

# On the Threshold of Image: First perspectives on the Production of Objects and Collages by Adolfo Nigro

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In the context of Argentina's artistic field, Adolfo Nigro's plastic production emerges with a singular language.

Faced with multiple modalities of artistic expression that nowadays give place to diverse and simultaneous manifestations, the artist develops a language with his own codes, distancing himself from the dominant trends.

Based on the works that have emphasized the main features of his production, we will first focus on the development of his processes of selection and appropriation, conceiving them as intrinsic mechanisms of his own productive reality. These mechanisms have been indispensable for the consolidation of his discourse, and in this case they allow us to approach one of the ways these processes of symbolic production are articulated in the periods that follow avant-garde conjunctures.

Based on the selection of the artist's collages and objects, the following essay, which extends the main premises to a later work, is structured on the possibility of visualizing the itinerary of these sources of his production and exploring the warp and woof of intertextual relations woven by his language. After trying to indicate the degree of importance and significance of the referents recovered by his gaze, we will place the main stress on those cultural exponents that constitute the Latin American scope of his perception. We consider that in this manner, it is possible to shift our attention toward a point of view presided by the intention to reserve a space for the analysis of seldom recognized influences on the artists of our context.

## 1. The Starting Point

*"It all started in Montevideo,  
which is where everything always begins"*  
Enrique Fierro

In 1961, Adolfo Nigro traveled to Brazil with his twin brother for the first time. It was the first of many travels he would embark on, driven by the search for new things. Despite the contingencies, this experience gave place to his first casual encounter with several Uruguayan artists, among them José Gamarra, Luis Díaz, Nelson Ramos, and Octavio Podestá, who invited him to visit Uruguay, the land of Torres-García. However, a number of circumstances obligated both brothers to return to Argentina.

Back in Buenos Aires, Nigro enrolled in the Prilidiano Pueyrredón Superior School of Fine Arts. While he attended school, his financial situation obligated him to take odd jobs. He worked as a metalworker, bricklayer, greengrocer, truck driver and vendor in the Abasto Food Market.

During this period in which he tried different ways of improving his technique at painting and drawing au naturel, his most important teachers were Aurelio Macchi, Diana Chalukian, Héctor Nieto, and Antonio Pujía. But it was Víctor Magariños who guided him in the understanding of modern painting by lending him the necessary tools that allowed him to part with the academic rules of the school. This artist was also the starting point in the warp and woof of referential links developed by Nigro throughout his production process.

They met in a painting class at the Manual Belgrano National School of Fine Arts in 1957. Nigro never attended classes as a regular student although he was enrolled there at this time. His classroom was the street—the parks, the nearby bars and the bars on Corrientes Avenue—and a workshop the teacher had in Banfield.

*"At first, I was always vaguely looking for an order, a meaning in plastic that would make it harmonize with universal totality. This body of thought of Torres-García, who Víctor admired and talked to me about, fully expresses his position as a creator. (...) He always talked to us about the creative man, the man who develops his abilities and struggles to achieve it in an unjust society. The purest light to accompany man's dreams. To speak in the language of the universe. To speak of oneself. To speak of others."*<sup>1</sup>

Through these encounters the artist became interested in Torres-García's thinking.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, Magariños was the first one who introduced him in depth to the pos-

itulates of the Uruguayan creator back when his writings and his works were still largely unknown in Argentina. The study of these concepts motivated him to travel again, this time to Montevideo.

In April 1966 with very little money, he traveled to the Uruguayan capital where the Argentine painter Ernesto Drangosch, who had been there since 1965, awaited him. This change of residence coincided with a period of social, political, and economic crisis in the country, which gave intellectuals and artists much more confidence in their expressions as promoters of social change. The situation led to a vertiginous process of propagation of new values, creating an environment scarcely in tune with the search of plastic artists like Nigro, who on his arrival in Montevideo felt as if he were in a different atmosphere.

*"... I was surprised to see that such thinking could be produced, so distant from what I had experienced in Buenos Aires. In Argentina, culture always looked abroad, except for isolated cases like Gambartes or Grell who weren't well known enough by the young artists"*<sup>3</sup>

In November of that same year he had, along with Drangosch, his first solo exhibit at the "U" Gallery. The show represented the starting point of his ulterior investigations in a presentation of paintings whose subjects—still life and landscape—were the excuse for a reflection on pictorial construction. On the other hand, they evidenced his knowledge and admiration for the works of Cezanne.

In this context he met a great number of artists close to the group of the Torres-García Workshop. Through Roger Julien, friend of several members of the group of the Montevideo Workshop, he met Gurvich,<sup>4</sup> one of the Uruguayan master's most important disciples and later his main referent.

At first, he installed his belongings in an old building on 25 de Agosto Street in Montevideo's Old City, facing the port. Other artists like Gonzalo Fonseca, Julio Alpuy, José Gurvich, "Yuyo" Goitiño, and later Ernesto Vila had lived in that house. Nigro<sup>5</sup> shared this space with Juan Cavo who lived on the lower floor. Very close to the house was the workshop of Julio Mancebo, who had been Torres-García's student in his youth; and José Gurvich's house, his teacher from then on. At the same time, the artist shared a workshop with Drangosch, Manolo Lima, and Nahuel Ojeda in the Old Market.

The workshops of the brothers Miguel "Lacho" and Héctor "Yuyo" Goitiño, Carlos Llanos, Clarina Vicens, Marta Morandi, Guillermo Fernández and Mario Mosteiro were also part of this group of artists who made Uruguay both a *geographical as well as a spiritual place*.<sup>6</sup> Each one of these environments maintained the atmosphere generated by the influences of the Torres-García Workshop<sup>7</sup> with experiences that distended the contributions of his heritage, mainly reflecting his ethical legacy. Thus the collective experience was present throughout this period of Nigro's activity, marking the general features of this first group of relations that had great repercussion in the construction of his language.

It's important to point out that Nigro's relationship with this context was intense and complex at the same time. Firstly, because at the moment of his arrival in Uruguay, the Torres-García Workshop had already dissolved and its members had derived into their own personal languages that, as in Gurvich's case, led them to abandon Torres' premises.<sup>8</sup> In second place, because the Uruguayan master's theories and teachings had such a great influence that they installed a very strong artistic tradition in the country's art. This was a highly attractive tradition for someone who was coming from another place, in spite of the present perspectives of change.

In that sense, along his process Nigro re-elaborated the heritage of these experiences through a mechanism of selective appropriation that still flows in his modality of plastic expression, and including a constant: the hybrid character.

## Collages and objects: first trials

The year following his first show at the "U" Gallery, he began using the collage. In Nigro's production process, it is evident that this practice begins when his painting starts taking other directions. "La mesa" [The Table] and "Plato con huesos" [Plate with Bones], 1967, are part of the artist's first experiences with this modality during his stay in Montevideo. The plastic profile of both works evidence his early view of the esthetics of Picasso and Braque: rejection of perspective, scarce sensation of depth and flat forms superimposed on a construction that is representative of the still life genre. Picasso and Braque are emblematic figures in the history of collage because in 1912 when analytic cubism was emerging, they introduced "papier collé", the technique of pasted paper. It was a crucial moment in the history of art when this technique opened new paths in the plastic field.

*"...It marked the end, or at least a cardinal moment, of a long evolution in western painting as it confirmed the questioning of everything that constituted*

its own foundation. Because what is questioned is image, threatened with extinction, the sacrosanct pictorial image that is opposed to the palpable evidence of matter. We go from the universe of pure illusion and the trompe-l'oeil to a world in which matter declines in terms of real texture, as if painting, in its search for a new expression of what is real had decided no longer to convoke the representation of things of the outside world but rather the actual originals in their triviality, their unsustainable truth"<sup>9</sup>

In Adolfo Nigro's language, the collage appears as an alternative capable of tracing the path to the simultaneous, which all through his process leads him to formulate various ways of making different things live in harmony in the same space. In these first collages, the artist makes use of the integration of realist forms in a structure established over geometric lineaments. A fusion between realism and abstraction, evoking Torres-García's proposal of constructive universalism.<sup>10</sup>

In "Ventana y luna" [Window and Moon] also completed in 1967, there are certain changes in the selection of the subjacent structure of the image and at the same time a greater distance from the works that are closer to cubist constructions. By the central placement of this heavenly body, the construction begins to echo certain formal synthesis, but as it holds an amalgam of everyday objects inside, it establishes those sprouts of simultaneity that unfold their meaning in the superimposition of bits of paper textured in black and white, interrupted by small red areas.

In "La mesa" and "Plato con huesos" as well as in "Ventana y luna" the pasted bits of paper achieve a value because of the form, the representation of the object, and not the matter. In this sense, the works are set in a sphere of bi-dimensional construction that allows the author to make good use of the resource of the fragment in relation with order and structural unity. Regarding the use of color, there are few variations and coincidentally, a manipulation of earth colors and the achromatic, which would become more unusual in later years.

Though they remain in the bi-dimensional field, these experiences in which the artist pastes bits of paper over the image, introduce him to another facet of his production: the one that allows *the introduction of the reality of the world outside the painting into the reality painted by it*.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, they are the first incursions into the development of a modality that would soon rest on the impetus of associating different realities in his work. Impetus that draws the admission of the plural and the heterogeneous, in accordance with a vision and a way of living in the world. Nigro's beginnings in this practice were parallel to his first developments in the sphere of his crafts production. A dimension that marked the first antecedent of what would later be his object production starting in 1980.

The characteristics of a new context and the collective experiences in the Cerro workshop contributed to the foundation of new values in the artist's view. He reaffirmed his attraction towards primary objects and rough materials and began making pottery, necklaces, works in wood and glass. This way, he was able to introduce *the world of the object in its entire significative dimension*.<sup>12</sup>

His arrival at the dimension of artistic trade had two motives: the validity in this environment of Torres-García's thinking through the group of artists gathered around Gurvich, and his financial situation. He had arrived in Uruguay without any means of economic support and selling this kind of production could provide him with a source of income that would allow him to remain there.

Torres-García's postulates changed his perspective of art. Such a notion included conventional and non-conventional practices without a hierarchy. Art was considered a trade that branched out in several areas and one of them was the crafts.<sup>13</sup> This thought induced him to produce such objects with the same impetus he put into his paintings, based on a series of conditions reinforced in his workshop experiences, as he worked hard on the production of engobe pottery with Gurvich, Cavo, Drangosch, and José Luis Da Cruz.

"We used to go to the Pantanos for the mud. We prepared it, kneaded it, took out the lumps and air and Gurvich would start working the dough. He would start developing the forms he came up with at that moment. He did it as he went along, with no plan in mind. He had some shapes prepared on the table and he embedded the beings and things he was creating in an instant..."<sup>14</sup>

This exploration of the field of applied arts made him turn his gaze toward the past. An attitude he reaffirmed in Chile in 1971 where he lived for a year participating in fairs. He exhibited his crafts production in the Parras's Peña on Carmen Street. There, he came in contact with Violeta Parra's tapestries and started making his own, woven on burlap. The designs he employed showed strong ties with the Paracas culture but also with Torres-García's constructive drawings. He developed this production streak until 1974.

In this same context, he started to test the application of enamels on ceramic objects. He made a great number of pots whose drawings also echoed a gaze

into the indigenous past, mainly because he took some designs from Nazca pottery as a reference.

In 1972 he returned to Uruguay. He continued selling his pieces at different fairs. However, his convictions were directed toward the reinforcement of the plastic worth of these objects rather than their functional worth. In this sense, following Torres-García's concepts, he continued his serial production but considering each piece as a unique object with different esthetic qualities.

"Torres had made it clear that there were no exclusion zones in art and that each pot had to be undertaken with the same plastic impetus used in tackling an oil painting. Nothing was privileged. And this equalitarian tendency was left by the master as a cultural legacy."<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, from this point of view we can find the first antecedents of Nigro's later object production. According to this perspective, these utilitarian pieces can also be considered as part of his artistic expression and shown in their sole condition as objects.<sup>16</sup>

This tendency didn't transcend to other environments. The importance of this production, which was justified in Uruguay by the role played by the TG Workshop<sup>17</sup>, was not the same in Buenos Aires where only isolated expressions acknowledged such tendency. One of them was the crafts exhibition organized by Diana Chalukian<sup>18</sup> in Lomas de Zamora, in 1972. The exhibition emerged from an almost marginal impulse to critically show the situation of the crafts production. In the presentation catalog<sup>19</sup> there is an underlying questioning of the conception of crafts production that sees it as a useful element, as a piece to be sold, with formal attributes reflecting the latest trend.<sup>20</sup>

It is obvious that in this context, the concept of applied artistic products didn't exist in the way it was thought of in Uruguay. At the time, there was a great separation in Argentina between the cultivated and the popular, made clear by the fact that hardly any artist used that practice along with the more conventional ones in art. For that reason, when Nigro returned to Buenos Aires in 1973, he couldn't continue with the lifestyle that had taken him to travel from fair to fair to support himself by selling his objects. At that time, he abandoned such production and continued with the drawings, collages, and paintings he had been working on simultaneously.

