

THE HORSE IN PUERTORICAN CULTURE

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The horse in its great diversity

The principal concept which leads this exhibition of almost 300 works is, as the culture itself, of inclusive and heterogeneous character. Art and culture are vehicles which promote and increase harmony and comprehension between people, as well as strengthen esthetic knowledge and enjoyment. Popular arts such as music, literature, poetry, cinematography, videos, advertisement, sports and everyday expressions blend in with painting, sculpture, graphics, ceramic and photography to celebrate the presence of the horse in our culture and acknowledge its relevance in Puerto Rican life.

This exhibit of the Las Americas Museum in San Juan and the Puerto Rican Equestrian School, documents such manifestations for a greater comprehension of the role this noble animal has placed in the history of western civilization, and particularly so, in the history of Puerto Rico. Communication is the target of our efforts. The word communication comes from community and it's precisely for this group of individuals that this multidisciplinary exhibit is designed and conceived for. Traditionally, the horse has represented the cyclical movement of life, the vital energy, character, erotic force, nobility, royalty, power and masculinity, among others. Horses have greatly contributed to life, work and leisure of humans. The magical and ceremonial character of the Paleolithic, the support to the development of agriculture, its protagonic presence in wars and battles, its relevance in the scope of transportation, its co-protagonist in the field of sports and its role as loyal companion constitute the paradigmatic characters which identify them.

The horse is an intelligent animal, for whom it is enough to learn the signaling of the legs, voice and hands of its jockey, in order to identify itself with his thoughts and desires. The artist has, since unmemorable times, found inspiration in the image of the horse. Ever since the beginnings of civilization, certain individuals have had the necessity to communicate in imaginative form and some have utilized the equestrian figure as theme of their creations. The first representation of such animal was made in the prehistoric era and the most recent is being made by some man or woman, at this very moment, somewhere in the world.

This desire and willingness to represent the figure of the horse has never ceased. The creative impulse has inspired on the equestrian image with no interruption in time. Universal history so demonstrates this fact and art history documents it.

Paintings

In Puerto Rican paintings, the horse has been present since the XVIII century when Jose Campeche painted several paintings inspired in the amazon. Three of these, with the same name have reached our times, Lady on horse. The exhibit presents the piece of the History,

Anthropology and Art Museum of the University of Puerto Rico. From XIX century, two oil paintings of Francisco Oller decorate the exposition. Study of the jockey and horse, oil painting of 1879 is of great interest since it was painted over a box of cigars and as a curiosity of great value, it has painted a beautiful landscape signed by the artist. From the same time, there are paintings from his disciples Manuel Jordan and two contemporary artists, Pio Casimiro Bacener y Manuel Castaño. From the first half of the XX century, two Works stand out totally different, about the role of the horse in our society. From 1934 Camino del pueblo, by Miguel Pou, we see a wild man reclined of his old horse loaded with baskets of bananas and Dulce Sueño by Oscar Colón Delgado dated on 1948, portrait, on first plane, of the horse known as "the father of Paso Fino horses in Puerto Rico". From the renown Generation of the 50, expressive paintings by masters such as Rafael Tufiño, Epifanio Izarray, Félix Bonilla Norat, José Meléndez Contreras, Manuel Hernández Acevedo, Samuel Sánchez, Domingo García, Carlos Raquel Rivera and Augusto Marín are appreciated.

Since the mid 20th century, painters of different generations have cultivated the popular theme of the three wise men on horse. On the first place, lies the master Rafael Tufiño with El Santero of 1955 in a scene in which the artisan sir Zoilo Cajiga y Sotomayor, seated on the floor of his workshop, paints wooden saints. Other wise men in this exposition are Works by Lorenzo Homar, Antonio Maldonado, José A. Torres Martono, Carmelo Sobrino, Connie Ann Martín, and Taller Una.

Horses have been an important theme in all stages of master August Marín. El Grito de Lares from 1961, presents the best of the colossal time. This work of monumental character, not only because of its size, but also because of its design and cost, frames the horse in a protagonic manner within a historic and patriotic moment of our island. Works of diverse medium by John Balossi, are exhibited: paintings, sculpture, ceramic, engravings and prints. This due to the fact that this artist has dedicated almost the whole of his artistic production to the theme of the horse. A classic example is Horse, a splendid iron sculpture from around 1985. Rocinante, a mixed medium of year 2005 by master Antonio Martorell is a poliptic composed of six linens. This interesting piece, based on passages of Don Quixote de la Mancha, is also an installation in which the artist disposes of different form on each occasion, turning the horse into a changing entity which interacts with the observer.

