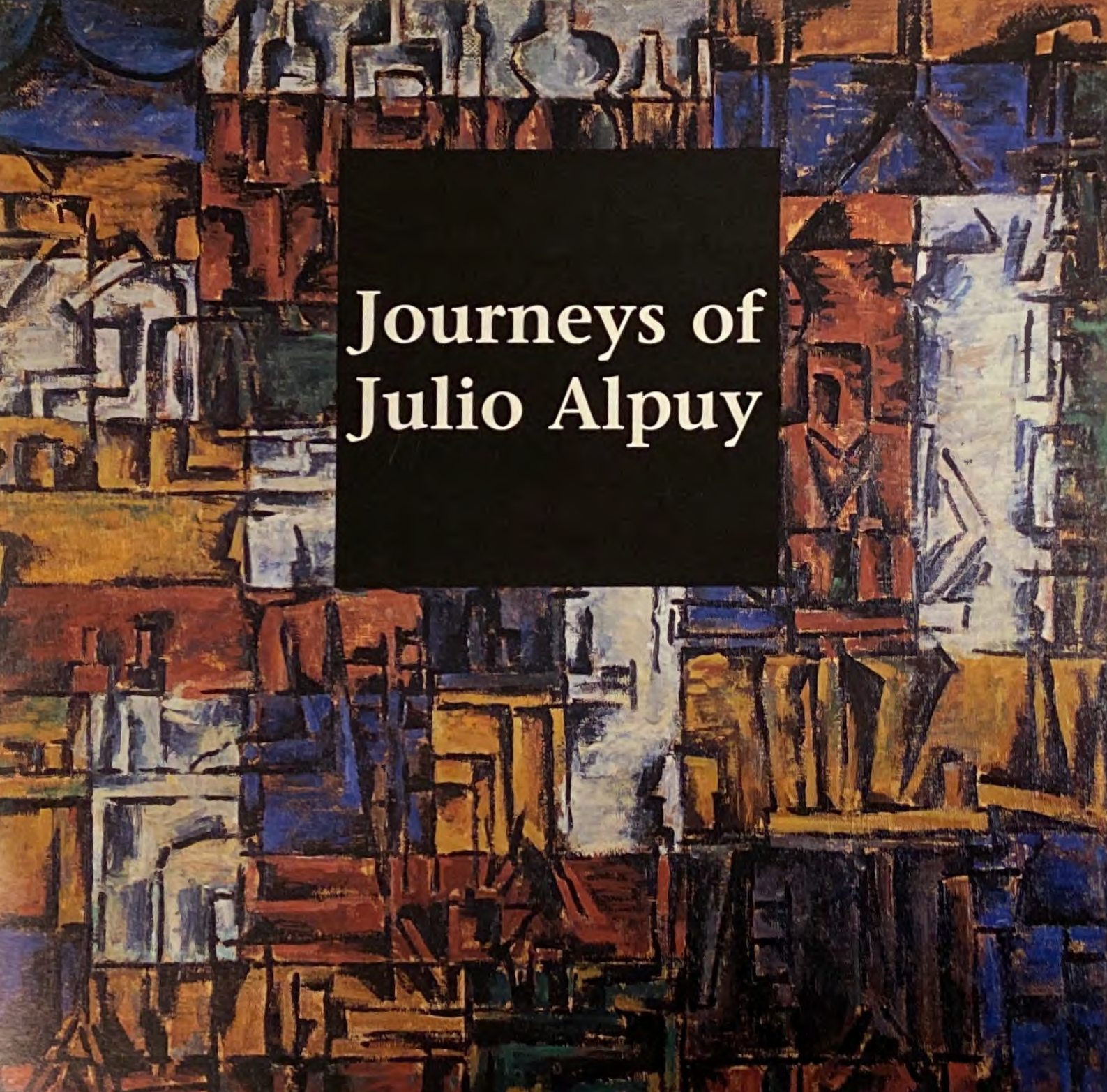

Journeys of Julio Alpuy

This retrospective exhibition at the Mishkin Gallery celebrates six decades of painting and sculpture by the Uruguayan artist Julio Alpuy. From his early work in the 1940s at El Taller Torres-García ("the School of the South") to his recent paintings in 1996, Alpuy's work documents his participation in and his contribution to the international development of modern art.