However, these experiences marked his later production of collages and objects in a fundamental way. The lasting original feature of those practices has been possibly his taste for the primary, for a materiality set in the coordinates of simplicity.

### **An esthetics of simultaneity**

"Thinking the collage would be (among other things) trying to reflect upon cuts and continuities, differences and coincidences, separations and bonds."<sup>21</sup>

In every process of plastic production there is a natural tendency toward deviation and divergence. In Nigro's itinerary, the use of collage ratifies that inclination by clear variations in the ways he employs that technique. Even so, in the works produced until the late 90s, these alterations do not conceal the possibility of a constant: the presence of the object. Fragmented or not, presented or represented in his images, they establish different levels of anchoring in reality.

"It's an autonomous object, capable of establishing unusual and novel relationships and characterized by its place in a concrete world, the world of the artist: 'This bus ticket and not another; the number of the house where I lived in Rosario during my childhood; that cup of milk and coffee; the letter from a friend who lives in Barcelona; the loaf of bread, the spoon and the everyday plate'."<sup>22</sup>

The first few years following his return to Buenos Aires, his collages showed a common feature: the need to underline the significant power of a certain group of objects, those that belong to the urban environment. The emphasis on these elements -and the way of integrating them and constructing the space of the image- is closely related to the moment when the artist introduces himself in his environment. It's a critical period. In the first place because he had to adapt to Buenos Aires again where he would reside permanently, but also because of the peculiar characteristics of that context, which was not very adequate for his search. In the artistic field, there was an atmosphere of transition that led to appeasing the tensions that had characterized the 60s avant-garde maelstrom. Realisms and different variations of conceptual art were the main tendencies of the decade. On the other hand, the Argentine 70s was a decade of political instability, economic weakening and social crisis.

Those years were a re-adaptation stage in which his memories of Montevideo,

Rosario, and other cities or neighborhoods, such as Aguada and Malvín, that had been part of his travel itinerary led him to an esthetic inclination toward the theme of the city, which he worked on in a way similar to Gurvich's.

The work "Montevideo", 1974, is an example of that facet. The dominant feature of the images is the preference for a palette of earth colors, of low saturation and light values, compared to his prior production.

The relationship with Gurvich is observed in the use of an iconography similar to the one visualized in the works of the master during the 60s and beginning of the 70s. The presence of flying characters that shows the proximity of the Uruguayan with Chagall is frequent.

Another one of Gurvich's iconographic signs present in "Montevideo" is the abandoned meat factory that shoots out from the ground of that construction. This element acts as a place of anchorage in the reality of both authors since it is part of the landscape that surrounds them in Montevideo. Stairs, wheels, houses, buildings, bars, faces are added to this iconographic scope, exhibiting a sort of constructive realism, not imitative, that evidences his proximity to the French Fernand Léger.<sup>23</sup>

In the work, some of the mentioned elements converge in superimposed areas that emerge from a structure based on the arrangement of irregular horizontal strips. The fracture of the forms, the transparencies and the variation of the actual proportions of the objects reinforce the attempt to subordinate the theme to the pictorial construction.

These characteristics of "Montevideo", noticeable also in other works of the same period, allow us to point out a fundamental aspect of the author's assimilation of Gurvich's language. Actually, he looked to that production that showed a redefinition of language and, furthermore, a rupture with the teachings of Torres.<sup>24</sup> Discarding the use of orthogonal structures and resorting to more dynamic compositions was the key stance of Gurvich's change, which was taken by Nigro and developed in other series of collages.

The years following "Montevideo" expressed some changes, unleashed by a new situation: a trip.

In 1974, Drangosch had left for Spain. Given the situation in the country, and the news he received from his friend who was living in San Cugat, he decided to travel to Europe in 1975. He stayed in Barcelona until March 1976.

During his stay, he visited the museums of all those places he always heard about: the Netherlands, France, Madrid. He was impressed by the works of several artists: Chagall, the Spanish artists Tapiés, Millares, Miró, Picasso, most of them great masters in the history of collage. He also discovered the Spanish sculptor Alberto Sánchez, and admired the way he could shape allusions of his place of origin, his birthplace Toledo, on the plastic image.

Indeed, the trip created a situation that again set the foundation for a deviation in his production. In his collages, he began to propose the need of ranking some real elements, which attached to the pictorial plane, acquired a higher presence in the plastic space. On the other hand, his palette became more heterogeneous, with a tendency toward warm colors.

"Viaje a San Cugat" [Trip to San Cugat], 1976, dates from this period. In this construction a transportation ticket appears on the surface with an inscription that reads "Barcelona". From the superimposition of planes and objects he shows in "Montevideo" he passes here to a selection of objects a bit more limited, though just as heterogeneous, surrounding that ticket. A selection of elements that would later be deputed in order to anticipate only some of them; the ones that had more significance in his life: carts, bus tickets, letters. He had noticed the same attitude in Miró, whom he met at the Belenes Fair of the Barcelona Cathedral, wandering around the stands and talking to the artisans.<sup>25</sup> His admiration for the master was rooted precisely in the position he had adopted regarding reality and the object.<sup>26</sup> An attitude that led him to respect, appreciate, and rescue the more simple things.

Exploring the field of the mentioned works, Montevideo and Barcelona, the places alluded to in these works, were places of profound experiences in the artist's life, but they were also two of the areas he transited when he was beginning to trace his search path. During those years, he had been unable to settle down in a definitive place, mainly because of the particular situations that emerged in each one of the contexts in which he found himself during his travels. That experience of what is transitory led him to outline another idea, presented almost surreptitiously in the series Horizontes catalanes: la utopía [Catalan Horizons: Utopia]. A character rooted in the lineaments of constructive universalism, which is expressed in his work with an order in the construction guided by the line of the horizon. The escalating arrangement of parallel areas based on a free geometry followed Gurvich's concepts. In this case, the systematization suggested a dimension that tended to recover lost things, stretching beyond eyesight.

With this series, he proposed a new thematic tendency. From the city references he went on to an interest for the countryside and the land. This theme brought back

memories of his childhood images, when he worked with his father delivering produce on a cart, his holidays in Rosario, and the Santa Fe countryside. The farm, the haystacks, the moon, the crops had to do with that atmosphere he was surrounded by during his stay in Barcelona.

In this series, new materials became relevant. The gaze into the production of Tapiés and Millares had to do with his need to include other kinds of qualities, transcending the sphere of paper, incorporating a fragment of thick matter to the pictorial reality of the work. In this sense, Nelly Perazzo points out:

"If tapestry and pottery had aroused in Nigro an inclination toward the crafts, in Spain the proximity of the artists Tapiés and Millares, who had succeeded in attaining a high degree of expressivity from matter, could not but emphasize his taste for surfaces and materials. Thus the rugged and wrinkled cardboards that appear as support [...]; corrugated cardboard, paper, burlap, metal plate, and small branches in "Horizonte catalán [Catalan Horizons]." <sup>27</sup>

Based on Guignon's postulates, Nigro began transiting a path in which matter would decline in terms of real texture as it is presented as such.<sup>28</sup>

In one of those "Horizontes Catalanes", what stands out the most are the strips of burlap fabric that become the moon, and also in an extension of land on whose surface he paints red flags. This type of resource allows him to jump toward a production where the residue, the fragment, can become a total element, which is made possible by the displacement of the quality of one object to another.<sup>29</sup> One of the most important signic entities of this work is the word "sur" [south] which proposes a framework of signification inevitably related to Torres-García's discourse. In this sense, the term becomes a quotation that expresses the vindication of the direction marked by the Uruguayan master when in his manifest he pointed out: "Our north is the south."<sup>30</sup>

Since his arrival from Barcelona, the artist continued his developments in the sphere of collage. He went on exploiting that tendency of ranking elements consequently leading him to a greater synthesis in the composition. A path that opened the door to a tension between the profusion of planes or objects he anticipated in his previous works and the emergence of spaces almost empty of images. Later, his production would revolve around this movement but adding the mentioned tendency to rescue from chaos certain objects already used in previous works.

"El boleto" [The Bus Ticket], 1978, evidences this peculiarity. It's one of those cases in which the object is pondered both for the characteristics of the composition as well as its actual presence. Emphasized or dispersed, in the works mentioned so far and also in later ones, the bus ticket constitutes a proper reference to underline the value of the mundane object, but also to evoke his travel experiences. In this work it emerges from a chaotic set of identifiable elements in the world around us, creating an unreal atmosphere mainly due to the disparity of the proportions. Buildings, houses, a car, the tail of an animal, a bottle, a spoon, a number referring to the year in which the work was made, are signs that, because of the fictitious relations they have in this construction, are not faithful to their referent. This same type of relation between objects is perceptible in works such as "Carro y cielo" [Cart and Sky], "Carta de España" [Letter from Spain] and "Viaje a Munro" [Trip to Munro], among others.

During the same year he completed "El boleto" he worked on a series entitled "Desprendimientos" [Detachments]. The mechanism here is different. Instead of focusing the tension on one object, he multiplied the points of attention in a big area crowded with elements.

Based on this, we can point out Nigro's preference for an esthetics of the simultaneous that leads us to vindicate one of the legacies of Torres-García's constructive universalism. It concerns that exercise of contradictions the Uruguayan master expressed through a synthesis between the worlds of reason and emotion, between the transcendent and the immanent, between the conscious and the unconscious, between intuition and knowledge, between synthesis and analysis, between geometry and representation, between abstraction and figuration.<sup>31</sup>

Coincidentally, in Nigro simultaneity is an existential characteristic conveyed to the image by a series of resources typical of baroque esthetics: decentralization, overflow, multiplication of points of view. Perceptible characteristics in this set of works in which the bus ticket is thrown into a space that fluctuates between the figurative and the abstract.

In different structures, the objects that compose the images in this stage are thrown into the plastic space generating an atmosphere of lightness. A symptom taken from Italo Calvino's short stories, expressed by several references to a universe in which everything is mixed together, everything lives together.

"...My operation has consisted, most of the time, of subtracting weight; I've tried to take weight off the human figures, the heavenly bodies, the cities..." <sup>32</sup>

Despite certain ranking attempts, in these works people, bus tickets, spoons, letters, heavenly bodies and other entities acquire a lightness that places them in the same projection plane affording different levels of signification.

### **The allusive mission of signs**

*"The real stupor is made up of memories"*  
Cesare Pavese

The early 80s marked the beginning of a new stage in Adolfo Nigro's plastic process. The itinerary of his object production begins at the same time his collages derive into other forms of object arrangement.

"Migraciones" [Migrations], 1980, is one of the emblematic series of this period where the peculiarity is given by an atmosphere of flying objects. Contrary to what happened in "Desprendimientos" these elements are not thrown into chaos. They simply remain in a void. A space that echoes lightness, liberating those entities awaiting movement, which is fictitious until now.

In this series, the author uses random procedures as an answer to a context that changes his perspective of reality and by which he develops an image open to other kinds of concepts. It's a production that, like the others, becomes a dialogue with his present situation, but that in certain moments such as this, acquires other nuances.

The year 1976 was the beginning of a different stage in Argentine history. Starting another period of military dictatorship, the so-called Process of National Reorganization, the armed forces took power. They had the clear goal of drastically transforming society by using practices of intervention in public affairs, reinforced with acts of censorship, persecution and genocide.

For Nigro -who for this reason saw how friends and family were distanced- plastic production was a form of resistance. With the modality of allusive constructions, he elaborated a series of allegories<sup>33</sup> of this critical and uncertain time.

"El zapato" [The Shoe] is one of the works that allows us to focus on that peculiarity. It's the representation of a boot whose conventional use distends the allusive characteristic of the work. In the compositional level such element acts as the continent for a diversity of objects that are dispersed inside, and in a few cases outside that contention area, thus proposing the random way in which all those entities support the system. A Spanish playing card of swords on the top area plays a significative role in this work. As in many of his works it represents power, suggesting a position of dominance over the rest of the elements.