It is interesting to note how Puerto Ricans have taken a generational step. The artists of the promotions of the 80's and 90's have taken traditional motifs and transformed them accordingly to their own time. The horse is still present in the Works: Huracán del sur of 1991 by Arnaldo Roche, paradigmatic piece which shows his expressive, dynamic and singular painting process;

Jinete de junio of 2005 by Rafael Trelles which shows its original esthetic universe and exquisite technique, and finally Jorge of 2005 by the polifacetic Eric Tabales, with a monumental horse executed in his very personal, using rusty fabric. Also present is the work of Jorge Zeno, Nick Quijano, Eric French, Carmen Inés Blondet, Charles Juhasz and Cecilio Colón.

The Works of these creators show the horse of an amazon, of an estate owner, of a wild man, of people from the city, of the three wise men, of the imagination, and of the inner world of the artist. In them we see in a truthful manner how this noble animal has been an inseparable companion to the human being, regardless of the social and economic condition; in the country and in the city, at work, at leisure and in spiritual life.

Drawings

With express integratory intention, Works done in drawing as a medium have been included, a medium neglected during the last decades and forgotten by collectors and merchants. As a token of recognition and acknowledgement of its relevance in art, we have included a selection of drawings in pencil and carbon, of the masters Manuel Jordán, Ramón Frade, Félix Bonilla Norat, José Meléndez Contreras, Julio Rosado del Valle and Susana Herrero. These remind us of the line, its expressiveness and beauty.

Engraving

The theme of the horse has been present throughout all the history of Puerto Rican engraving. From the artists of the 1950 generation to current art students have demonstrations in all techniques of this multiexemplary art. The role engravings have played in the construction of the Puerto Rican identity is of common knowledge. Our engravers have worked landscapes, landscaping, social and political matters and any other that may contribute to strengthening identity and national esteem. Engravings from Lorenzo Homar with Saltimbanqui of 1951 to recent Works by Fabián Detrés, Orlando Salgado and Gilberto González of this decade.

Prints

Our printing has a strong tradition, dating from mid 20th century and is almost in it is practically exclusively a product of the joint efforts of diverse governmental agencies, such as Sanitary Education Section of the Department of Health, the Cinema, Graphics, and Public Leisure Workshop, The division of Community Education (Divedco), and the Graphic Workshop of Institute of Puerto Rican Culture. Million of prints of great expressiveness, beauty and marked cultural intention, many of which are related to theater, ballet, music festivals, and national milestones, have been produced at these work-



shops. Besides the works of the masters of the 50's generation, prints Nelson Sambolín, Luis A. Cajiga, Rafael Colón Morales and Roberto Matos may be appreciated.

Photography

Technology renders possible the presentation of this art. A digital program shows the historical photography of the spanish and northamerican time; artistic photography with photo essays by Jack Delano (El Puerto Rico de ayer), Héctor Méndez Caratini (El rodeo en Puerto Rico), Sandra Reus (Las carreras de caballos), José Charrón (Los caballos de Vieques) and Viveca Venegas (Caballos).

Cinematography

The film images selected for this exhibition are projected in a monitor which rescues segments of those films, which throughout time have included, to a greater or lesser extent, the horse. Films from the beginnings of the 20th century to the beginnings of the 21st century are all part of the sample. some of these are: El de los cabos blancos, El Yugo, Una gota de agua and Un día cualquiera de la Divedco; Cuentos para despertar, Boleto de ida and Leyendas de Puerto Rico by Luis Molina; Linda Sara and Lo que le pasó a Santiago by Jacobo Morales.

