

## THE MURALS OF THE BANCO DE GUATEMALA

### An aesthetic view of nationality

By: Silvia Lanuza\*

Walking through the Civic Center of Guatemala City is an experience that the first settlers of the city will surely have experienced in the imposing cities on market days. The site is visited daily by thousands of people who must carry out their administrative procedures in the different public institutions that make up this sample of Guatemalan aesthetic creativity.



Since the mid-1950s the buildings of the Municipal Palace, the Guatemalan Social Security Institute, the Crédito Hipotecario Nacional and the Banco de Guatemala have become part of the capital's urban landscape and the daily life of Guatemalans. In such a way, there are already few who go about discovering the

wonders that each of these buildings possess, the work of young visionaries who marked not only the face of the city, but also the history pages of Guatemalan architecture and art.

Architects Jorge Montes, Carlos Heussler, Raúl Minondo and Roberto Aycinena were hired for these buildings of great symbolism for the country, because they encompass a large share of political, economic and legal power.



These avant-garde designers who were influenced by their studies abroad and the modernist currents of the moment, had the support of artists Carlos Mérida, Roberto González Goyri, Guillermo Grajeda Mena, Efraín Recinos and Dagoberto Vásquez, among others. Some of these art master's found the consolidation of their careers in these buildings.

Made years after the 1944 revolution, it is undoubted that the Civic Center had its origin in the artistic opening that took place during the revolutionary decade. Many

of the young creators in full training during this period, had the opportunity to access scholarships to hone their skills in the best art schools and universities abroad.

Hence, it was not so difficult to find that group of talented characters who came together to make this project concrete, which although it had all the modern conceptualization of the time, it did not fail to present pre-Columbian features by the way it was designed.

Some scholars claim that its staircases, esplanades and elevations along with the buildings that make up the urban complex are a kind of memory from the Main Plaza in Tikal. One idea that is comparable, is, if in a moment, you close your eyes and try to recreate those legendary cities built of stone, stucco and wood.

In addition, the windows were infrequent, and if used, they were very small and narrow. As can be seen in the building of the Banco de Guatemala, which today we occupy, in which interestingly the international current ideals call for the removal of windows and include sunshades.

The exteriors of these pre-Columbian buildings were treated in a special way because they were decorated with painted sculptures, carved lintels, stucco moldings and stone mosaics. The decorations were usually arranged in wide friezes that contrasted with strips of smooth bricks.

Just as these buildings had their decoration, architects and artists provided these modern buildings with monumental creations and richly decorated interiors. Especially in the Banco de Guatemala, a building in which the reinforced concrete structure is perfectly combined with the mural decoration of Roberto González Goyri and Dagoberto Vásquez, as well as the enamels of Carlos Mérida in an unparalleled

mix of art.



"The property has unique values. Its existence materializes the sum of humanistic philosophies that were based on the need for creation for social purposes. In that modern language with all its weight that gave way to other expressions and searches for the Guatemalan artist", is the way Guillermo Monsanto defines the building of the banking institution.

### THE AESTHETIC UNITY

With a very clear concept for integration, the young creators opted for a site that would expose modern architecture that responded to collective and interdisciplinary work. Painting and sculpture merged with the architectural body and were not taken as meaningless empty ornaments. The buildings were presented as a sample of functionality. In addition, to constituting an important part of that urban center, which even now, 50 years after its conception, remains in force.

According to architect Jorge Montes in his article "Civic Center: a city heart",



sculpture and painting should be considered part of the essence of a building, from planning. "This establishes the introduction of the pictorial and sculptural work as a part of the architectural body, in such a way that if they are removed, the building disintegrates as a concept and, conversely, if the mural is raised or the relief is peeled off, these lose their meaning and their rhythm as independent values", notes Montes.

For that reason, the four architects who participated in the construction of the Civic Center asked the artists that all their artistic creations revolve around the theme of Guatemalan nationality, either old or current. However, it is fair to say that in this bank building an integration of architecture, sculpture and painting was achieved, achieving a true architectural-sculptural solution as Jorge Montes and Roberto González Goyri have commented on different occasions.