I would like to thank the artist for his help with organizing this exhibition. I am grateful for the assistance of Maria R. Balderrama, who provided an essay for this catalog and helped with the organization of the exhibition. I also appreciate the cooperation of Cecilia de Torres, who represents the work of Alpuy and has brought his paintings and sculpture to the attention of the New York public with exhibitions in her Soho gallery. Her gallery director, Dan Pollock, was also very helpful in providing information and materials about the artist and in preparing the work for exhibition. I would also like to thank Oscar Prato for his assistance in Montevideo.

The support of Carlos Orlando, consul general of Uruguay, has been very important for this exhibition. The catalog was funded with help from the Fundación Amigos del Patrimonio del Cultural del Uruguay, Montevideo; Walter Calcagno, senior vice president and general manager of the Banco de la República Oriental del Uruguay in New York; Castells & Castells, auctioneers in Montevideo; Cecilia de Torres, Ltd., New York; and The Baruch College Fund. On behalf of Baruch College, I would like to express my appreciation to them all.

It is a great pleasure to acknowledge the encouragement and support of Baruch College President Matthew Goldstein and Provost Lois Cronholm. Their commitment to providing cultural programs at Baruch College has been essential to the success of the Mishkin Gallery.

SANDRA KRASKIN, DIRECTOR
SIDNEY MISHKIN GALLERY

Editor: Diane Harrigan
Designer: Eileen Boxer
Printer: Becotte & Gershwin
Photograph Credits: Leonardo Barreto, James Dee, Charles Manley
Copyright ©1997 Sidney Mishkin Gallery, Baruch College
Cover: **Julio Alpuy** *Caffé*, c. 1946, Oil on board, 41 x 53½". Private collection, New York

Sidney Mishkin Gallery
Baruch College

Journeys of Julio Alpuy

Pictographic Constructivism from the Workshop of Torres-García to New York City, 1943–1996

September 17 – October 16, 1997
Sandra Kraskin, Curator

Baruch College/CUNY, 135 East 22 Street, New York, New York 10010

Still Life Painted with Primary Colors, 1948

The Visual Journey of Julio Alpuy

"MY 'NATURE' IS NO MORE THAN A SUGGESTION OF NATURE, AND THE SHAPES REPRESENTING IT IN MY PAINTINGS TRY TO EXPRESS ESSENCES WHICH, THROUGH PLASTIC MEANS, CARRY US BACK TO ORIGINS. SO MY 'NATURE' IS TIMELESS AND ITS SPACE SO IDEALIZED THAT IT DOES NOT CALL UP THE CONNECTIONS OF SPACE DETERMINED AND LIMITED BY REALITY."

In his visual journey of six decades, Julio Alpuy has traversed a path that explores most of the major tenets of twentieth-century modernism. Born in Uruguay, Alpuy is one of the most innovative artists among the group of avant-garde Latin Americans who worked with the Uruguayan master Joaquín Torres-García at El Taller Torres-García ("School of the South") during the 1940s. Alpuy, who worked with Torres-García from 1940 to 1949, developed his own variation of constructivism in painting and sculpture. This he refined as he traveled and studied in Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East during the 1950s. In 1961 he moved to New York City, where he now lives and works.

Alpuy's early work, which reflects his modernist training at El Taller, reorders and transforms nature into symbolic pictographs structured within a grid. Alpuy has continued to personalize and extend the concepts of Torres-García, inventing his own legendary narratives. Like Torres-García, he draws from the discoveries of cubism and the neoplastic structure of Mondrian, using vertical and horizontal lines to divide his painted and carved constructions. With great originality, Alpuy creates paintings that have the haptic quality of sculpture and sculpture that is painterly, often working with primary colors.