It is possible to visualize the collage entitled "De esta tierra" [Of this Land] in this same sphere. A work in which the bits of paper reconstruct the mission of memories: rescuing things from oblivion. It was completed in 1983 as a homage to the Madres de Plaza de Mayo [Mothers of the victims of military repression]. In its construction he placed several strips of paper on which he drew and pasted a series of elements: the white headscarves, the word Thursday (alluding to the day the Mothers meet), flags, loaves of bread. On the top area, he placed a playing card with an arrow pointing to it. Arrows are used frequently to signal or alert the spectator. The playing card is an element that, as in the previous case, symbolizes power: "...a power that caused what was happening below."<sup>34</sup>

A specific and more detailed analysis would allow us to extend these observations to other collages. They could possibly constitute another dimension of the artist's production, distinct because it weaves a representative discourse of his peculiar dialogue with reality.

Without going into further detail, in this stage of maturity of his language, several signs would acquire allusive functions. Thus we see how the letter is added paradoxically to the card of swords. One is still the symbol of power while the other appears as a representation of a distant bond. The latter, counterbalancing the card of swords, becomes the utopian referent of his own world of experiences and at the same time of the contingencies that are unleashed in its context.

From here on in his works, the letter becomes the referent of a common wish, to retain the bond with other people in the distance. A bond that had been suspended by the events that threatened our country in those years.

### **Toward an object dimension**

*"Thus we arrive to the appearance of 'objects,' at the same time in which they become unrecognizable on the painting. They were born as the children of his pictorial work and his previous collages, but guided by another expressive need."*<sup>35</sup>

The specific presence of the objects that Nigro began to show in some collages (particularly those that included playing cards and bus tickets) turned into another type of realization. Since 1980 boats, fish, guitars, tools have been taken to a different level of presentation: the object.

With this journey in mind, his process marks a path where the collage represents the transit toward the object dimension of his production. This doesn't mean that the artist has displaced his earlier resources; on the contrary, as of then he began to cultivate both practices showing his predilection for meddling in simultaneous lines of elaboration. A feature that allows us to rescue some common characteristics of these modalities in order to approach the origin of the author's choices.

From remote times, both the collage and the object make it possible to work by adding things, constructing a piece with chunks of actual realities, be they bi-dimensional or tri-dimensional. From this possibility dangles the discovery of intuition. One of the permanent features of the creative process, which is processed in a very particular way by each one of Nigro's referents. In this sense, basing his language on the laws of geometry, Torres-García placed intuition high in the rank of the fundamental principles of artistic creation:

*"Without going into a lot of philosophy and getting directly to our object, we will underline -in opposition to all this brain work- feelings. Let's settle that what is not felt is worthless because the main principle of creation are feelings. Feelings or emotion that at certain times makes us clairvoyant. Let's call it intuition, if you will, or inspiration, it's the same thing."*<sup>36</sup>

From different historical perspectives, the use of humble materials is also characteristic of these forms of resolution. It is precisely the Uruguayan artists -also Nigro's referents and friends, like Washington Barcala, Nelson Ramos or Ernesto Vila- adopted this choice. Torres-García had started to make objects with humble materials in 1927. As part of his legacy, he left an authentic "arte povera" whose plastic values instilled an ethics of materiality into his production.<sup>37</sup>

Following the line of art history, both forms of realization, which were not included in official art at the beginning, constituted fundamental initiatives -first the collage and then the object- in freeing the work from figuration. In this respect, a differentiating feature of the Uruguayan constructive universalism perspective taken by Nigro is the simultaneous admission of figuration and abstraction in the same resolution. It is evident that, despite the common characteristics with the collage, the object dimension conformed another language option, allowing the use of other resources for construction, different from both the bi-dimensional production and sculpture, which outlines a field of difficult definition.

*"The object is close to the field of painting and adjacent to the field of sculpture. The demands of the object are different: space is not the virtual pictorial element or the main factor in sculpture. It's a space of occupation, of contour, of closeness. Its volume brings contemplation closer and shows things that painting conceals. In the universe of identities each object is an intake of sense, each gaze a different view."*<sup>38</sup>

Therefore, searching for new possibilities of language, and interested in the exaltation of a particular object, Nigro began making objects and collages at the same time.

The first of these productions was "El barco" [The Boat], 1980. Among his personal objects, boats are part of the group of his most precious. His interest reached such a point that Nigro began collecting pieces from different places.

Therefore, the boat became one of the most important icons of the object dimension in a production that, at this time, started incorporating another area of the author's interest: the water theme.<sup>39</sup>

Focusing on the main aspects of the mentioned work, it's possible to observe that in this case, the artist used a series of materials he had found or kept, which echo the primary, the rugged: pieces of wood, a roll of cardboard, nails, thread.

*"These objects or fragments that constitute objects are primary in a stage slightly different from nature. As they integrate a new object they inevitably allude to the primary condition and establish associations with the water, the fish, the bird, the fisherman, the boats, the beach."*<sup>40</sup>

That same impetus in using raw materials is seen in several of his objects dating from the first half of this decade in which the material is presented in its pure qualities. The author is able to rescue them from their context, but respects them and reveres their significative power. An attitude that is also close to the teachings of Torres-García:

*"The more understanding and respect we develop toward the material, the more we can expect the attitude toward production and appreciation of art form to be honest and responsible."*<sup>41</sup>

In this sense, one of the constants is the use of wood. Sometimes it's found on a beach, such as in "El barco (Homenaje a Juan Cavo)" [The Boat (Homage to Juan

Cavo]). Others, it is taken from fruit crates as seen in "El ojo del agua" [The Eye of the Water], 1993. The cutting boards became one of the more frequent items. In "Guitarra del mar" [Guitar of the Sea], 1991, with this kind of support, he emphasized rather than the rustic material, the tendency to find balance and unity, reinforced by verticality.

In "El pez" [The Fish], "El pájaro" [The Bird] both from 1982, and "El barco" [The Boat], 1983, he uses nails, cotton thread, wire, and wood, in practically the same condition they were found. Therefore, in these works color plays a secondary role like graphism, used with the intention of emphasizing the fictitious qualities of matter.

Another perspective shows us that Nigro makes use of small objects which he incorporates together with raw materials: rope, clothes hangers, wheels, a knitting needle, clothes pins. In this case, immersed in the work, the functional object abandons its practical function to place itself in the same rank as the raw matter, although it may still evoke what it represents. In works such as "El pez y la luna" [The Fish and the Moon] the painter's palette doesn't perform its natural role, like the bread basket in "El girasol" [The Sunflower] or the square in "El barco" [The Boat], 1991, and in "El pescador (Homenaje a Juan Grela)" [The Fisherman (Homage to Juan Grela)].

The arrangement of elements in the structure is a characteristic shared by several of his objects. In this sense, each construction generates a system, at the expense of the laws of order and unity, on the basis of an intuitive geometry.<sup>42</sup>

The fact that he establishes that in the structure each element occupies a certain place leads us to discover a point of contact with Gonzalo Fonseca's object production. Another disciple of Joaquín Torres-García who also produces a series of constructions where each significant entity is determined by its relationship with the rest.<sup>43</sup> In "El pescador (Homenaje a Juan Grela)" the elements have this kind of relationship. They're found in a direction coherent with what they tend to signify. The tension downward, toward the water, evokes the movement a fisherman performs in real life. Likewise, in "El pez y la luna" the pencil is directed toward that heavenly body in whose interior there is a number 22, indicating the artist's date of birth.

Indeed, this way of arranging elements and this use of rough material lead to the basic conception that includes all those objects: the idea of order and unity proceeding from a fundamental theoretical premise shared by all the artists that follow Torres-García, the conception of structure.

"Structure means recognizing that unity resides at the bottom of everything. Outside that concept everything is fragmentary, baseless."<sup>44</sup>

For Nigro this notion was the stepping-stone of a series of constructions that were directed by the intention of obtaining a plastic order through the relationship between forms, lines and colors over a geometric base that had the function of conferring universality to his expression.<sup>45</sup>

From then on, the transformations suffered by his language have to do with new proposals related to that conception and the premises derived from them.

These deviations bring to mind a series of inquiries, whose perpetual characteristics will be the warp and woof of reference signs of his universe of everyday objects, and the permanent play with matter.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Nigro, Adolfo "Victor Magariños: recuerdos dispersos", Buenos Aires, October 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Key artist in Latin American art of the south cone, born in Montevideo in 1874. After developing an intense artistic activity in Europe, in 1934 he created the "Association of Constructive Art" in Montevideo. An initiative that later led him to found the "Torres-García Workshop" in 1944 originating an activity of great transcendence in the Uruguayan cultural field and creating a legacy of international extent. Torres-García is one of the most important referents in the search for a Latin American identity. From his proposal to reformulate the position of the American continent to the elaboration of the constructive universalism theory, he left open an arch of possibilities to create different paths in accordance with a single norm: the search for the Latin American essence. His thought had great projection through his writings, his conferences, publications and, mainly through his dedication at the workshop. A study on the reach of his theoretical thought and his esthetic formulations is found in: Ramírez, Mari Carmen, *El Taller Torres-García. The School of the South and its Legacy*, University of Texas Press, Austin, U.S.A., 1992.

<sup>3</sup> Adolfo Nigro in: Muñoz, Miguel Ángel, "Adolfo Nigro: la tradición plástica rioplatense", unpublished text, Buenos Aires, 1991.

<sup>4</sup> Born in Lithuania in 1927 and lived in Montevideo, Uruguay since 1932. In 1945, he joined the Torres-García Workshop and participated in all the activities, as well as a professor since 1957, replacing Alpy who had moved to Colombia. Today, Gurvich is considered one of Joaquín Torres-García's most important disciples and one of the main figures of the "Escuela del sur" [School of the South].

Among the research works on the artist's production we have used the work of Alicia Haber, published in José Gurvich, Buquebus Foundation, Montevideo, Borges Cultural Center, Buenos Aires, 1999, p. 8-48. At the end of the book there is a bibliographical list of texts written about the artist.

<sup>5</sup> In that house, he remained until 1968 when he moved to the Parque Rivera Workshop with his wife.

<sup>6</sup> Da Cruz, Pedro, "Pintura en dos orillas. La obra de Adolfo Nigro", *Heterogénesis*, Suecia, Malmo, April, 1995, p.33.

<sup>7</sup> In 1943 the Uruguayan master established the community workshop-school "Torres-García Workshop". This initiative was supported by a group of young artists who agreed with the tendency to integrate the fine arts and the applied arts in a context of appreciation of the collective experience. The atmosphere this group tried to generate was similar to the medieval or renaissance workshops where the students worked side by side with the master in an environment of fertile and vital interaction, propitiating learning and trial of techniques with different materials. Like the artists of the Bauhaus groups or the Russian constructivists, the TG Workshop group created paintings, sculptures, pottery, stained glass, mosaics, metal objects, and furniture. Although this organization had a fundamental role in the Latin American art of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it never became an officially accepted institution in Uruguay. On the TG Workshop see: De Torres, Cecilia, "The School of the South: El Taller Torres-García, 1943-1962", en Ramírez, Mari Carmen, op. cit., p. 105-137.

<sup>8</sup> Jacqueline Barnitz points out that between 1950 and 1954 several artists of the TG Workshop took turns to travel abroad and discover the world on their own since what their master had taught them was no longer enough. Whether it was due to this distance or to the need to establish personal quests, "the art of these artists developed in more original directions as they freed themselves from Torres-García's pre-established models, although not from his main principles". Barnitz, Jacqueline, "El Taller Torres-García: Un movimiento de artes aplicadas en Uruguay", in *La Escuela del Sur. El Taller Torres-García y su legado*, Reina Sofía Center of Art National Museum, Spain, July-August 1991, p. 36.

<sup>9</sup> Guigon, Emmanuel, *Historia del collage en España*, Teruel Museum, Spain, 1995, p. 27.

<sup>10</sup> Torres-García's goal was to reach an integrated synthesis in order to reach the affirmation of a "universal constructive art". A practice that would allow the true creation of an order based on a synthesis of structure/figuration that could radically change the meaning of art. To develop these premises he took the primitive arts as a reference, maintaining that there was no need to take its esthetic aspect but rather its metaphysical nature. Due to such proposals the most transcendent aspect of his legacy would be that exercise of contradictions which allowed him to formulate the synthesis of three avant-garde movements: cubism, neo-plasticism and surrealism. On this aspect see: Fló, Juan, "Torres-García desde Montevideo", in *La Escuela del Sur. El Taller Torres-García y su legado*, Reina Sofía Art Center National Museum, Spain, July-August 1991, p. 7-18.