To achieve this goal and that both the artistic work merged with the architectural design, the murals of Vásquez and González Goyri, located on the east and west facades respectively, were made of concrete and were fused *in situ* (in the place itself). In this process, wooden formallettes were used that served as a mold to contain the cement, in this way, the artists avoided first making a positive and then moving it to the wall.

On the brick wall, they placed the 1.22-meter-high by 2.44-meter-long molds and the casting was carried out. At the end of the emptying and removing of the formallettes, they achieved a relief that became part of the wall.

A very important feature of these murals is that the artists left them natural, therefore, when approaching to carefully observe the details of each piece, you can detect small imperfections that were marked during the casting and that they never



tried to hide from public view.

For its part and as a contrast to the monochrome exterior, there are the murals by artists Carlos Mérida and Arturo López Rodezno, located in the elevator cube and the Session Room of the Monetary Board, respectively. For these works of art, they used glass-glaze on copper.

This technique is characterized by using molten glass that goes to liquid state, where a glassy surface remains on the metal to mold the pieces that will be part of the monumental work. Colors are given to the enamel with burned oxides and color variants, their behavior and physical properties, depend on the different grades used during melting.

Without a doubt, the urban concept of integration achieved by the Civic Center has been impossible to imitate today, because these are buildings that are not only



functional, but also give pleasure to passers-by because it's true art. They also offer a visionary bridging of cultures, at a time when the term diversity is in vogue.

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL ADAPTATIONS

**Name:** Untitled

**Technique:** Concrete

**Measures:** 40 meters high divided into three segments of 7.21 meters wide each.

**Location:** Western exterior facade (view

towards the 7<sup>a</sup>. avenida, Zona 1).

**Date made :** 1964-1965

When on the 7a. Avenida it is easy to find the abstract proposal of artist Roberto González Goyri (1924). Recently returned from studying abroad, the young creator was imbued with a series of currents that were evident in this mural. He removed all figurative strokes and was seduced by the freedom of expression that this style allowed him.

"It is here that the artist showed his abstractionist expression, even reaching absolute abstractionism", creating a sense of movement through the effects of light and shadow", notes Haroldo Rodas, in a monograph on the artist.

The three panels are an abstract expression rhythmically related to each other and fully adapted to the cold material used in their creation, so like the murals of the East Wing, they do not disagree with the design of the building.

"In these murals we feel the orderly will of the artist: precise and rigorous. González Goyri works with the harmony of imagination and calculation. (...) It is



interesting how it gives solutions and solves the problem of light and shadow that are created with the relief. The author divides the height of the mural into three parts and does not give the same thickness or measure to the reliefs, as well as to the forms. The thickness of the reliefs varies, 5, 8 and 12 centimeters, and the measures of the forms are 12, 20 and the biggest is 40 centimeters, on the bottom”, explains Irma Lorenzana de Luján in her thesis “Murals in Guatemala”.

Although this piece does not have a particular theme and, as the artist himself has made known in abstract design, you only have to see the forms and their aesthetic value, the truth is that he recognizes that his work has a certain resemblance to a Mayan stella, in response to the request to address the pre-Columbian theme, made by architects Jorge Montes and Raúl Minondo.

So, the artist, using modern language, dared to transfer the Mayan concept, taking into account that for several years he worked in the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. An experience that undoubtedly gave him the authority to freely conceive Mayan art.



Despite not offering any concrete history, being face to face with this mural and seeing its figures that resemble hieroglyphs; the renowned Temple of

Inscriptions, located at the archaeological site of Palenque in Chiapas, Mexico, comes to mind.

This majestic construction took its name from the three large panels of hieroglyphic writing that welcome you to the sanctuary raised on its apex and on a nine-tier stepped pyramid. Its magnificence is due to the fact that it was the burial enclosure of King Pacal the Great, who during his long reign developed architecture and art. This building was built in 683 A.D. as a living monument and for his remains to rest. The inscriptions tell the part of the story that corresponds to this era.