Music

Music has been a protagonic element in the evolution Puerto Rican culture. Our composers have found inspiration in the horse. Ballads, plena (rhythm originally from Barrio San Antón, Puerto Rico), guarachas and sones are just a few of the musical genres cultivated by . Rafael Hernández, Bobby Capó, Davilita, Mon Rivera y Tite Curet Alonso. Salsa and nova trova have been recipients of the talent of artists such as Rafael Cortijo, Bobby Valentín, Roy Brown y Antonio Cabán Vale, among others. Recently, artists such as Daddy Yankee and Tego Calderón have interpreted songs making allusions to the horse. Who can forget popular classics such as El caballo pelotero, Camarero en punta, Monta mi caballo, Préstame tu caballo, Caballo de hierro, El paso fino,

Ensillando mi caballo, Caballo de palo and other songs with the horse as theme which have enjoyed different generations of Puerto Ricans?

Wooden saints: three wise men on horse

Saints are considered the most representative expression of the popular feel since the arrival of the Spaniards. Families and artisan groups from the 18th century have been known as dedicated to the sculpting of wooden saints. The Three Wise Men is one of the themes of greatest devotion and is characterized by its organization is chronological, from traditional to contemporary works, so that they may be appreciated and compared. The traditional sculptors in the exhibition are:

Genaro Rivera, Juan Cartagena, José Ramos, Jesús Antonio Crespo, Pedro Arce, Benigno Soto, Cachetones de Lares, Quiterio, Florencio and Manuel Cabán, Francisco Claudio (Pacheco), Juan Muñoz, Zoilo Cajiga and Sotomayor, as well as several unknown authors. Marcelino Cortés, Carmelo Soto, José Negrón, Emilio Rosado Méndez, Obdulia Gracia, Domingo Orta, Santia de Orta, Rafael Hernández Reyes, Carlos Anzueta, Ibsen Peralta, Juan Ortiz, Carlos Vázquez Sánchez, Isaac Laboy Moctezuma, among others, are the sculptors which represent contemporary santeros. May this selection of sculptures play a role in the affirmative recognition of a tradition which has transcended the artesian to transform itself into an object of relevant personal expression.

The wooden crank horses

During a large part of the 20th century, patron festivals of many of the counties in Puerto Rico were characterized by the presence of wooden games originally from the United States. These were round wooden structures, named horse tracks, where using a manual mechanism and a crank, little wooden sculptures of race horses were moved in circular motion, the winner being he or she who gets closer to the finish line. Three games are on exhibition, one with 48" diameter, whose horses are made by artisan Chú Montalvo and

the other two of 38" and 34" diameter, original concepts by sir Yuyo Ruiz, with Puerto Rican characters and the three wise men. For these last two games, the collector commissioned to several artisans of the island his favorite characters. This betting game for adults is an integral part of the culture of the country, as these are a reminiscence of the horse races in the great San Juan festivals, and modern horse races.

Christmas Cards

The hospitalarian and kind nature of Puerto Ricans found its ideal vehicle in the Christmas greeting card, a tradition which has been greatly diminished in the last decades due to the increase in the methods of communication and life's complexities. Today it is easier and faster to make a phone call or send an email.

The Puerto Rican Christmas card, despite being an adoption from a foreign tradition has demonstrated being a vehicle of national affirmation. The Creole theme, the Spanish language, the evident Puerto Rican stamp and the use of prints from paintings are all elements which show the artists intention in letting others know who we are and what our culture consists of. We owe the design and development of our Christmas card mainly to Irene and Delano, Pava Prints and Taller Una, composed by Sandra Vázquez and Isamar Colón.

Epigraph

El caballo en la cultura puertorriqueña is the product of a gregarian idea which invites and includes all segments of the community. The concept of curetaje shows the diverse manifestations of the creative spirit while highlighting the elements they have in common. To include the concept of culture means to glance at the diverse elements which make up the knowledge and human behavior. The presence of popular arts, sports, advertisement, and the proverbs supposes understanding as well the set of traditional manifestations in which life of the people are expressed.

All of the arts are integral parts of the culture, but not all cultural expressions are art. In this exposition, we may observe both as part of the whole which makes up our people. This anthropological aspect of the function of the human being, that is to say the artist, the artisan, and all whom compose this exhibition constitute our society as well. The equestrian theme is present in all cultural simples of Puerto Rico and constitute a common element with the diverse experiences we live with on a daily basis.

It is inevitable to conclude that this noble animal appears in a constant, interdisciplinary form in the Puerto Rican culture. From the 18th to the 21st century, all across the island, from the Fine Arts to the Popular Arts, the horse has captivated the imagination of our creators and enriched the lives and esthetics in this island of enchantment.

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