<sup>11</sup> Guigon, Emmanuel, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>12</sup> Faccaro, Rosa, "Los buscadores de almejas", Márgenes Gallery, Buenos Aires, May-June 1992.

<sup>13</sup> These are the conceptions that led Torres-García to organize the workshop in Uruguay (1943-1962). The master's main idea was to reunite the different artistic modalities and to annul the idea of a superior art in contrast with crafts to establish a tradition of applied arts in that country. On the subject see: Barnitz, Jacqueline, op. cit., p. 21-37.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with the artist by Miguel Carvajal, *El país*, Uruguay, February 24, 2002.

<sup>15</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>16</sup> When it comes to the history of object art on several occasions the main focus has been placed on the dimension of antique utilitarian objects. It refers to the perspectives that visualize those pieces considering their plastic worth, not only their historical value. An example of this point of view is found in an extraordinary issue of *Artinf* magazine: "Más allá del objeto" (Beyond the Object), in which a series of authors outline a history of the development of the object in Argentina. On this occasion Angel Bonomini pointed out: "Except in the case of architecture, the arts have in common a definite separation from all utilitarian intention. However, throughout history mankind has left testimony of the fact that even in the utensils used in everyday life it has been possible to reach a high esthetic level according to the refinement of the artisans who created them. It's precisely the appearance of the Bauhaus that every utilitarian object is demanded a hierarchic design in order to reach a level that could go beyond the mere efficiency in its mission of cutting, lighting, supporting, etc. Without aspiring to become Works of Art, the objects then go beyond their pure functional use in order to enrich the exaltation of the material they are made of, plastic worth...". Bonomini, Ángel, "El objeto temporal", *Revista Artinf*, Issue 78-79, Year 14, 1989, p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> See the work by Jacqueline Barnitz, op. cit., p. 19-37.

<sup>18</sup> In the catalog of the mentioned exhibit some of Torres-García's conceptions and thoughts are expressed. In this case, we can rescue the defense of the authenticity of the piece in contrast with the "conception of crafts as a level of fantasy for the latest fashion trend". Chalukian, Diana, "Artesanía. Una actividad fundamental en la sociedad humana", Municipality of Lomas de Zamora, Lomas de Zamora, 1972.

<sup>19</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>20</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>21</sup> Guigon, Emmanuel, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> Giunta, Andrea, "The 'Object' in the Work of Adolfo Nigro".

<sup>23</sup> Nelly Perazzo sustains that Léger's influence on Nigro can be seen, mainly, in the series of paintings of "Objetos en el espacio" [Objects in Space] that Nigro begins in the late 60s when the city theme emerged in his production. According to the author, the starting point of Nigro's gaze is the theoretical position of the French artist. Léger speaks of a "New realism" or "conceptual realism" in which what substantially lies in the work is the importance of the object as a concrete reality. This is conveyed in the option of throwing objects into space along with abstract forms. See: "Léger y el objeto", in Perazzo, Nelly, op. cit., p. 25-27.

<sup>24</sup> Since he joined the TG Workshop in 1945, José Gurvich cultivated constructive universalism. He was one of the most notorious representatives of this language until the mid 50s when different experiences began to direct the artist toward a more personal language, developed with greater strength during the 60s. See Haber, Alicia, op. cit., p. 12-18.

<sup>25</sup> Adolfo Nigro's conversation with the author, Rosario, year 2003.

<sup>26</sup> Haber, Abraham, "Carta de Barcelona", Retiro Gallery, Buenos Aires, June-July 1983.

<sup>27</sup> Perazzo, Nelly, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>28</sup> Guigon, Emmanuel, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>29</sup> Mechanism visualized by Andrea Giunta when she points out that "In the collage and the painting the concepts of interrelation and unity are outlined between the world of the work and the world of reality and also between objects within the work. This idea is expressed through the displacement of the quality of one object to the other: a strip of burlap is a yellow moon, a scrap of newspaper, a boat..."

<sup>30</sup> Manifest of the Escuela del Sur [School of the South], Joaquín Torres-García, Uruguay, February 1935.

<sup>31</sup> Haber, Alicia, José Gurvich, op. cit., p. 14. Juan Fló, on the other hand, points out that this conjugation of opposites is the most transcendent in Torres' legacy. Fló, Juan, "Torres-García desde Montevideo", in *La Escuela del Sur. El Taller Torres-García y su legado*, p. 12.

<sup>32</sup> Calvino, Italo, "Levedad", in *Propuestas para el próximo milenio*, Siruela, Buenos Aires, 1990, p. 15.

<sup>33</sup> An allegory is a resource of rhetoric. It allows the displacement of sense through the invocation or presentation of an image that is capable of producing the thought of another object.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with the artist by Alfredo Seymour Hopkins, unpublished, United States, 1984.

<sup>35</sup> Giunta, Andrea, "The 'Object' in the Work of Adolfo Nigro".

<sup>36</sup> Torres-García, Joaquín, "Mística de la pintura", Montevideo, 1947, p. 23. Compiled in a selection of fragments in: Fló, Juan, *Joaquín Torres-García. Escritos*, Arca, Montevideo, 1974, p. 23.

<sup>37</sup> Giunta, Andrea, "Torres-García. Objetos y estructuras en madera", *La Actualidad - arte y cultura*, Year XIV, Supplement 3, August 1990.

<sup>38</sup> De Ambrosini, Silvia, "Introducción", *Revista Artinf*, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> Perazzo, Nelly, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>40</sup> Fèvre, Fermín, "El objeto recuperado", *Clásica y Moderna*, Buenos Aires, July 1 to 19, 1991.

<sup>41</sup> Torres-García, quoted by Barnitz, Jacqueline, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>42</sup> This agrees with Torres' postulates: "We speak a lot about geometry, but it would be important to agree on what we understand by that. Because there are two types of geometry: an intuitive one we can call spiritual; and another one made with a ruler and a compass. The first one is useful to us, not the second. When we sketch the structure of an object it is intuition that should direct our hand" Torres-García, Joaquín, "La recuperación del objeto", Montevideo, 1952, p. 173. Compiled in a selection of fragments in: Fló, Juan, *Joaquín Torres-García. Escritos*, op. cit., p. 95.

<sup>43</sup> In this case we rely on the theory of the sign in the postulates of Ferdinand de Saussure. We won't stop at this point because visualizing the works from a semi-otic theoretical framework implies a specific study which is taking place nowadays but exceeds the coordinates of this essay.

<sup>44</sup> Torres-García, Joaquín, "Estructura", Montevideo, 1935, p. 17. Compiled in a selection of fragments in: Fló, Juan, *Joaquín Torres-García. Escritos*, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>45</sup> Nigro, Adolfo, "Encuentros entre un artista y su memoria: José Gurvich-Adolfo

Nigro", Union Carbide, Buenos Aires, July 1983.

## 2. Transits of Matter

### On the basis of infinite reference

"Nigro has always been aware of his environment, with his experiences close at hand, capturing the poetry of everyday things, taking notes from the natural, turning his experiences into the plastic elements he integrates into his works. The addition of such references, those related to the intimate world as well as the universal, form a sort of autobiographical fabric, in which the plastic elements can be read in different forms, forms that at the same time do not exclude each other. There is no correct interpretation of each work but rather different levels of interpretation, which does not mean that his work can't be seen as a fundamentally plastic event".<sup>1</sup>

The elaboration of infinite reference patterns constitutes a substantial character in Nigro's production. The transcendental situations, the trips, the encounter with other artistic worlds, the influence of other lifestyles are the factors that determine the framework of this great fabric. Therefore, the author's approach to his plastic production beginning with his thematic series is going to respond to those contingencies. It's a production mechanism that allows him to slip in his developments until he arrives at a point of inflection. A modality that encourages him to return in order to renew himself in another place of his own language.

From the series "Los buscadores de almejas" [The Clam Hunters] to "Armação" and "Papeles de Calyecat" [Papers from Calyecat] his language traces the sketch of a rhizome in a space of constant research concerning the eventualities of matter. The first substance in which Nigro places all the weight of signification.

This way of facing production rests on the admission of frequent deviations both by focusing on the rugged and primary as well as by a tendency to move in a sea of pure probabilities. Procedures that led him to weave different intertextual<sup>2</sup> bonds with the cultural Latin American manifestations selected by his gaze: the native cultures of the Argentine Northwest, the popular art of Mexico, the Mayan and Aztec cultures, the legacy of the Torres-García Workshop, the regionalism of Grela's and Gambartes' paintings, the Latin American proposals linked to surrealism, mainly those of Wilfredo Lam and Roberto Matta.<sup>3</sup> It is a set of references found throughout the revision of other factors of his production, which we will consider later, in relation to the mechanisms chosen by the author for his developments in the plastic field.

### The word, the text: another mode of language materialization

The integration between image and word is one of the modalities of construction that Nigro's language takes from the works of Torres-García and his disciples.<sup>4</sup> From Pedro Da Cruz's<sup>5</sup> point of view, the words used by the author refer to his private world, but also to a more general context. The names of his children are evoked in several collages following his trip to Barcelona. Likewise, in works like "Estela a Montevideo" [Estela to Montevideo] he incorporates the names of several of his Uruguayan artist friends, among them: Gurvich, Juan Cavo, the Goitiño brothers, Felipe Novoa, Roger Julien, and others.

Among the terms that belong to a more everyday context, those that show a geographical reference, or allude to a certain period of time are the more frequent. Rosario is mentioned in "Pez casa y estrella (Homenaje a Renzi)" [Fish House and Star (Homage to Renzi)] *Martes 5 [Tuesday 5]* or, in "Los buscadores de almejas", *Enero [January]*, they refer to a period of time that is meaningful to the artist. The "Calendarios" [Calendars] series, 1981, is rich in this type of references. In it, the constitutive signs of the calendars are placed together with others that are closer to an everyday world, in a pictorial space impregnated in red.<sup>6</sup> A hue that appears overbearing and that manifests itself in all the works of this series occupying a large area of coexistence with the signs, or otherwise, in a vast space supporting other planes of confluence of that amalgam of elements. The "Calendarios" have one peculiarity; they emerge as a first draft prior to the pictorial work, which accentuates the degree of implication this resource has as a previous step before the finished production.

In his works, Nigro exceeded the possibilities of the mechanism of integration of word and image when he started using fragments of texts, small systems of words. In this sense, we usually find fragments of poems by Juan Gelman, Cesare Pavese, Italo Calvino, Lautremont, Hugo Gola, which respond to an attitude of valuation of the text as matter. A singularity that comes from the artist's love for poetry and literature. The poems by Juan L. Ortiz, Vicente Huidobro, Pablo Neruda, Rafael Alberti, Paul Eluard, and Alejo Carpentier constitute the spectrum of his constant gaze.

It is possible to trace back the use of this resource in the artist-books: "Los buscadores de almejas" and "El caballo muerto" by Raúl González Tuñón, both from 1983. In these collages the text is attached as a fragment, a piece of matter with different qualities and therefore, with different possibilities of meaning.

In the first of the cited artist-books, Nigro composes each unity from a dialogic relationship in which texts and images establish a transcendental bond with each piece of the series. However, in Raúl González Tuñón's "El caballo muerto" [The Dead Horse] that relationship is of mutual dependency given that each word performs a descriptive role in reference to what is represented.

The distinct feature of this last one, in relation with the former artist-book, is the postulate of a literary origin. The *ouvre-texte*<sup>7</sup> derives from another production, which is literary. From it, Nigro creates his own work under the parameters of plastic art.<sup>8</sup>

The pieces of both artist-books synthesize an important detonation of this period: the installment of tensions provoked by lineal drawing and a depuration of the forms attached to the surface. Aspects that were already anticipated in "Dominios Naturales" [Natural Dominions], 1982. One of the sets of works in which Nigro creates lapses of simultaneity between empty areas, marked by the lines of the drawing and full spaces made up of irregular strips of paper.

In Raúl González Tuñón's "El caballo muerto", the forms acquire greater strength in the plastic space. They're flat forms that strongly impose themselves on the surface by contrast of colors. The pasted paper acts as an interruption in the continuity of the drawing. It subtly breaks the rhythm of that line, which changes profile with the effects of a curvilinear movement. In this case, the curve intercedes in these spaces, adjacent to the pasted planes.