Or it takes you to Quiriguá and Tikal in Guatemala or Copán in Honduras to those huge stone slabs on which the sculptors carved bas-reliefs of their Kings Jubilee. The importance of the stella was the fact that they were the means by which testimony was left of the most important events of the reigns using hieroglyphs as narrative expression. These were erected at the end of a specific time period, every five and twenty years.

But regardless of the reminiscences caused by the artist, the truth is that being in front of this immense piece of concrete, evokes one of the peak moments of architectural and plastic creation in the country. Each stroke, each relief and each line were made with the greatest possible honesty.



## THE PORTRAIT OF A CULTURE

### MERGED

**Name:** Economy and culture

**Technique:** Concrete

**Measures:** 40 meters high divided into three segments of 7.21 meters wide each.

**Location:** Exterior east facade (View towards the 9<sup>a</sup>. avenida, Zona 1).

**Date made:** 1964

This mural can be seen from the land that corresponds to the Supreme Court of Justice and the Courts Tower. It also consists of three sections that tell a story that Guatemalans have experienced for centuries.

This work of art was an inspiration from Master Dagoberto Vásquez Castañeda (1922-1999), recognized for his sculptural, pictorial and engraved work. Product of the artistic currents that characterized the revolution of 1944, Vásquez acquired a social consciousness from an early age which characterized him throughout his life.

Which is why, he may have felt comfortable using muralism, allowing him to express himself in synthetic geometrism and maintain direct contact with that village that always worried him. "In this relief, Dagoberto Vásquez shows the best of his sensitivity and the cohesion of the image with the structural design of the building, which was obviously studied with precision", exposes Rosina Cazali in a monograph on the artist.

"In the three large murals, starting with the one on the left, the composition

unfolds in a zig zag, the figures of men take shape, and the lines acquire different constructive values, that is, a line, however faint, connects each of the parts, achieving coherent reading. (...) These working characters, moving or gesticulating are men, but in these murals, they represent the essence of the human, through art", explains Lorenzana de Luján in his thesis.

The three panels that make up the work are imaginatively and systematically subdivided, and should be read from left to right, from bottom to top. Each scene had its starting point on every two floors of the building.

In the first section (the one on the left) the creation myth, seen from the Mayan worldview, was addressed. Obviously, the artist took up the Popol Vuh to tell how the ancient gods gave life first to the Earth, then to the animals and finally to man who after two attempts with mud and wood was finally formed from ground corn. Thus, in the geometric figures the origin of the earth, water, rain, fish, birds and, of course, the human being was embodied.

Subsequently, the common thread moves to the fecundity represented by a pregnant woman attached to a family staged by a father who carries the load on his shoulders while he is accompanied by his son and his wife. In this print, the artist expressed the importance of the family as the nucleus of Guatemalan society.

At the end of this part, the artist made an interpretation of the Mayan universe, sculpting clouds, birds and rain, probably alluding to Chac, the rain god. He did not forget to include the four cardinal points, fundamental elements of Mayan cosmogony, since it was said that the Bacabs were the four deities that held the sky. They were also associated with four symbolic colors: red for the east, white for the

north, black for the west and yellow for the south.

After reviewing the creation of the universe, the panel in the middle focused on culture. He began it with a representation of time, considered by pre-Columbian cultures as a continuity with a recurring cyclical behavior. He also explored the work of man, but a more westernized one, undoubtedly due the influence of the conquest.

In one of these sections, the artist paid special attention to fire as a creative force, purifying and driving development, making with it three figures that are integrated into a single body and reflect history, economy and culture.

Then he made a moving figure that represented man and his eagerness to work with science, in a concept, which many feminists would criticize, the woman was represented as a source of beauty, in addition to being the giver of life and support in the home, while the man was presented as a forger of ideas and change.

The third panel ties in the part of economy. Here, Vasquez used the most basic economic forms from the beginning of time in his first strokes. He resorted to representing hunting, fishing and agriculture, which were also vital economic activities within Mayan societies.