In 1963, two years after Alpuy arrived in New York City, the definition of the grid began to disappear from his work. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, his paintings and sculpture appeared less visually structured, but his deep understanding of the use of classical proportions and his implied verticals and horizontals form his compositions even when they are invisible. Alpuy constructs his figures, landscapes, and still-life objects to invent a world that extends beyond specific geography—creating a universal landscape.

Alpuy has exhibited in all of the group shows of the artists from El Taller; therefore an exhibition of his work also continues the documentation of that school. Although his artistic identity has been closely linked to Torres-García, Alpuy's work merits serious independent consideration. Presenting an opportunity to view a broad range of his painting and sculpture, this retrospective exhibition at the Sidney Mishkin Gallery reveals a universal vision of great power and insight. Julio Alpuy has invented a marvelous world that spans six decades and crosses four continents.

SANDRA KRASKIN

Buenos Aires, 1957

Julio Alpuy: An International Painter and Sculptor

Julio Alpuy, one of the preeminent artists of the workshop of Joaquín Torres-García, has always been an independent painter and sculptor to whom no stylistic label accurately applies. Each of his works in all varieties and mediums, from the earlier to the most recent, more than 40 of which are on display in this retrospective, evolves from and goes beyond what he learned at El Taller.

Reality and nature are the sources from which Alpuy's works begin. Throughout his life he has journeyed and worked far from his native Uruguay traveling to other countries in Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East. Recollected moments from these experiences often inform his paintings, which include constructivist cityscapes as well as imaginary landscapes and symbolic abstractions taken from nature.

In his paintings, Alpuy sometimes provides traditional clues (in differently constructed compositions) to hint at the depth of a space. Yet the richness of Alpuy's combinations of earth and primary colors refocuses the viewer's attention on the surface. Although Alpuy has defined himself as "basically a painter," he began to do reliefs and sculptures in wood when he arrived in New York in 1961. From the monochromatic tones of his works on wood and on canvas to his intensely colored paintings, Alpuy maintains his consistency of message and style.

Alpuy eloquently summed up that message in an interview for the catalog of the 1980 exhibition *Julio Alpuy* which was held at the Galería de Arte Karlen Gugelmeier in Montevideo: "An artist is a builder—builder of something he believes in and has faith in. To express something as an artist is to assert something as a man. To build is a way of expression. The conscious expression of a man who is an artist who builds with elements [ ] to create something solid, a unity."

MARIA R. BALDERRAMA

Genesis I, 1964

Metamorphosis, 1975

1980

Composition in Red, Yellow Blue, and Black 1996

Julio Alpuy was born in Tacuarembó, Uruguay, in 1919. He moved to Montevideo in 1935 to continue his studies. In 1940, at the age of 21, he was introduced to Joaquín Torres-García and joined the Torres-García workshop. In 1943–44 he began teaching at the workshop under Torres-García's direction. In 1945 Alpuy traveled to Peru and Bolivia with Gonzalo Fonseca and Jonio Montiel, both members of the workshop. In Montevideo in 1949, he executed several mural commissions in mosaic for the architects Levingne and De Leone and for Torres-García's home. In 1951–53 he traveled to Europe and the Middle East and recorded impressions of his travels in sketchbooks. In 1953 he returned to Montevideo and resumed teaching at El Taller. In 1955 he executed a series of large mural paintings for architect Payssé Reyes, the Lyceum Larrañaga, and the YMCA headquarters in Montevideo. In 1957 he traveled to Chile, and then, invited by Colombian artists, he moved to Bogotá. In Bogotá Alpuy met the renowned art critic Marta Traba. In 1959 he moved to Caracas, and then in 1961 he emigrated to New York City, where he still resides, teaching privately and working in his Soho studio. In 1961 he received The New School for Social Research Fellowship. In 1981 he received a mural commission at the Uruguayan Embassy in Buenos Aires. Alpuy has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts (1983), the New York Council for the Arts (1986), and the Gottlieb Foundation (1990).