This also happens in "El sur" [The South], 1983, in which this plastic element plays with the surface, sometimes mocking the textuality of a calendar, sometimes emphasizing the contour of a piece of paper.

Actually, in these works the curve implants the baroque, marking a point of inflection in his language, a change of direction that given the possibility of unfolding can be traced back to other origins.<sup>9</sup>

"The rhythmic introduced by the curve element, which he takes from his master Gurvich, is a way out of the orthodoxy of Torres' system of the straight line. This difference, calibrated by the lineal sequence on the plane is a property of his spatial configuration. In vertical and horizontal directions –that is, maintaining the idea of an implicit orthogonal- the syncopated web of line and plane slips in and out of the pictorial field."<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, the singularity of these series resides in the act of expressing a form of construction linked to the acceptance of change, always in the framework of an order and a unity. This conception, as Rosa Faccaro points out, is owed to the ideas of Gurvich, who after being faithful to Torres-García's theoretical/practical perspectives for a long time, marked one of the strongest ruptures with the language of his teacher.

This way, Nigro installs himself in the edges of another development of matter in order to decisively step into another sphere of textuality.

### **The alternative of delineating his own geography**

"Nigro has known how to construct his own environment, which transforms him as much as he modifies it by the experience of residing in it. Being, residing in a place, living together with other people and things. Extracting from that landscape which is vivacious and lucid, filled with well-known as well as unknown faces and objects, the incitement toward Form".<sup>11</sup>

Nigro's successive relationship with different places leads us to speak of a process traversed by the character of transcendence, term that like Genette, we use as opposed to immanence<sup>12</sup> and in perpetual relationship with another aspect of his experience, the constant change of place. Nomadism in his case, constituted one of the substantial metaphors of his esthetic development. Brazil, Montevideo, Chile, Barcelona left important marks in his works, due to the historical background or the geography of each territory.

From the connotation implied in inhabiting a place and interfering in another geography, we have elaborated a parallel with two important moments of this process. The period when the series "Armação: pesca del viento" [Armação: Fishing of the Wind] was produced in Brazil, and the period of his stay in Mexico in which he carried out "Papeles de Calyecat" and "Suite Guadalajara".

The first of the mentioned series was produced in a small fishing city in southern Florianópolis: Armação, where he spent successive holidays since 1986.

Brazil attracted him for its Latin American roots and also for its landscape: the contact with nature, with the beach, through experiences in which the senses could reach their highest vigor.

"Armação" is made up of collages and objects gathered together in a single series for the first time. The *mise en scène* of the pieces confer a particular hue to the set. Some objects are suspended in the lightness of the atmosphere that contains them.

"La red" [The Net] and "Señal para navegantes" [Signal for Navigators] are hanging objects. They prefigure the idea that on this occasion, the things rescued on the beaches still show traces of water, maintaining their relationship with the original context of reference.

The way these works are linked to their environment is almost a repetition of the way Nigro manipulates raw matter in the construction of his process. The intuitive proof of the arrangement of the pieces of matter brings out the existence of multiple possibilities. "Rumor de Juncos" [Rumor of Reeds], 1995, is an example. It's a collage that includes a reed found on the beach, whose weak matter prefigures the sensation of the crumbling of the fabric it weaves. As in this case, in "Agua y Luna" [Water and Moon], 1993, Nigro recovers that type of weak material of natural origin, and therefore, liberates it from the effects of the passing of time in an apparently durable construction.

One of the peculiarities of "Armação" is the constant initiative of transforming the materials. He paints the pieces of wood, the pieces of cardboard, pierces the surface, performs incisions. "Lluvia de Enero" [January Rain], "La barca" [The Boat], and "Luna del río" [River Moon] show this type of gesture that might be able to express, conceal or transgress the qualities of matter. That's how, in the context of an apparent order, different materials struggle to mark their own attributes.

In relation to this, Emmanuel Guigon pointed out that by exalting materials and textures, making the gestures perceptible, the collage works as a means of transgression of the *techné*.<sup>13</sup> A function accentuated in the author's choice of objects and materials. Indeed, they are foreign to the environments of high cultures. Generally, they can pass to the rank of the disposable, other times they remain trapped in the area of the unimportant.

To Nigro, Brazil is a place that is not only attractive for its natural beauty. It's one of the countries where certain historical ideas on cultural identity have emerged. This series manifests the way in which the author has assimilated them.

"In this muddy sensation of navigating on an identity whose foundations are still not solid, Nigro sets all his production".<sup>14</sup>

From this sphere, it is possible to move toward a visualization of his bond with Mexico, which allows us to establish another point of continuity in his production through the series of collages "Papeles de Calyecat", completed while he was staying in that country between 1995 and 1996.

The starting point of these elaborations is the historical quotation. They are images allusive to Mexico's cultural tradition.

"Aguascalientes" and "Chiapas" synthesize the aspects of this evocation that accounts for the role the pre-colonial past occupies in this country's history, the figure of the natives and the farmers, and the phenomenon of the revolution.

In the first work he presents a figure made up of pieces of materials that, in this case, transcend many miles from their original context. Matches, pieces of paper, threads, a small cardboard box, lose their relationship with the place they come

from. Contrary to the objects in "Armação", in this collage the individual fragments no longer evoke their use in their original state; they now represent the idea of a figure that by its essentially totemic appearance can be connected to the Aztec world.

In these and other works, the author continues exalting the qualities of the materials he employs. In this case, the *amate* [fig tree] paper is relevant as a support. It originates a propitious atmosphere that evokes the Mexican codices.

In works like "Sembrado y bandera" [Labored Field and Flag], color is employed not only as a primary quality. It also has a symbolic function. The mark is placed in the use of red and black, in allusion to the flag of Mexico's EZLN [Zapatista Army of National Liberation]. The same colors appear in "Muchos barcos" [Many Boats], "El granero" [The Granary], "Hay ya luces" [There Are Lights Already], "Herramienta y serpiente" [Tool and Serpent], and "Chiapas".

It is precisely in Mexico where the use of a series of icons belonging to the popular and native arts would become frequent: mask, serpent, nopal, cross. In the same way and reinforcing the country's cultural tradition, he uses these icons in the series of collages "Suite Guadalajara", 1996. A set of works in which he emphasizes his references to Mexican masks.

The masks constitute one of the dimensions of Latin American popular art. Destined to diverse uses, they are given a great range of expressions in ritual ceremonies, dances, and carnivals. Events in which religion and idolatry are intertwined. The characteristics of "Máscara y pez" [Mask and Fish], "Máscara y ramas" [Mask and Branches], and "Máscara y caracol" [Mask and Snail] belonging to this series show the aspect of Nigro's assimilation in reference to this type of production. He doesn't refrain from the formal peculiarities of the original object of worship. On the contrary, he elaborates an allusive image that stems from his own language. The direction is not only given by the treatment of color, but also by the dissimilarity of the iconographic qualities.

Therefore, the connections with the popular arts established by these collages explore the symbolic plane rather than the plane of the plastic language. At this time -in contrast with his crafts production period in Montevideo between 1966 and 1972- he didn't place his energy in making a selective appropriation of these production forms. In each case, he took advantage of the symbolic role of these elaborations, trying to express it in his production with the forms typical of his own language.

The series of "Armação", "Papeles de Calyecat", and "Suite Guadalajara" move toward another line of his search. They constitute sets that are joined chronologically and formally.

The formal relations have to do with the passage toward a state in which matter becomes relevant and the elements acquire a symbolic connotation, given by the environment of the work and the history of the symbols.

"Time and matter blended in one place, which is like saying: a space and time, a matter charged with precise meaning because it holds a dialogue with that time and that space; a matter transformed, nonetheless. A matter that has become art."<sup>15</sup>

The appropriation of the place that popular production has in the Mexican and Brazilian cultures becomes a fundamental characteristic of these sets of collages and objects.

On the other hand, these countries are not chosen at random. Brazil is a territory where there's practically no separation between the educated and the popular; and Mexico is a place where the popular has spread over daily life due to the actuality of the historical weight of Mexican muralism; an art that became the most popular in the history of Latin American avant-garde movements.

The formal choice of the artist is coherent with that gaze. The collage and the object are modalities in which hybrid forms inscribe their existence. They both reveal the *mezclaje* [intermarriage] of artistic disciplines<sup>16</sup>, and taken by Nigro at this time, they grant his production a new facet of penetration of the rugged and primary on the basis of a latent wish: forging a culture of his own.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Da Cruz, Pedro, "Lo íntimo y lo universal en la obra de Adolfo Nigro", in *Nigro*, Torres-García Museum, exhibit catalog, Montevideo, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> We refer to those links established between one text and another, considering the work as an "esthetic text". The concept of intertextuality to Gérard Genette implies a relation of co-presence of two or more texts. According to the author, this concept is set in the concept of transtextuality, by which every text transcends its own spheres. It refers to a text that goes beyond itself, which inevitably evokes a previous one. The first contributions to this notion are given by Bakhtin in the field of literature. See: Genette, Gérard, *Palimpsestos. La literatura en segundo grado*,

Taurus, Spain, 1989, p. 9-17.

<sup>3</sup> Other artists and groups also have a place in his gaze: the Cobra Group, Antoni Tàpies, Richard Tuttle, Robert Rauschenberg, Josep Guinovart, among others.

<sup>4</sup> Da Cruz Pedro, *op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>6</sup> Perazzo, Nelly, *Adolfo Nigro*, Gordon Foundation for the Development of the Arts, Santiago de Chile, 1993, p. 69.

<sup>7</sup> According to Omar Calabrese the notion of "text" is also useful in the study of artistic production. Taking his concepts from W. Dressler and U. Eco, he defines the term as a linguistic enunciation, a communicative entity that demands to be actualized in an interpretative process. In this sense, he points out that short stories and novels are texts, but also advertising messages, photographs, architectures and works of art... Calabrese, Omar, *El lenguaje del arte*, Paidós, Spain, 1987, p. 177.

<sup>8</sup> In this sense, this work transcends its own sphere. We can't consider it in itself but rather in relation with another text. Therefore, the concept of transcendence, of transtextuality we referred to in note 2 is possible here.

<sup>9</sup> In this case, we based our concepts on Deleuze's theory of baroque set in the concept of "the fold". Deleuze, Gilles, *El plegue*, Paidós, Buenos Aires, 1989. In the works of Nelly Perazzo and Rosa Faccaro Nigro's link with the baroque is established. In Nelly Perazzo's work, from a different point of view from the one proposed in this text. Perazzo, Nelly, "Barroquismo latinoamericano", *op. cit.*, p. 91-92. Faccaro, Rosa, *Los buscadores de almejas*, Márgenes Gallery exhibit catalog, Buenos Aires, May-June, 1992.

<sup>10</sup> Faccaro, Rosa, *op. cit.*, p.7.

<sup>11</sup> Ravera, Rosa María, "El artista como mediador", in *Adolfo Nigro. Objetos y collages*, Banco Patricios Foundation exhibit catalog, Buenos Aires, December, 1996, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> Genette, Gérard, *op. cit.*, p.13

<sup>13</sup> Guigon, Emmanuel, *Historia del collage en España*, Teruel Museum, Spain, 1995, p. 30.

<sup>14</sup> González Cortiñas, Fernanda, "A través del color Adolfo Nigro cultiva el pasado como ejercicio" [Through color Adolfo Nigro cultivates the past as an exercise], *Rosario 12 Newspaper*, Rosario, Tuesday, April 20, 1999.

<sup>15</sup> Achugar, Hugo, *Papeles de Calyecat*, Torres-García Museum exhibit catalog, Montevideo, August 1997, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Guigon, Emmanuel, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

### 3. The 'construction' of a mosaic of quotations

On a stage determined by a social, political, and cultural conjuncture in transformation and redefinition, several Argentine artists of the 80s took different paths, destined to reformulate the "internationalist" condition of the productions that were the focus of the debates of the period.<sup>1</sup> At that time and during the following decade, Adolfo Nigro resorted to the option of assimilating external languages with a constructive intention, not imitative. His production began to knit a fabric of intertextual relations,<sup>2</sup> which expose the directions of his gaze. Through quotation or allusion,<sup>3</sup> he outlined part of his journey, giving sense to Bajtin's formulation that sustained that "every text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations."<sup>4</sup>

In addition to this attitude, in some groups of works he expressed the possibility to remember and acknowledge several exponents of the past or the present, answering to a need to reaffirm himself in his own cultural legacy.