Undoubtedly, as the mural would be part of the most important banking institution in the country, the artist could not leave aside the trade of goods as the representation of two figures in an exchange that would result in the increase of goods.

This part is crowned by the quetzal. It is no coincidence that Master Vásquez decided to close with the bird symbol of Guatemala, because as of 1925 it is also the name the national currency. In addition, historically this small, red-chested, leafy

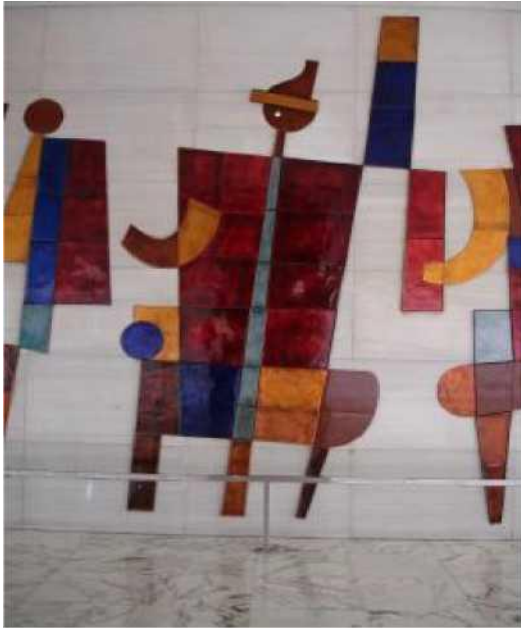


green, emerald bird of 35 centimeters, with a 60 centimeter-tail, is mythologically considered a protective and faithful companion in any vicissitude.

It is important to note that this design did not break with the exterior structure of the building. It is composed of two open planes and two closed planes. As Vásquez himself noted, "the open ones are the ones that form the areas of the windows, which are divided by the lines of the vertical shades, so that the surface looks dynamic. The ones that are closed on the relief are vertically continuous. The horizontal link is made with dividing lines that section the mural", so the viewer will be able to have his own perception of the mural, from the position he chooses to admire it.



## WITH AUTHENTIC ROOTS



### MAYAN

**Name:** Dancing Mayan priests

**Technique:** 2,000 enamel plates on copper, with marble background **Location:** Inside the Banco de Guatemala, on the first floor, surrounding the four elevator cubes.

**Measures:** 117.50 square meters

**Date made:** 1963-1966

After the immersion with the sculpturers on the outside, you are strongly impacted when you come face to face with those brightly colored figures that seem to give a joyful welcome to each visitor or attract the goodwill of the gods. They are the “Mayan Dancing Priests” of master Carlos Mérida (1891-1984), a person who has left Guatemalans an important cultural legacy.

His contact with muralism came from a primary source: Mexico. At a time when this form of expression was the most used to reach the consciousness of spectators, because after the 1910 Mexican Revolution, artists used the walls of public and private institutions to leave their mark of the historical events that affected that nation.

Despite being in direct contact with the main exponents of the current, Mérida found his own form of expression, by preserving his Guatemalan essence and paying tribute to the roots that he abandoned in 1919, when he went in search of greener pastures in the Aztec country.



Therefore, it became a natural decision to communicate with the absent master, to ask him to create these works of art that would come to complement the architectural ensemble. His colorful mural was made with copper plates with glazed enamels, made with the *champleve* technique, which consisted of allowing the plate-coloring to have certain transparencies and tonal variations to meet the demands of the artist, who specified that each plate must look like a watercolor.

The workshops of Franco Bucci, in Milan, Italy, were responsible for complying with the design and specifications of Merida, with whom the enamels of the Crédito Hipotecario Nacional were also worked.

To achieve a better contrast, the plates are placed on white marble brought from the quarries of Zacapa, Guatemala and in this way ensure that each priest

stands out. "The characteristic of these murals is that the author uses space as a primary element of his creation," says Lorenzana de Luján.

