

## Diego Rivera's Last Self-Portrait

**M**ARY-ANNE MARTIN/FINE ART will exhibit a previously unknown self-portrait by the famous Mexican muralist, Diego Rivera, at **The Art Show of the Art Dealers Association of America**, in February 1996. Recently acquired by **Mary-Anne Martin/Fine Art**, this signed, circa 1956 caricature drawing in graphite on tan paper was recently authenticated by **Dr. Ramon Favela**, Professor of Art History at the University of Southern California at Santa Barbara, who is preparing the definitive catalogue of Diego Rivera's works. According to Favela, only seven self-portrait drawings by Rivera have come to light so far and as of now only fourteen self-portraits of the artist in any medium will be included in his catalogue.

The work was known to us since 1978, but it had never been researched or authenticated. When presented with the opportunity to acquire the



**Diego Rivera, Self-Portrait**, pencil on tan paper, signed, 18 1/2 x 19 inches, c. 1956

work, we took a chance that our instincts were correct and bought the piece. The drawing shows the artist as an old man, with soft, sagging features and woolly hair, gazing out at the viewer. Rivera exhibits no vanity or self-delusion; his features are ravaged by time, yet he still has a twinkle

in his eye and appears positive and hopeful. We thought the work had a witty, self-mocking quality and that the painter was depicting himself "warts and all." However, Dr. Favela's favorable opinion was crucial, since we guarantee authenticity of the works that we sell. In his letter of authentication, Favela writes, "it is the 'last' known self-portrait by the Mexican artist in any medium to appear on the market, thus far. I am dating it to circa 1956, the year before Rivera's death at the age of 70.... In my opinion, Rivera sketched this **Self-Portrait** sometime between his return to Mexico from the Soviet Union where he underwent cancer radiation therapy in 1955-56, and when he appears quite healthy and reposed, and in the last months of his life in 1957, when his health was visibly deteriorating. The drawing of a clearly healthy but old Diego Rivera appears to have been spontaneously executed using a mirror and signed on the spot, which also adds to its rarity."

## Alfredo Castañeda 'Mini Show' at Art Miami '96

**M**am/fa will exhibit eight recent works by the Mexican painter who has shown with our gallery since 1983. These works include a large and complicated composition called *Announcing your Death*, and several humorous works in a surrealist vein, including *Player*, *Musician* and *Father Time*.

Castañeda now lives in Madrid, where his entire family operates a Mexican restaurant, with great success. The restaurant, *Entre suspiro y suspiro*, which in addition to Mexican home cooking offers a splendid selection of over 40 kinds of tequila, also showcases art by young painters in an adjoining gallery called *El guardian de lo pequeño*.



**Alfredo Castañeda, Player**, oil on canvas, 31 1/2 x 31 1/2 inches (80 x 80 cm), 1995

## Letter from the Director

Looking at the results of the November Latin American auctions at Christie's and Sotheby's there doesn't seem to be too much that happened that wasn't foretold in this column in our last **mam/fa** newsletter. It was really just a matter of when the prices would come down and how much.

The May, 1995 auctions went pretty well and certainly the record breaking dispersal of the IBM collection which included some masterpieces of Mexican art (a rare Frida Kahlo *Self Portrait*, a famous Diego Rivera, *Dance in Tehuantepec*) had the effect of masking the real problem, which is that many of the biggest Mexican buyers are - at least for now - big sellers. Both Sotheby's and Christie's had in their vaults a number of Mexican paintings sent up to collateralize cash loans in the first quarter of 1995, when the biggest devaluation occurred. Many of the owners of these paintings hoped to pay off these advances when things got better and retrieve their pictures. Unfortunately things did not get better, and although most of these pictures did not come up for auction in May, they did indeed hit the block in November. The result was predictable; a glut of blue chip Mexican paintings, especially by internationally saleable artists like Tamayo, Rivera and Gerzso, flooded the market and the buyers selected out the ones that interested them and left the others begging. Many of these good but not great paintings bore estimates that reflected the market a year ago, but the buyers who contributed to those high prices a year ago were out of the market. Now it is not the case that Mexicans are the only buyers for Mexican pictures (although in good times they are the backbone of the market) but what occurred in those

auction sales was a refusal by the other buyers - Americans, Latin Americans and Europeans - to pay prices that largely represented the reserve (or seller's idea of the right price). After the first ten or so works went unsold at Christie's auction (Christie's went first this time) buyers simply sat on their hands when they thought something was overestimated and competed only when they felt a work was of high quality and the estimate was realistic. Sotheby's had an advantage in going second, since their experts had 24 hours to telephone sellers who had high reserves and try to get their minimums down. Still, many lots went unsold, some of them high quality works with overly ambitious estimates (the late Diego Rivera *Maternidad* is a case in point, and also the 1956 *Vendedoras de Flores* by Tamayo), and other good, but not exceptional, paintings which bore 1994 style estimates. Factor in to this that there were at both houses combined at least twenty five works by Tamayo, a count that would put a strain on an artist's market in the best of times.