In this sense, his poetics began delineating particular characteristics that today allow us to perceive the way the artist sows traces of other texts in his own production by evoking them, vivifying their virtues, or adding poetry to his own work.

#### Toys: the quotation of a language

Quoting a language, quoting a modality of a specific construction is a form that Nigro adopted in his construction of toys following one of the dimensions of Torres-García's production.<sup>5</sup> Torres' starting point had been the need to investigate the possibilities of playing as a forceful motor, as *an exercise of multiple experiences and activities, of discoveries and findings...*<sup>6</sup>

Following the object line from these perspectives since 1992, Nigro starts developing this production that also stem from his interest in Mexican popular arts which present among its objects small clay toys that have the peculiarity of bringing the viewer closer to his vision of the animal world.

In these toys, he employs an iconography, like the rest of his works, very close to Torres-García's: snails, fish, carts, boats. With these elements he made works, in many cases, resorting to metamorphosis in order to create non-existent figures. "Hombre caracol" [Snail Man] follows this line. In it, he used the spiral as a sym-

bol of the represented animal,<sup>7</sup> as a cosmic form that confers to this piece a body of significations referred to man's original force in relation with nature. Like his teacher Gurvich, in this toy he erases the limits between the human being, the animal, and the thing. A unity under which other complex figures also emerge, like the ones in the pieces Barca-pezu [Boat-fish], Ave-nido-rama [Bird-nest-branch] or like the ones in other objects: Guitarra-pezu [Guitar-fish] and Pájaro-guitarra [Fish-guitar]. The plastic characteristics of his toys are resolved in the formal synthesis and the pictorial elegance. This aspect is intimately related to the theoretical legacy of Torres, who develops a body of thought concerning the use of color. Some of those premises can be seen mainly in Barca-pezu [Boat-fish] and in El Barco [The Boat].

"... on the plane in which the work will be developed, he will have to postpone the colors without murdering them; that is, without altering their intrinsic nature; without mixing them: red will be there, by itself, pure; and blue; and yellow, and white, and black. And maybe, exceptionally the secondary or complementary: green, violet, and orange; but no other because only those are fundamental. And each will be there speaking its own language; letting its own voice be heard; which is the voice of color in the intrinsic architecture of the universe: the decomposition of light rays given by the prism; and even there, going to the primary colors, the pure ones, not to the compound ones."<sup>8</sup>

A very particular piece is "Estrella-barco-pájaro" [Star-boat-bird] which in relation to Gaston Bachelard's philosophical universe evokes again the presence -inevitable in his works- of the spheres of water and air, and adding the cosmic one. Contrary to the former, in this case he populates the surface with graphisms that provide vibratory effects. The exclusive use of white and black reinforces the visual dynamism in the blend of geometrical and organic forms. Another distinct characteristic is that the pieces that form it are mobile. Thus, the artist reverberates in the eventuality of an object that can be manipulated in order to achieve its transformation. Its parts can be articulated to form a star, a boat or a bird. From these types of toys the author delves into the intuitive and constructive capabilities of human beings. It prefigures a dimension of his production of objects, reaffirming the conviction that creative play and invention are united, and that life and art are one and the same.

### **The illustrations of Martín Fierro**

The intertextuality is also expressed in the series of collages he produces to illustrate "Martín Fierro", in the framework of a project coordinated by Emilio Ellena, a theoretician from Rosario, in 1996.<sup>9</sup> It is a set of works that take as a reference José Hernández's literary work. A text that "narrates the civilization of a territory as the constitutive discontent of a nation."<sup>10</sup>

The idea of civilization proposes a form of systematizing society based on order and destined to achieve social homogeneity, which since Sarmiento has implied a struggle against barbarism. It's an order based on rules of coexistence that generate completely foreseeable types of relationships, accepted and unarguable. From the field of plastic art, the collage is a resource opposed to this possibility. It emerges from the margins of official art and its procedures -cutting, tearing, chopping, assembling- it differs from that type of thought. Therefore, in Nigro's works, the quotation of that text is also expressed in the way he carries out the plastic resolution.

"In the same way Matisse draws with scissors, Nigro draws tearing paper with the tip of his fingers, guided by the sound of an act that can't conceal its resemblance to that of skinning. Paper is a substitute of skin. The tearing sound anticipates its graphic effect. The origin of drawing is always a trauma."<sup>11</sup>

In each one of his collages, the author has detached himself from the text as a whole to form an allusive image of a fragmented vision of his interpretation. That's how the following titles appear "Civilización" [Civilization], "Huella y guitarra" [Track and Guitar], "Campo, cuchillo y luna" [Field, Knife, and Moon], "Desertor" [Deserter], "Campo quemado" [Burnt Field]. He has also detached himself from the central figure of the poem, the gaucho. Instead of choosing an iconic representation, he suggested his presence through some of his attributes: the guitar, the knife. These characteristics, added to others of the esthetic order, among which we emphasize the humility of the material or the insertion of fragments with different types of writing, express one of the forms he has chosen along his process to connect his esthetic text, in this case, with a key work in Argentine literature.

### **Letters**

In the development of the construction of his language, the letter becomes a skill-

ful record of memories and allusions. In the collage, where the elements that represent it are the envelope, the postage stamp and the postmark, it is incorporated as preconceived matter, differing from a great number of the components of the work, according to the occasion. In the series "Cartas de Dinamarca" [Letters from Denmark], 1987, he uses his brother's letters to unfold evocative games where the tension between matter and form is overflowed by the signs referring to his birthday, a certain month, a certain place.

In some of the works, the epistle acquires significance mainly due to its place of origin or the destination it points out. "Carta de España" [Letter from Spain], 1978, is one of the characteristic works in relation to this aspect. It's a collage-draft of a painting where the postage stamp evokes reminiscences of the place, while it appears as a law around which the rest of the elements revolve. Its presence is also significant due to the ideological features his icons bear, subtly allusive to the fall of Franco in that country. Territory that since 1975 had captured his gaze concentrating his attention mainly in Barcelona, Cuenca, Toledo, La Mancha, but also in Miró, Alberto Sánchez, Picasso, Tapies, Millares.

These works, made in reference to a place, weave paths that focus on one of the substantial metaphors of his esthetic developments: nomadism.

In other collages that reference is concentrated around a person who in many cases belongs to the artistic scene. Thus, Nigro found another way of continuing his journey in the sphere of evocations. Through those figures alluded to in each letter, he arrived at expressing his relationship with the same places remembered throughout his process.

Among the letters from Brazil is "Carta do Luis" [Letter from Luis], 1995. It is a collage that refers to the illustrator Luis Díaz, one of the first artists he met during his first trip to that country. In the image, the elements were selected on account of that referent's profile and his origin: the pencil that hangs, the drawings, the Brazilian postage stamp. In certain areas, those elements establish relations of appreciation of the territorial crossing represented by epistolary communication. It's the case of the presence of a Uruguayan postage stamp, placed in opposition to the one above mentioned.

Completed in 1998, it's a series that brings to mind a double evocation: of Emilio Ellena and of Manolita Piña de Torres-García. The works are part of a homage to the widow of the mentor of constructive universalism in Uruguay, produced in Santiago de Chile, based on the project of Ellena himself.<sup>12</sup> In this case, the letters also have the peculiarity of marking a significant transit: the one between Uruguay and Chile. All the collages include envelopes whose sender and recipient unfold a territorial crossing, in this instance expressed in a textuality generated by a play of graphism and color that enlivens the surface.

Another transit is marked by "Carta de Hugo Gola" [Letter from Hugo Gola]. This work alludes to the poet who currently lives in Mexico. In this case, he incorporates a literal quotation of one of his poems. As in the rest of his letters, the presence of a postage stamp with the Michoacán inscription serves to point out the country of reference. The graphisms, suspended by strokes of color, take its signification concerning a central element, revealing on this occasion, the sun. A heavenly body that represented by an "oro" ["golden coin" in the Spanish deck of playing cards] leaves the possibility open to other insinuations related to certain threads of Mexican history.

Through this group of letters, it's possible to perceive the way in which the relation to a series of figures allows him to delineate the metaphor of a journey that exceeds the spheres of his own territory of origin. At the same time, these works constitute a subtle reflection of his gaze, given by the mention of the artists, most of whom are not recognized by official art, but whose stories are woven in relation to the Latin American sphere. In the same space, Joaquín Torres-García and Rafael Barradas wove their stories, and their epistolary bond was also portrayed in a visual metaphor.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Homages: another vein of Latin American evocations**

Throughout this process -and alternatively- the artist paid homage to several figures of the cultural scene. In some way, these productions synthesize a series of characteristics that lead us to visualize the profile of his gaze in the framework of a personal stand regarding the cultural field. These homages can be classified in three categories of artistic production:

-literary: Oswald de Andrade, Haroldo Conti, Héctor Francia, Felipe Novoa, Italo Calvino, among others.

-musical: Alfredo Zitarrosa, Gilberto Gil.

-plastic arts: Miguel Goitiño, Juan Cavo, Manolita Piña de Torres-García, Lucho Maurente, Juan Pablo Renzi, Juan Grela, Enrique Aguirrezabala, Mathias Goeritz, among others.

Due to their diversity, these homages generate a journey that allows us to draft a complex cultural texture of Latin American base. As these works pay homage to representative figures of popular culture, referents of local art histories or directly to artists that belong to his personal universe and who are, in most cases, on the margins of official culture, they are related both to the intimate as well as the popular and historical.<sup>14</sup>

From this combination it is possible to visualize one of his objects: "El barco" [The Boat], 1993. An acknowledgement to the Argentine writer Haroldo Conti, missing during the period of the last military dictatorship.

Nigro's works establish a highly visible intertextual relationship with the literary production of Conti, who links his narrative with the river and sets his stories in the Uruguayan atmosphere: beaches, fishermen and people Nigro also met. In these novels, there's a concern for the life of the inhabitants of humble neighborhoods and riverside areas. The writer's gaze is directed toward everything that happens in the areas inhabited by the popular class.

"El barco", which Nigro dedicates to this writer, is made with pieces of wood from fruit crates, which give the work a humble aspect. In relation to other boats of the same period, this structure is different; it marks a rhythm almost evocative of the novels through the presence of horizontal strips. He places a series of symbolic elements over them: the word "Mañana" [Tomorrow], designating the name of the boat in one of Conti's novels (*Mascaró, el cazador americano*, 1975), the word "Dominguez" in reference to one of the characters of his stories, and "La Paloma" in relation to the place.<sup>15</sup>

In allusion to the popular atmosphere, he also pays homage to Alfredo Zitarrosa, a Uruguayan singer who was exiled for eight years after the military coup in Uruguay (1973). The work Nigro dedicates to him bears the name of one of his songs: *Crece desde el pie* [It Grows From the Base]. In this case, he constructs an object whose materials are arranged around an *alpargata* [a hemp sandal]. A significant element from the point of view of the "popular singer" who was committed to his people, their struggles and aspirations. This element was taken by Nigro as a base to convey the idea of marching, rising from the ground. The connection between both productions is found in the utopian character that leads them to create with the simplest elements. In Nigro's case, strands of thread, cardboard boxes, strips of fabric, among others.

From the plastic rank, in this case, we will only point out the homages to: Juan Grela and Juan Pablo Renzi, two representative figures in the history of local art in Rosario.<sup>16</sup> His acknowledgment also resides in the fact that they share his place of origin. If Montevideo is to Nigro the place where "everything always begins",<sup>17</sup> Rosario is the place to which he always returns.

Grela's figure is a very important reference because he was one of the artists who constructed his work around the river and its inhabitants.

"A river that in Grela acquires the significance of a myth. His information comes from the natural world of the riverside, the shapes of the river, the coast, the known places that returning to his memory, establish the place that ever since his childhood manifested itself as unique, absolute, timeless. A place that in each work, he tries to approach from a different aspect."<sup>18</sup>

The sense of the regional that Grela, along with Gambartes, gave his works was one of the key attention points of Nigro's gaze. In addition, both artists recognized their closeness to Torres-García's constructive universalism, which they were the only ones to acknowledge in the Litoral Group.<sup>19</sup> Nigro's homage to Grela is embodied in one of his box-objects of 1987, "El pescador" [The Fisherman]. This work and particularly his "tablas" [slabs of wood] of the period, remind us of Grela's language, expressed by the polychromatic wood, very little known, presented in the Vermeer Gallery in 1986. A series of works realized also on the basis of that logic of encounter with the material, a bit haphazard, which allowed the artist to play with matter and structure.