In addition, the work is proportional and full of rhythm, so that it is easy to imagine the rituals that these characters celebrated during their festivities. It must be remembered that Mérida's first profession was music and from there his work is always rhythmic and leads the viewer's retina towards a strumming beat.

On the other hand, in addition to his fondness for music, Carlos Mérida felt an attraction for dance and was even the founder of the Dance School at the Public Education Secretariat of Mexico and had an important participation in developing it in the neighboring country, which is why we can appreciate the mastery that he used to give life to the positions of the dancing figures.

In these glazes, the artist used the transposition of form achieving a balance that keeps the work attractive. "These colors and shapes that move on the white marble field, enclosed in thin black lines of unequal height on the wall, in which the figures are slightly spaced from each other, so that each one achieves a life of its own, but are intimately intertwined, holding unlimited spaces, at the same time creating greatness. The mutual influence of the colors is essential on this white background", notes Lorenzana de Luján.

On the other hand, master Roberto González Goyri himself has written that "his figures, so modern and so ancient at the same time, seem to be emerging from a pre-Columbian Codex and are getting ready for a ritual dance".

Because we must remember that although he lived most of his life outside of Guatemala, Carlos Mérida always kept a certain respect for Mayan culture and as

part of his creation incorporated some elements of American influence, of which he was proud.

A situation that is immediately grasped, looking at those figures floating on the white marble, and it is impossible to avoid making an association with Bonampak's frescoes located in Chiapas, Mexico, which were painted around 720 BC. and they were rediscovered in 1946 by Giles Healey.

This mural that is in three rooms of the enclosure, in addition to capturing the war and social scenes, they also depict scenes of the gentlemen dancing to the rhythm of timeless music. Characters that keep some conceptual similarity with the Merida enamels.

So, with his constructivist forms, Mérida left his personal way of conceiving the role of those characters within the holistic concept of the building. As was left clear by Juan B. Juárez in his monography of the artist: "The integration, in addition to the formal, environmental and structural, is also a meaning of expressiveness: it gives the building and the institution the visible signs of its origin and its nationalist destiny".





Or, given the intimate knowledge of the artist on Mayan civilization, these mystical dancers could be seen as a graphical representation of one of the dances that are part of the Rabinal Achí, a play in which the characters dance at the mercy of a higher power that ultimately decides the fate of every member of the Rabinal and Quiche families.

"The essence of my work," said Carlos Mérida, "is its purity; it does not rely on anything foreign at its most intimate painting: form and color. It does not need to be explained: shapes, color, movement that can be seen without listening to music. "Music and drawings stand by themselves, each with their own means; they take their arms and dance together, without stumbling," the artist said.

He made sure that his forms had their own language but supported by a color

that, however violent it may be, had nuances. A confirmation is evident in all his murals, but especially in those made for the Banco de Guatemala, which complement the pre-Columbian aesthetic style that its creators wanted to print.





FROM THE HEART OF

### MESOAMERICA

**Name:** Central American Economic Integration

**Technique:** 240 copper enamel plates

**Measurements:**

**Location:** Monetary Board Meeting Room

**Date made:** 1965

Not always accessible to the public, but also important, is the Monetary Board Session Room mural, inspiration by Honduran artist Arturo López Rodezno (1906-1975).

Although an entry for this work was considered for a Guatemalan artist, in a gesture of brotherhood, the Central Bank of Honduras decided to gift the mural for this space.

To do this, the Honduran banking institution summoned the local artists to participate in a contest that, in the end, was won by outstanding artist López Rodezno, who presented a proposal that was to be made in enamel on copper and reminisced of French stained glass by the definition of color areas and the contrast when fading into a profile or figure.

His knowledge of the stained-glass technique learned in the workshops of Master Carlucci in Italy, as well as his friendship with Guatemalan artists of the stature of Humberto Garavito, may have allowed him to faithfully capture the essence of what was sought to complement the plastic architectural integration, which was gestated here.

As the artist was originally from Copán, one of the imposing Mayan settlements in Honduras, we might say that there is where his interest arose to record the combined history of the countries that made up Mesoamerica, a term coined in 1943 by Paul Kirchhof to refer to the region that goes from Mexico to Costa Rica, including the countries of Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua.