"I BELIEVE MORE AND MORE IN THE WORLD OF MY WORK; IT IS MY LIFE, MY WORLD. NOW IN THAT WORLD, I'M NOT ALONE. YOU NEED TO LOOK INTO YOURSELF AND TO TAKE EVERYTHING FROM WITHIN YOURSELF, LITTLE BY LITTLE, BECAUSE YOU CAN'T TAKE IT FROM OUTSIDE."

Selected One-Person Exhibitions

1997 *Works on Paper*, Cecilia de Torres, Ltd., New York
1994 Cecilia de Torres, Ltd., New York
1990 Walter F. Maibaum Fine Arts, New York
1989 Galería Palatina, Buenos Aires
1988 Galería Diálogo, Brussels
1985 Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, New York
1983 Museo Rayo, Roldanillo-Valle, Colombia
1980 Galería Sarmiento, Buenos Aires
1978 Galería La Trinchera, Caracas
1972 *Julio Alpuy*, Center for Inter-American Relations, New York

Selected Group Exhibitions

1997 *La Escuela del Sur*, Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas
Torres-García y 10 Artistas del Taller, Galería Ruth Benzacar, Buenos Aires
Diálogo en Papel, Galería Clavé, Caracas
El Taller Torres García, Museo Central de Costa Rica
1996 *Universal Constructivism & The School of the South*, Art Museum of the Americas, Washington, D.C.
The Still Life, Cecilia de Torres, Ltd., New York
La Cercle de Torres-García, Zabriskie Gallery, Paris
El Espíritu de la Pintura Latino Americana, Associated American Artists Gallery, New York
Latin Viewpoints, Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn, New York
1995 *45 Years of Constructivist Mood*, Cecilia de Torres, Ltd., New York
1993 *El Taller Torres-García. The School of the South and its Legacy*, Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain (1991)
Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, Austin, Texas (1991)
Museo de Monterrey, Mexico (1992)
Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York (1993)
Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City (1993)
1991 *Circle and Square: Geometric Abstraction and Constructivism in the Americas, 1934–1953*, Kouros Gallery, New York
1986 *Torres-García and His Legacy*, Kouros Gallery, New York
A Schüler von Torres García, E. P. Lückerz, Düsseldorf, Germany
1985 *Mira*, Museo del Barrio, New York
1983 *Cuatro Artistas Uruguayos*, Ex-ministro Nacional de Bellas Artes del Uruguay
XVII Bienal de São Paulo, Museu de Arte Moderna, São Paulo
1979 *Windows to the South*, Henry Street Settlement, New York
1977 *Recent Latin American Drawings, 1968–76*, International Exhibition Foundation, Washington, D.C.
1973 *New Latin American Painting*, Queens County Art Museum, New York
Tropic of Cancer: Tropic of Capricorn—Contemporary Latin American Art, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
1971 *Selected Works from Latin America*, Stamford Museum, Stamford, Connecticut
1961 *Talle: Torres-García*, The New School for Social Research, New York
1958 *Jóvenes Artistas del Uruguay*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam
1950 *PanAmerican Union Exhibition*, Washington, D.C.

Selected Collections

Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales, Montevideo, Uruguay
Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, University of Texas at Austin
Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York
Museum of Tel Aviv, Israel
Museum of Trenton, New Jersey
The Nahum A. Rachofsky Collection, New York
The J. M. Kaplan Foundations Collection, New York
Banco de la República y Biblioteca Angel Arango, Bogotá, Colombia

Catalog of the Exhibition

Chimneys III, 1943
Oil on cardboard, 16 1/2 x 20"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Elements of a Still Life, 1943
Oil on cardboard, 16 3/4 x 20 1/4"
Collection of the artist

Still Life, 1943
Oil on cardboard, 17 1/2 x 20 1/4"
Collection of the artist

Structure, 1943
Oil on cardboard, 16 1/2 x 20 1/2"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Urban Landscape, 1943
Oil on cardboard, 23 1/4 x 31 7/8"
Collection of the artist