"It's always been a habit of mine to find and pick up things on the street. The materials I like are wood, glass and iron. I used to put all these things on a shelf. But one day a piece of wood fell on the floor, I looked at it and saw that compared to the color of the hardwood floor, the piece was too red and this caught my attention. So I put it on a plywood surface, added another piece and painted it..."<sup>20</sup>

Renzi's homage is "Pez, casa y estrella" [Fish, House and Star]. A work that simply alludes to the place of origin they have in common. It's a box-object in which very few elements are placed, but in which everything springs up from a background whose materiality promises proximity to the earth, space of support where everything emerges and where everything converges. Fish, house and star are proper elements to propose a series of references to origin, roots, the place where

we come from. A possible connotation is the arrangement of these humble materials, set in a structural order that places each element in relation to their natural place, surely from the point of view of an intuitive gaze.

In the homages we also find an ideological instance. A sphere in which Nigro connects his work with certain parameters of Oswald de Andrade's poetry, whom he acknowledges in the work "Barrilete" [Kite], 1995.

Again his gaze is in Brazil, which allows him to continue extending the main lines of his reflection on art and cultural identity.

Throughout the different periods of his production, he exercised a practice that inevitably linked his position with Andrade's discourse of "cultural anthropophagy". His attitude was to work around a common heritage in the framework of a redefinition of the previous languages, and based on the search for alternatives to face cultural dependency.

The idea expressed by Andrade in his anthropophagous manifesto proposes a work of synthesis, carried out consciously reaffirming the national values of a modern language.<sup>21</sup> It reverberates in the need to take advantage of imported art in the production of national art. A path taken by Nigro and expressed in the presentation of an object that as a kite is able to take flight to vindicate one of the postulates of Pau Brasil's poetry manifesto: *No formula for the contemporary expression of the world. To see with free eyes.*<sup>22</sup>

The image of that kite and moreover the inscription "América do sul, do sol, do sul" [Salt America, Sun America, South America], allows us to observe the way in which the artist relocates the continent from his own view, elaborating a rhizome whose lines expanded to other places alien to legitimacy, among them, the ones occupied by the sphere of popular art.

Far from a unidirectional gaze, Nigro weaves infinite warps and woofs of references that include his view of native art and of some exponents of classical and avant-garde European culture. This way, he focuses on one of the many features of the Latin American vision, a wide but selective regard, without which would be impossible to formulate the emergence of what García Canclini has called "hybrid cultures".<sup>23</sup> Through this production of Latin American quotations and evocations, the artist expresses the possibility that in the elaboration of a fabric in which the cultivated and the popular are merged, it is possible to find an outlet for artistic production in the midst of this complex social, political, and cultural context.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> A perspective on the developments of Argentine plastic arts of the 80s can be found in the work of Viviana Usubiaga: "Imágenes argentinas en la postdictadura", *Ramona*, Revista de Artes Visuales, Issue number 23, Buenos Aires, May 2002, p. 18-28.

<sup>2</sup> In note 2 of "Transits of Matter", we had already clarified the concept of intertextuality, which comes from the field of literature, from which the relations between one text and another emerge –intertextual relations-. On the basis of the considerations of Gérard Genette, which are the ones we adopted in part of this work, we would like to add that there are three types of intertextuality: quotation, allusion, plagiarism. While they come from the field of literature, the first two categories allow us to develop some characteristics of this artist's procedures during his production process. See Genette, Gérard, *Palimpsestos. La literatura en segundo grado*, Taurus, Spain, 1989, p. 9-10.

<sup>3</sup> According to Genette, quotation is one type of intertextuality, and therefore a relationship of co-presence between one text and another. It's the most explicit and literal form of this kind of relationships. Allusion, however, is another type of intertextual relationship, less explicit and literal than the former. It's an enunciation whose full understanding supposes the perception of its relationship with another enunciation to which this or that of its inflections necessarily refers to, not being perceptible otherwise. See Genette, Gérard, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Julia Kristeva in: "Bajiti, la palabra, el diálogo y la novela", published in: Navarro, D., *Intertextualité. Francia en el origen de un término y el desarrollo de un concepto*, UNEAC, Casa de Las Américas, French Embassy in Cuba, Havana, 1997, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Torres-García began making toys in 1917 motivated by the need to provide his children with constructions that could awaken their interest in the world around them and would offer them creative possibilities. In his production, toys are the direct antecedent of his objects. His first toy exhibit was in 1918 in Barcelona, in the Dalmau Gallery. Barnitz, Jacqueline, "El Taller Torres-García: Un movimiento de artes aplicadas en Uruguay", in *La Escuela del Sur. El Taller Torres-García y su legado*, Reina Sofía Art Center National Museum, Spain, July-August 1991, p. 31.

<sup>6</sup> Torres-García, Joaquín, "Exposición Joaquina d'art", exhibit catalog., Dalmau Gallery, Barcelona, 1918, in: *Homenaje a Torres-García. Juguetes, objetos de arte, maderas*, exhibit catalog, Museo de Arte Precolombino [Pre-Columbian Art Museum], Montevideo, July 28, 1974, s. p.

<sup>7</sup> The spiral was used frequently by Gurvich as a global compositive form or as a sign. Fundamental theme of the symbolic art of all times and of constructive universalism, the spiral alludes to cosmic dynamism and to the creative and changing forces of nature and reflects the legacy of Torres-García and vital symbolism. Haber, Alicia, *José Gurvich*, Buquebus Foundation, Montevideo, Borges Cultural Center, Buenos Aires, 1999, p. 35.

<sup>8</sup> Torres-García, Joaquín, "Universalismo constructivo", Buenos Aires, 1944, p. 764-765. Compiled in a selection of fragments in: Fló, Juan, *Joaquín Torres-García. Escritos*, Arca, Montevideo, 1974, p. 122.

<sup>9</sup> *Cuatro ilustraciones de Martín Fierro: Carlos Clérice, Roser Bru, Luis Seoane, Adolfo Nigro*, España Cultural Center, Santiago de Chile, 1997, s. p.

<sup>10</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>11</sup> Pastor Mellado, Justo, "Emilio Ellena y cuatro ilustraciones del Martín Fierro", *Cuatro ilustraciones de Martín Fierro: Carlos Clérice, Roser Bru, Luis Seoane, Adolfo Nigro*, op. cit., s. p.

<sup>12</sup> *A propósito de un personaje. Manolita Piña de Torres-García. Sus trabajos y los saludos*, España Cultural Center, Santiago de Chile, May 1999.

<sup>13</sup> We refer to the work of Rafael Barradas: "Collage, naipes y carta de Torres-García", 1919, Museo Nacional de Artes Plásticas y Visuales [National Museum of Plastic and Visual Arts], Montevideo. Courtesy of Mr. Ángel Kalemberg, museum director.

<sup>14</sup> The formulation derives from the work by Pedro Da Cruz: "Lo íntimo y lo universal en la obra de Adolfo Nigro" in: *Nigro*, exhibit catalog., Torres-García Museum, Montevideo, 1995.

<sup>15</sup> See Conti, Haroldo, "Tristezas de la otra banda", *La balada del álamo Carolina*, Volume II, Biblioteca Página 12, Buenos Aires, s.f.

<sup>16</sup> Renzi in relation to the situation in the 60s, Grela related to the avant-garde articulation of the 40s and 50s. The author Guillermo Fantoni has written several works on the itinerary of this esthetic modernity, anchored in the space outlined by Rosario. Among them: Fantoni, Guillermo, "Rupturas en perspectiva: modernismo y vanguardia en el arte de Rosario", in *Cuadernos, CIESAL/CEI/UNR*, Year 2, Numbers 2/3, 1st and 2nd Semester, Rosario, 1994, p. 177-184.

<sup>17</sup> Fragment of a poem by Enrique Fierro quoted by the artist in the text "Recordando a Juan "Cacho" Cavo", unpublished, Buenos Aires, October, 1995.

<sup>18</sup> Giunta, Andrea, "Juan Grela, conversación en Rosario", *La Actualidad. Arte y Cultura*, Buenos Aires, 1992, p. 16.

<sup>19</sup> "Gambartes and I were the ones that followed more rigorously the problems of color and when we got to Torres-García's treatise, it was rejected by all of them [*he refers to the Litoral Group*] (...) Gambartes and I remained very attached to the pre-Columbian tendency and to Torres-García's proposals". Grela, Juan, in: Fantoni, Guillermo, *Una mirada sobre el arte y la política. Conversaciones con Juan Grela*, Homo Sapiens, Rosario, 1997, p. 58.

<sup>20</sup> Grela, Juan, in: Giunta, Andrea, "Juan Grela, conversación en Rosario", op. cit.

<sup>21</sup> "Manifiesto antropófago", Schwartz, Jorge, *Las vanguardias latinoamericanas. Textos programáticos y críticos*, Madrid, Cátedra, 1991, p. 142-143.

<sup>22</sup> De Andrade, Oswald, "Manifiesto de la poesía Pau Brasil", *Correio de Monha*, Rio de Janeiro, March 18, 1924, in: *Algunos documentos sobre el Arte en América*, Vol. I, Numbers 1-16, UNR [National University of Rosario], Published by Casa de las Américas, Rosario, 1995, s. p.

<sup>23</sup> In a redefinition of the concept of hybrid, in his "Introducción a la nueva edición" [Introduction to the new edition] of the book *Culturas híbridas*, the author considers hybridization the *sociocultural processes in which the structures or discreet practices, which existed separately, are combined to generate new structures, objects and practices*. See "Las culturas híbridas en tiempos globalizados. Introducción a la nueva edición", García Canclini, Néstor, *Culturas híbridas. Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad*, Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2001, p. 13-33.

#### 4. Points of inflection in language<sup>1</sup>

"it is then that free space becomes an infinite place of possibilities"<sup>2</sup>

The cultural fragmentation that installed the concept of *peripheral postmodernity*<sup>3</sup> in our country late in the last century, brought on a different climate in the cultural field, which under an intense social, political, and economic imbalance generated a simultaneity of artistic manifestations and the loss of persuasion power of some symbolic knots that acted as parameters of the artists' searches.

Faced with this reality, Nigro continued his plastic journeys under the same initiative that had motivated him until then: exploiting the viability of space and matter of his works.

In all his production stages, paper was the material that gave him the greatest possibilities for making deviations in his process. Besides being an easily accessible

material, it offered possibilities of use common to other means: cutting, tearing, folding, piercing. Therefore, it was one of the basic elements of his works, even when he had to work on his realizations in other places.

In 1999 he traveled to the United States. During his stay, he came in contact with a world of mass consumerism, which showed its effects in the sum of discarded materials, leaving as a detonating character an abundance of different types of paper.

Faced with a universe of advanced technology and in another uprooting circumstance, the artist decided to resort to the use of this primary material. Ernesto Vila, one of his Uruguayan referents, had taken the same attitude although with another reason for the distance: exile.<sup>4</sup> Both constructed authentic *paper metaphors*<sup>5</sup> but their bond resided in their research in the use of that humble means through a permanent search rather than in the aspect of the completed production. In the same way, for some academics in the discourses on Nigro it's also possible to speak from the idea of exile:

"... Nigro's work speaks of that forced pilgrimage along different landscapes that one inevitably ends up loving from seeing so often. Brazil, Uruguay, Chile... they all open a deep wound, a feeling of emptiness and uprooting that makes of each postcard of exile an indelible mark that returns in his work."<sup>6</sup>

In this context, more precisely in the city of Duran (North Carolina, United States) he began the series "Jironadas" [Shreddings]. A production at which he arrived submerged in the possibilities of paper, deriving singular procedures compared to other works; in this case, marked by the artist and poet Hugo Padeletti:

"The artist has laid on the plane, horizontal threads of medium dimensions or smaller which sometimes he crosses over with vertical ones, where he hangs shreds of different types of paper, producing different effects in each case, but joined by something in common: a sort of perceptible vibration (the bits of paper move perpetually in their stillness)."<sup>7</sup>

In his production process, "Jironadas" promoted an authentic "display" of his language that became a multiple -and at the same time univocal- manifesto of the directions he had been transiting. For that reason, this series became a space of interlude in which the artist could detach the image from its previous iconic variants. With minimal forms, with primary procedures, these works came to admit the simultaneous concentration of fragment and totality, order and randomness to exalt the vicissitudes of matter and create a scope of infinite possibilities: from movement to the detachment of some of those shreds. Variants that emphasized Gurvich's idea that *free space becomes a place of infinite possibilities*.<sup>8</sup>

From this proposal, it's possible to understand the different resultants that emerged from the exigencies of matter, of the shreds of paper. To mark them, it's indispensable to quote Hugo Padeletti, who designed an outline of the different versions of *jironadas* [shreddings] produced by Nigro:

"The artist uses, in certain cases, different pieces of paper printed in black and white or in color and combines, swiftly but very subtly, the multiple visual possibilities that appear when the shreds are torn and hung, and he wisely arranges them in a play that is not planned but rather inspired by something that lies between the gifts of randomness and his personal experience and preferences (...)"