One thing that I observed—as pictures that had been bought four years ago were in many cases being resold for 30 to 40 percent less than their cost—was that many of the auctiongoers in the room were witnessing a down market for the first time. Many collectors of Latin American art, both American and Latin American, have come into this market in the last seven years. Many non-Mexican new buyers of Mexican pictures have witnessed the extraordinary rise of interest in works by such artists as Rivera, Tamayo, Kahlo and Gerzso, and have started collecting these works *without ever having seen a correction in the market*. I found that the effect of this realization on the

collectors was not to discourage them but to excite them. Many people called me after the auctions and spoke to me of the opportunities they felt were opening up to them because of the "failure" of the sales. In my own gallery we were busier in a ten day period than we had been in the past ten months and we sold extremely well in all price ranges. It was as if a dam had burst! Collectors perceived that it was a buyer's market and they started buying! But they were only interested in good quality, at the correct price.

### What can we learn from all this?

First, rumors of the death of the Latin American market are premature. The market is alive and well but it is just that, a market, and it goes down as well as up.

Second, it is not true that the Mexicans are not buying. They are, and I personally executed bids in behalf of Mexican clients in amounts of hundreds of thousands of dollars. They are not, however, buying mediocre paintings at inflated prices, and this should be good in the long run, because auction estimates next spring will undoubtedly be much more conservative, as both auction experts and prospective sellers adjust to the reality of lower prices.

As always the same advice pertains: Buy good quality. Pay correct prices. But be aware that just because something is cheap doesn't mean it's a bargain. M.A.M.



# News of Elena Climent

## Works in progress:

*Elena Climent* is now preparing a series of paintings commemorating the house in Mexico City where she grew up. Now that both of her parents have died and the house will eventually be sold, she wishes to set down on canvas the memories of "a home that was somehow outside of time." This is the house where her father, Enrique Climent, "painted endlessly up there, in his studio." She writes, "throughout my growing years, I cherished my parent's house and felt a strong link to the mysterious power that impregnated every part of it, attracting me to the secret labyrinths of my origins. The house was not only a house, it was a symbol of a lost world, recreated out of distant recollections where art was of invaluable importance. It was through it that your soul could 'touch' the spirit of what had once been, and somehow let you recover some of its essence."



Elena Climent, *Ledge with Ex-voto*, oil on canvas mounted on panel, 11 x 16<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches (28.1 x 42.9 cm), 1995

## Upcoming exhibitions:

- Some of the paintings in this series of *Memories of the House of my Father* will be exhibited in Madrid by the Galería de Arte Mexicano at **ARCO 96**, as part of an exhibition of **Art by Mexican**

**Women**, which will subsequently travel to the Galerie Rahn, Zurich.

- Climent's work is now traveling in *Latin American Woman Artists*. This very popular exhibition will travel in 1996 to the Denver Art Museum and Museo de las Americas (through January 14th), the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D. C. (February 8 - April 29) and will be extended to a final venue at the Miami Center for the Fine Arts (June 14 - August 25).
- A work by Elena Climent, *Ledge with ex-voto*, was specially created for an exhibition tracing the history of the retablo to be held at the Centro Cultural de Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City from March 20 through September 15, 1996.
- **mam/fa** will exhibit works by Climent at **Art Miami '96** (January), **The Art Show '96** of the ADAA at the 7th Regiment Armory in New York City, (February) and **Sanford Smith's Works on Paper** (March '96), also at the 7th Regiment Armory.



Elena Climent, *Bricks and Plants*, oil on canvas mounted on panel, 18 x 24 inches (45.7 x 61 cm), 1995



# Gunther Gerzso 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday Show

In September 1995 **mam/fa** had the great honor of presenting a retrospective exhibition of over forty of Gerzso's paintings, drawings, sculpture and prints, covering work from the 1940's to the 1990's. Included were



At Gerzso's **mam/fa** opening: André Emmerich, Mary-Anne Martin, and Gunther Gerzso

works from **mam/fa**'s inventory, new works from the artist, and works lent by private American and Latin American collectors, including two key paintings graciously lent from the **Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection** in Mexico City. The artist traveled to New York for the gallery opening on September 27th where he was congratulated by well-wishers from as far away as San Francisco, Mexico and Zurich. Gerzso also presided the following day at a colloquium entitled *A Conversation with Gunther Gerzso*, held at the Americas Society, which hosted the event jointly with the Mexican Cultural Institute and **Mary-Anne Martin/Fine Art**. The artist reminisced about his life as a painter and his earlier career as a set designer for the theater and the Mexican film industry. The artist was presented by Ambassador Jorge Pinto, consul general of Mexico in New



Gunther Gerzso, *Muro rosa y naranja*, oil and sand on masonite, 15 x 21¾ inches (38.1 x 55.8 cm), 1962

York, and the interview was conducted by Dr. Hank Hine, now director of Graphicstudio in Tampa, whose Limestone Press has published many of Gerzso's sculptures and prints.