City in Grey, Pink, and Ochre, 1945
Oil on cardboard, 25 1/2 x 33"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Symbols, 1945
Painted wood relief, 9 3/4 x 14 1/2"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Café, c. 1946
Oil on board, 41 x 53 1/2"
Private collection, New York

Urban Composition, 1946
Ink on paper, 10 1/2 x 14"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Urban Landscape in Green, 1946
Oil on cardboard, 31 1/2 x 39 1/4"
Collection of M. M. Manley

Composition with Figures, 1948
Oil on board, 13 1/4 x 11 1/4"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Still Life Painted with Primary Colors, 1948
Oil on board, 16 x 20 1/2"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Composition with Eight Hands, 1950
Ink and watercolor on paper, 11 1/2 x 11 1/4"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Incised Constructivist Composition, 1950
Oil on incised wood, 10 1/4 x 19"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Red Construction, 1950
Oil on canvas, 36 x 35 1/4"
Collection of the artist

Trades, 1950
Oil on canvas, 39 1/4 x 62 1/2"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Study for a Mural, 1955
Ink and watercolor on paper, 25 x 18 3/4"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Buenos Aires, 1957
Oil on canvas, 38 x 26 1/4"
Private collection, London

Landscape of Bogotá—Guadalupe Mountain, 1958
Oil on canvas, 25 x 29 1/2"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Both Cigarettes—Dortmund Series, Germany, 1958
Oil on cardboard, 19 1/4 x 29 1/4"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

View of Bogotá, 1958
Oil on canvas, 22 x 29"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Eighth Avenue El, 1962
Oil on jute, 27 x 34"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Still Life in Perspective, 1962
Oil on canvas, 40 1/8 x 30"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Union Square, 1962
Oil on canvas, 26 x 34"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Atlantida and Hidden Forces, 1963
Watercolor and tempera on paper, 20 1/2 x 25 3/4"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Genesis After the Chaos, 1963
Watercolor and tempera on paper, 21 x 26 1/2"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Composition, 1964
Painted wood relief, 27 1/2 x 26"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Fertility, 1964
Painted wood relief with inlaid glass, 53 1/2 x 35 1/4"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Genesis I, 1964
Painted wood relief, 63 x 75 1/2"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

The River, 1964
Wood relief, 18 x 27"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Untitled, 1969
Painted wood relief, 22 x 57 1/2"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Fluid Form, 1971
Wood, 91 x 20 x 16"
Collection of Ladd Spiegel, New York

Primordial Landscape, 1971
Ink and oil on wood relief, 23 x 33"
Collection of A. Pedrozo, Madrid

Spiral of Life, 1971
Carved wood, 33 1/4 x 50" diameter
Collection of the artist

Metamorphosis, 1975
Wood, 19 x 13 1/2 x 8"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Synthetic Landscape with Seven Figures, 1979
Oil on cardboard, 51 1/4 x 37"
Collection of the artist

Three Worlds, 1980
Ink and watercolor on paper, 37 x 28 1/4"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

River, 1983
Oil on cardboard, 39 1/2 x 47 1/2"
Collection of the artist

The Fountain of Life, 1984
Oil on cardboard, 52 1/2 x 39 1/2"
Collection of the artist

Archetype, 1989
Wood, 16 1/2 x 36 1/2 x 3 1/4"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Ideal Landscape, 1991
Oil on canvas, 49 x 64"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Primordial Plant, 1992
Wood, 24 1/2 x 13 3/4 x 15 1/2"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Lafayette Street View, 1994
Oil on canvas, 52 x 38"
Collection of the artist

Composition in Red, Yellow, Blue, and Black, 1996
Oil on canvas, 47 1/2 x 35"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Untitled, 1996
Oil on canvas, 48 x 36"
Courtesy of Cecilia de Torres Ltd., New York

Dimensions are in order of height, width, and depth.