As at present, the boundaries of that pre-Columbian area, as well as its traditions, changed constantly as certain traits spread among the different societies such as the use of the 260-day ritual calendar, a conception of the universe in which space and time were considered a continuity, religious elements and a stratified social system. There were four civilizations that dominated the region: Olmec, Zapotec, Maya and Aztec.

That is why the artist also turned to the Popol Vuh and developed his mural around the young Maize God, Ah Mun, who according to ancient tradition was linked to vegetation and the main source of food, and was also the representative of the religious, political, social and economic structure of the area.

"The God of Corn is represented by a huge head of green, stylized jade. On the right, the Mayan god, a matron dressed in a white robe and seated position, holds the Horn of Plenty, an allegorical concept of economic well-being derived from Central American integration. To the left of the God of Corn a group that represents the family serves as a symbol of social development," notes Ricardo Martínez in his article published in the book *Artistic Jewels of the Banco de Guatemala*.

López Rodezno with his neofigurative style embodied his female characters with simple white cotton tunics and only one of his male characters with a more

elaborate dark tunic. Perhaps as a way of highlighting their noble ancestry, since only people belonging to nobility could use richly embroidered robes that distinguished them from the rest of the population.

On the other hand, the artist captured the important role of trade both in antiquity and now, since among the Mesoamerican peoples the division between highlands and lowlands allowed societies to have relationships based on mutual benefit, because they exchanged crops, animals and natural resources.



The aspect he represented with a fisherman, coffee plants, the corn and the bunches of bananas that are part of the agricultural activity that has characterized the region. Maybe the inclusion of banana as part the impact that this fruit has had on the economy and culture of both countries. It also included economic and industrial development and represented it through a factory, the natural substitute for land-related work.

López Rodezno emphasized culture and at the bottom of his mural included craftsmanship, a tradition that has remained over the centuries and has been passed

down from generation to generation. For this, he used a woman weaving on a stick loom, a primitive but functional tool that is still used today.



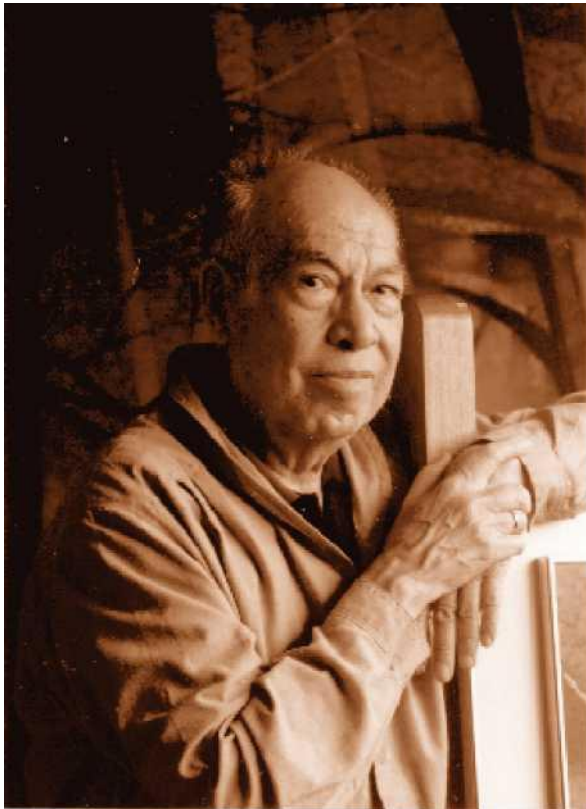
The artist also embodied his origins from Copán, an astronomical city par excellence, and included the Sun (Kinich Ahau) and the Moon (Ixchel) because from the Mayan worldview, both stars are intrinsically related to the fate of man.

As a concession to western culture that merged with Mesoamerican culture more than 500 years ago, the artist included a cross, which complemented the sense of cultural integration, which he achieved by adding the Horn of Plenty, the factory and the banana crop in other parts of the work.