"The artist uses silk paper -red or yellow or blue- and the work consists of a sort of a unipersonal of the color that assumes, without moving, all the movements produced in it by the innumerable variants of form the tearing assumes with the play of lights, shadows, transparencies, and projected shadows that are composed in that space, which is more than enough, that opens between the cardboard support and the glass of the painting".

"The artist uses silver and golden paper (candy wraps) and the plane that begins to turn into the wrinkled fragment of silver or gold of some funeral mask (perhaps Agamemnon's or one of the admirable pre-Columbian masks) has suddenly taken investiture without the artist necessarily having favored or avoided it, with all the numinous and tragic splendor of the sacred archaic".

"The artist uses white or black paper and one would have to have a special talent and also inspired words to attempt to translate the simultaneous and spherical symbology of opposites -white and black, good and evil, life and death- that temporarily grows in that brief delimited space."<sup>9</sup>

Padeletti's gaze leads us to visualize the different ways in which Nigro employed paper during this production period. One of them is marked by a common feature in his realizations: the infiltration of cultural remains from the past and the present. We refer to the group of works in which he used golden paper to concrete his recognition and homage to an artist of great importance in Mexican art: Matías Goeritz. In these *jironadas* [shreddings] Nigro refers particularly to a series of works resolved as background and surface, covered with gold leaves that Goeritz presented as "Dorados" [Golden].<sup>10</sup>

Another group of *jironadas* [shreddings] stands out for the trace of the orthogonal structure generated by the threads superimposed on the shreds, which accidentally emphasize the compositional order of the image. The artist had already been proposing this mode of basal organization in the series of "Andares" [Amblings], which he began in 1994, and in "Plancton", completed in Colonia in 1997. In "Andares" he arranged a number of fragments or bits of small objects he found in a similar order, although in a more spaced manner and with a serial rhythm. In the pieces of "Plancton" he resorted to the same arrangement of the unities that in this case were fragments of the collage. However, this series took a particular hue. It was made for the production of a book of illustrations and poetry that the artist published with César Bandin Ron –author of the poems.<sup>11</sup> Despite this circumstance, in each of these images, he detached himself completely from the poet's words to create resolutions provided with a textual, singular display in which the parts and their relations emphasized his taste for the esthetics of fragment.

"Plancton" configures an instance in which the collage allowed him to play with the small and the simultaneous in order to give back to the images recorded in the book the vivacity of the pieces of pasted matter.

Indeed, from these productions that continued to sustain themselves in the initiative of playing with matter, the author tended the lines toward a different way of facing the support. In this sense, with "Jironadas" he created a space of uncertainty prone to enrich the tensions of his process toward other spheres.

### **Other games with matter**

On his return from the United States and on a new summer holiday, this time in Colonia, he entered a field of work in which he took a single object of the many he had used during his whole process: playing cards. Thus emerged the series "Barajando" [Dealing]. A set of small collages in which he places the playing cards in an instance where the classical card games are changed by a series of modifications that emit a truly metalinguistic proposal.

Modification is one of the common features of collage, whose essence resides in the effects of turns, separations, deviations, and oblique procedures tending to change the situation of matter in the work. With the points of inflections generated by this modality, in this case, each piece finally constitutes the image of a dislocated relation.

Through an intervention in the icons of each playing card, the artist transformed the rules of language of the cards, originating a displacement of their primordial sense. Thus, this object which has personal but also social and historical connotations, expressed the possibility of evoking situations representative of a system of non-articulated relations very close to the one showed by the present times in his environment. In any case, for Nigro this was a propitious moment to construct spaces of experimentation with the matter of his collage and also of his objects. With his series of "tablas" [slabs of wood] he continued inquiring the sphere of object realizations starting from other types of modifications in the support. With elements of his everyday world, which he arranged on cutting boards, he configured different objects strongly linked to Hugo Padeletti's wooden boards. In this case, that support was also changed.

Therefore, with these works and the former ones, the artist produced a succession of visual metaphors that allow us to visualize today the state of permanent fluctuation of his journeys based on the different uses of matter.

### **The vicissitudes of cardboard**

Cardboard is another element he used during moments of redefinition in order to bring on other procedures in his language. Like the use of paper, its use was related to the exigencies of a general weakening that since earlier times had led him to recycle humble materials.

In 1998, he started to work on his "Cartones" [Cardboards]. In this series, which is an antecedent of his "Cromofomas" [Chromofoms], he fixed his gaze on the support, which from this time on would be present in a transcendental way in his works. The image began to move toward its own background through his attitude of impinging on the base.

This way, he inquired again on the vicissitudes of plastic space as a place of infinite possibilities. The freedom of the support was manifested in the colors the matter could suggest. Pure white was one of the variants he proposed mainly in his "Cosmografías" [Cosmographies], through large neutral planes constituted as places of a more subtle matter.

The "Cosmografías" of the water and the river constitute true maps of another geography. The crossing, interaction, penetration of one zone into another was set in the proposal of a new spatiality. Each one of these images played with the subtlety of the diagrams, originating the encounter with other types of folds; those that emerged from the expression of the minimal.

These proposals, more diagrammatic than iconographic, had their formal and conceptual starting point in a work he produced a year before: "Luna de las islas" [Moon of the Islands], 1997. In it he used this tendency presenting a piece of a map of Tigre –a place the artist often frequented during his childhood– as the central area of the work.

Different from this series, in "Ritmos de la tierra" [Rhythms of the Land], "Ritmos de enero" [January Rhythms], and "Ritmos de la tarde" [Afternoon Rhythms] color appears in a more rotund way, promoting larger centers of attention. The drawing becomes a fundamental orbit and the line an element of great possibilities, be it through incisions or through the threads the artist crossed in a certain folding area of that rhizome.

The actuality of the pictorial drawing underlies in "Ritmos de la tierra", which reinforces the use of a certain set of signs, still permanent although barely drafted. The snail, the eye, the fish, the guitar are almost a scribble and in fact they seem to become pure forms rather than referential objects of an iconography.

As these characteristics are barely displayed, it's possible to point out that in this set of realizations, the artist is marking some other variants of the plastic space and of the transition of the line in a production that could evoke the mode of construction of his own geography.

The peculiarities of this dimension of his language had their derivation in "Cromofomas". A series produced in La Floresta (Uruguay) during the summer of 2002. The climate out of which these works emerge is that of a singular experience, another of those experiences that have as a characteristic the contact with a new place.

In this case, he reaffirmed the sensation of spatiality given by the impetus of engraving on cardboard that in this instance gave back another facet of the drawing to the work. Instead of being pictorial, it is now a precise drawing done through incisions, therefore recovering the native procedures that were always present, although linked to the plastic language and not to the expression of the author's motivations. Here, this detonator –representative of an attitude toward the past– has its extension in the crowded arrangement of the planes, directly linked to Mayan art and the plastic formulations of some Mesoamerican codices. The forms interweave diverse networks generating several simultaneous nuclei, designing the structure of a maze.

"Laberinto de la arena" [Labyrinth of the Sand] and "Laberinto marino" [Sea Labyrinth] express these features. Their structures share with other works, such as "Montevideo", a multiplication of points of view provoked by a miscellanea of heterogeneous planes that incites and focuses on the variety of the connections between the journeys of the forms rather than on the relations between one form and another. For this reason "Cromofomas" is a series in which the idea of the rhizome emerges perfectly.<sup>12</sup> A rhizome that in many cases seems to cede its place to some center of attention. "La luna blanca" [The White Moon] is a work of these characteristics. In "Laberinto de la arena" the crowded forms produce the germ of decentering and therefore the marks of overflowing.

In spite of this, certain respect for the laws of Torres-García underlies in these images. The note is given by the use of pure and achromatic colors, and by the actuality of the orthogonal structure.

The common signs of his works are still present only due to the trace of incision. This way, Nigro arrives at an image in which his imprints are inscribed in another facet of collage, completely distanced from the procedure of "papier collé". It is an instance in which the color and the gesture of the drawing exalt the derivation through a proposal that is more indicial and less bound to the realistic forms that were common in the productions of his other periods.

### **As a way of closing**

Through this journey it has been possible to approach the series of characteristics by which Nigro constructs his plastic discourse. The attitudes of redefining prior esthetic concepts, of preserving essential features of his masters' languages, of delving into the possibilities of matter constituted the most important accesses to the general character of his production.

Surpassing these spheres, the paths of this process are found, at first glance, in the transits made by the matter of his works. Substance that in his collages and objects created its own terrain to make effective the diversity of resolutions.

In this essay, which exposes the initial perspectives of a look into this production, we attempt to account for these journeys. The emphasis that Nigro has placed in the construction of certain reference patterns has allowed us a first approach to the way the author related to other artists of the Latin American context.

The path is now open for the study of the character of his inclusion in one of Latin America's plastic coordinates of historical relevance: the plastic tradition of the Rio de la Plata.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> We take the concept of "point of inflection" used by Gilles Deleuze in his theory of the fold. The point of inflection implies a change of direction, a deviation that allows us to speak of the journey of this artist as a process tempted by change. In this section, we will work with several of Deleuze's concepts. Among them, the rhizome concept. See: Deleuze, Gilles, *El pliegue*, Paidós, Barcelona, 1989. On the concept of rhizome: Deleuze, Gilles, "Introducción: Rizoma", Guattari, Félix, Deleuze, Gilles, *Mil mesetas. Capitalismo y esquizofrenia*, Pre-Textos, Valencia, 1988, p. 9-32.

<sup>2</sup> Gurvich, José, *Gurvich*, Exhibit Catalog, Comisión Nacional de Bellas Artes [National Commission of Fine Arts], Montevideo, May 1967.

<sup>3</sup> Situating Argentina at the end of the last century, Beatriz Sarlo points out some general characteristics that in a more specific and broader work on this production period would allow us to extract contextual features to visualize Nigro's conditions of production. In this case, we will limit ourselves to the concept of peripheral postmodernity, which she uses to speak of *cultural spaces that are defined by strong, individual choices or by small groups: the cultural fragmentation that is no longer recognizable in some strong symbolic knots*. See Sarlo, Beatriz, "El mito nacional", *Lápiz*, Revista Internacional de Arte, Year XIX, Numbers 158/159, Spain, December 1999, January 2000, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Ernesto Vila was one of the Uruguayans who attended the classes of Jose Gurvich and Guillermo Fernandez. He had to remain out of Uruguay since the military coup of 1973.

<sup>5</sup> Peluffo Linari, Gabriel, "La metáfora del papel", *Ernesto Vila*, Exhibit Catalog, Municipal Palace Exhibit Center, Montevideo, August 1990.

<sup>6</sup> González Cortiñas, Fernanda, "A través del color Adolfo Nigro cultiva el pasado como ejercicio" [Through color Adolfo Nigro cultivates the past as an exercise], *Rosario 12*, Rosario, Tuesday, May 20, 1999.

<sup>7</sup> Padeletti, Hugo: "Jironadas de Adolfo Nigro", unpublished text, Buenos Aires, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Gurvich, José, *op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Padeletti, Hugo, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> Reyes Palma, Francisco, in *Los ecos de Matías Goeritz*, Exhibit Catalog, Antiguo Colegio de San Idelfonso, Mexico, 1997, p. 178-179.

<sup>11</sup> *Plancton. César Bandin Ron, poeta - Adolfo Nigro, pintor*, la marca editora, Buenos Aires, 1998.

<sup>12</sup> The characteristic we take of this concept is that which postulates it as that space in which there can't be any points or positions, there are only lines. A rhizome is not made up of unities but of changing directions; it doesn't have a beginning or an end and it always has a means by which it grows and overflows. See Deleuze, Gilles, "Introducción: Rizoma", *op. cit.*

*Translation Note: The notes in brackets contain my free translation of Adolfo Nigro's works, as well as the mentioned work by Joaquín Torres-García. In the case of the other artists mentioned, I included the English titles by which their works are known, except those not found in museum lists, publications and other reference material available to me at this time. M.G.*