The exhibition was a critical success and in fact an article on the artist's work is now in preparation by the writer David Ebony for publication this spring in *Art in America*. Prompted by the enthusiastic response of the public to **mam/fa**'s show (the exhibition had to be held over for an extra month), this will be the first article on Gerzso to appear in a major national art magazine in the United States.

This show will travel in a reduced



A Conversation with Gunther Gerzso at the Americas Society: Gunther Gerzso and Hank Hine

format to the **Galerie Rahn**, in Zurich, where it will open on March 27th. A Swiss venue is especially fitting as Gerzso spent his formative years



Gunther Gerzso with Mexican Cultural Attaché Mireya Teran

studying in Switzerland under the tutelage of his uncle, an art collector, and art dealer who schooled him in connoisseurship and the history of art. Galerie Rahn has begun a program to introduce Mexican and Latin American to Zurich and we look forward to future collaboration with them.

A full-color illustrated catalogue of the **80th Birthday Show** at **mam/fa** with essays by Dore Ashton and Marie Pierre Colle is available at the gallery for \$10 postpaid.

## mam/fa winter art expo schedule

art@  
MIAMI

### Art Miami 96

Preview, Thursday, January 4  
Fair runs January 5 through 9  
Miami Beach Convention Center  
Stand 1420

## The Art Show

ART DEALERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Preview, Wednesday, February 21  
Fair runs February 22 through 26  
7th Regiment Armory  
Park Avenue at 67 St., New York City  
Stand B-8

### Sanford Smith's Eighth Annual

*Works on Paper*

Preview Thursday, March 7th  
Fair runs March 8th through 10th  
Stand D-2

For additional details call the gallery:

Telephone: 212-288-2213

Fax number: 212-861-7656

## mam/fa personnel briefs

We are happy to announce a number of changes in gallery staffing this year. **Matthew Rembe**, who joined us in 1992, is now Associate Director. Matthew handles daily operation of the gallery and works on exhibitions and sales. A native of Albuquerque, New Mexico, he is fluent in Spanish, which he studied while living in Seville, and has a great love of Mexican and Latin American art.



Matthew Rembe and Dina Mitrani at the Gunther Gerzso 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday Show opening

**Dina Mitrani**, now works in the gallery part time as our administrator. She comes to us from Christie's, where she was Senior Administrator in the Client Advisory Service Department, dealing with Latin American clients. Dina is a native of Miami, Florida. The daughter of a Cuban father and an Argentinean mother, she is comfortable in Spanish and English and mans the phones in both languages. She is with us half time, as

she is currently pursuing a master's degree in Art History at Hunter College.

**Lynn Harrison Bump** is our Director of Computer Services. He has designed our Gallery Management System and also does our desktop publishing, including ads, newsletters and catalogues. Lynn also does private tutoring for individuals who need help getting started with computers, covering everything from finding the "on" switch to installing programs, custom designing routines, organizing screens and replacing chips.

**John Rabasa** has left the gallery to join the ITP program (Interactive telecommunications) at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. John is learning about all the new information technology and its applications for the future. He is in a two year master's program that will enable him to "direct traffic on the Information Highway." He is involved in special projects with mam/fa and will consult for us as time permits.



Lynn Harrison Bump

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## *Suite of Gerzso Etchings Now Available*



**mam/fa** is now offering a suite of twelve hard ground etchings entitled *Temples* with accompanying poetry by C. Henri Hine and Spanish translation by Alberto Blanco. Published in an edition of 50 by Limestone Press in 1995, the prints were executed in 1993 in a somewhat figurative style not usually associated with Gerzso's work. Printed in dark green ink, these evocative etchings call to mind ancient archeological sites in Mexico. Plate sizes vary and the paper size is 14<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches.

The suite is offered at \$5000 (excluding applicable taxes and shipping costs). Individual prints are available at \$600 each. For more information about this portfolio please contact the gallery.



The **mam/fa** newsletter is an occasional publication of Mary-Anne Martin/Fine Art, New York. If you would like to receive the newsletter free of charge, please send a note or postcard to:

**Mary-Anne Martin/Fine Art  
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