### **AN APPROACH TO PLASTIC ARTISTS**

After having an approach with these masterpieces that form a majestic monument to creativity and artistic purity, it makes it necessary to know a little more about these dreamers who have left a cultural legacy for Guatemala.



#### **ROBERTO GONZÁLEZ GOYRI:**

He was born in Guatemala City on November 20, 1924. In 1939, he was admitted to the then well-known Guatemalan Academy of Fine Arts (now Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas). He was one of the students who collaborated in the making the stained-glass windows in the National Palace, under the direction of Master Julio Urruela.

Around 1944, he was presented with the opportunity to work at the National Museum of Archaeology as a ceramic restorer. It wasn't until 1948 when he made his first solo exhibition at his home and that same year traveled to New York where he studied sculpture and painting at the Art Students League and the Clay Club Sculpture Center. Those three years in the city and the contact with abstract expressionism gave him a new vision of his visual aesthetics, which is appreciated in his later works.

In 1951 he returned to Guatemala and two years later he was invited to participate in the creation of the murals of three of the buildings that would make up the Civic Center: Guatemalan Institute of Social Security, on 7<sup>a</sup>. Avenida, Crédito Hipotecario Nacional on the east and that of the Banco de Guatemala on the west. At the beginning of that time, the name of González Goyri gained fame and was asked years later to create other murals, one of the most recent being that of the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology.

His pictorial and sculptural work has been exhibited in important galleries around the world such as the Roko Gallery in New York, the Tate Gallery in London and the Pan American Union in Washington. He has also participated in exhibitions in Sao Paulo, Brazil; Quito, Ecuador, and the Venice Biennale in Italy.

In addition, his artistic pieces belong to the collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, The Museum of Art of the Americas in Washington, D.C., The Lowe Art Museum in Miami and in museums and private collections both in Guatemala and abroad.

**ARTURO LÓPEZ RODEZNO:**

He was born in Santa Rosa de Copán, Honduras, on March 12, 1906 and died in 1975. In 1920, he traveled to Havana, Cuba to study Agronomy with a specialty in sugar. At the end of his career in 1930, he studied three years of painting at the San Alejandro School in Havana and then



from 1938 to 1939 he studied fresco painting at the Juliane Academy in Paris. From 1952 to 1956, he trained in the mastery of enamel techniques in Rome, Italy.

His early works had a realistic style, albeit with a popular theme. Then he went in search of his own expression until he felt identified with the neofigurativism of traditional content in which he used large planes of color and did not go into the details of the figures.

He was the one who introduced muralism to Honduras and was also inspired by the Mayan civilization. As evidence, are his murals at the Toncontín Airport, the National School of Fine Arts, of which he was founder, Banco Atlántida and Banco Nacional de Fomento.

He participated in the Hispanic American Art Biennial in Madrid, Spain, in the Mostra d'arte Contemporáneo del Artenamento, Rome, Italy. He won the Great Gold Medal in the competition of the second exhibition of the Italian landscape seen by foreign artists, Lucca, Italy and the first prize in the National Hall of Paintings of the Honduran Institute of Inter-American Culture (IHCI), Tegucigalpa, 1963.

**CARLOS MÉRIDA:**

He was born in Guatemala City, on December 2, 1891 and died in Mexico City on December 21, 1984. His first passion was music and he studied under the tutelage of Master Jesús Castillo in Quetzaltenango, a city to which his family had moved shortly after his birth.

In 1909, a young Merida returned to the capital and established a friendship with the intellectuals of the time.

In 1912, he traveled to Paris to study music, but an auditory sclerosis forced him to abandon this profession and choose art, his second passion. World War I forced him to return to Guatemala in 1914 and a year later he held his first exhibition in the city of Quetzaltenango.

Around 1919, he decided to move to Mexico where in 1922 he joined the group of Mexican muralists collaborating with Diego Rivera on the mural of the Bolivar Amphitheater in the Aztec capital. Together with Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros founded the Union of workers, technicians, painters and sculptors. In 1931, he inaugurated the School of Dance for the Secretariat of Public Education.

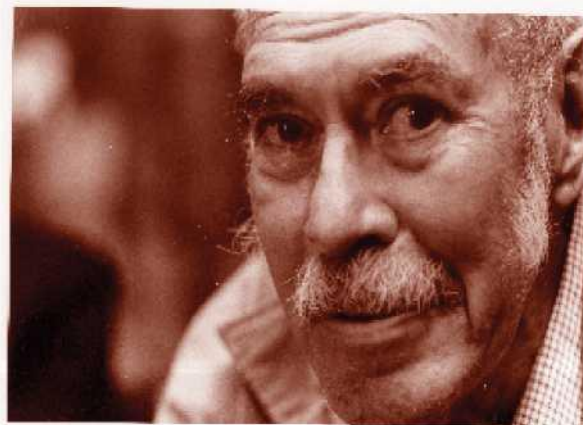
In the neighboring country he has left an incalculable sample of his pictorial and muralistic work such as the mural he made in 1923 in the Children's Library of the Secretariat for Public Education and in 1964 the stained-glass wall of the Cora Huichol room in the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico.

In Guatemala, his monumental work is in the Civic Center with "Song for Races" in the building of the Municipal Palace of Guatemala City, "Allegory to Social Security" in the Guatemalan Institute of Social Security, "Muralistic Intentions of a Mayan theme" in the Crédito Hipotecario Nacional and "Mayan Priests, Dancers" at the Banco de Guatemala.

His work is in private collections and museums around the world. It has been an important pillar in the development of Guatemalan art due to the novelty of its techniques and forms that have always kept an intrinsic relationship with its origins.

**DAGOBERTO VÁSQUEZ CASTAÑEDA:**

He was born in Guatemala City on October 2, 1922 and died on June 21, 1999. He entered the then Academy of Fine Arts in 1937, when sculptor Rafael Yela Günther, from Quetzaltenango, was the director.



Together with other colleagues at the time, in 1940, he became one of the assistants of Master Julio Urruela in the making of the stained-glass windows of the National Palace.

A supporter of the ideology that forged the 1944 revolution, Vásquez was one of the artists who enjoyed that political spring and had the opportunity to obtain a scholarship to study at the School of Applied Arts of Chile. He stayed there for four years and specialized in sculpture, carving, modeling, molding and casting in bronze.

Upon his return to Guatemala, he worked as a teacher of geometric drawing at the Vocational Technical Institute, the Rafael Aqueche Institute and the National School of Plastic Arts. His first solo exhibition in Guatemala was held until 1950. Three years later he won the competition to make the mural "The sources of life" at the Institute for Nutrition of Central America and Panama, which he made in ceramic mosaics. In 1954, he raised and drew the old post-classical period structures located in Mixco Viejo, as part of a French-Guatemalan archaeological expedition led by French archaeologist Henry Lehmann.



Subsequently, he was invited to participate in one of the side murals of the Municipal Palace of Guatemala City (towards the 7<sup>a</sup>. Avenida), entitled "Canto a Guatemala." He also decorated the wall on the East side of the Banco de Guatemala, the Carranza building and the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology of Guatemala.

For 20 years he was the director of the folklore Department, of the General Directorate of Fine Arts. In this place, he also contributed greatly to the conservation of Guatemalan culture because he researched and published texts on folk dances, popular music and painting, as well as colonial art and crafts. He also had the opportunity to impart his knowledge in different schools and areas of the country's universities.

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#### **Silvia Lanuza Campo**

Degree in Communication Sciences with a Master's degree in Communication Management. Political and Electoral. Since 1993, she has worked at the Rafael Landívar University as a professor of writing and topics on communication, in addition to being a thesis consultant. She worked for nine years in the cultural section of the Crónica magazine, that is no longer in circulation and from 2000 to date works as editor of magazines and Suplementos of Prensa Libre. She has also written articles for several art-related publications and has consulted with several cultural institutions in the country.