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## Estampas de mi Tierra- Vignettes of my Land

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“ESTAMPAS DE MI TIERRA- VIGNETTES OF MY LAND”

A Thesis

by

ANGEL BERRIOS

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Texas-Pan American  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

December 2010

Major Subject: Art



"ESTAMPAS DE MI TIERRA-VIGNETTES OF MY LAND"

A Thesis

by

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December 2010



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## ABSTRACT

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With the intention of expressing my heritage, I have recalled all of my artistic knowledge in order to create this series of art works. I am very much in agreement with the route of artistic expression that I have followed in order to capture these images. I have given form to my message by following a technique involving the application of a combination of strokes and dots of color. I do not have, nor did I use photographs or any other visual resource to aid me in the creation of these paintings. I am solely inspired by my ideals as an artist to contribute toward the cultural enrichment and realization of my homeland, the island of Puerto Rico in the Caribbean Sea.





## DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my loving sisters Norma, Carmen, Ana, Maria, Mirta, and Miriam whom have never denied me their time and moral support throughout my art career. Their love and understanding helped me with the decision of continuing a higher education to obtain my Master of Fine Arts Degree. They are my inspiration and they represent the classic abnegated working Puerto Rican women.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am heartily thankful to Otto Irady, Sylvia Jackson, Erum S. Javed, Jose Ramos, Mirla Martinez, Nina Gonzalez, Ileana Gaya and my family, who have encouraged, guided and supported me in all respects during my career. I offer my regards and blessings to all of them.

I give special thanks to all my professors, in particular to the members of my committee: Dave Martinez, Richard Phillips, Philip Field, and Richard Hyslin.



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## ARTIST STATEMENT

The presence of water, mountains, valleys, wooden houses, people, and country sites are constant themes that appear in my artwork due to the magnetism I feel towards Mother Nature. Mother Nature must be present in all my works. I do not intend to change Mother Nature's scenes as much as I desire to share my experience through use of contemporary concepts, using strong strokes, bold colors, and freedom of expression. In addition, I wish to illustrate my own folklore: the traditions and scenes of my homeland, Puerto Rico. Through my paintings, I wish to impart how beautiful traditions and landscapes are, because I know that someday they may change or disappear. My intent is to show the new generation how it was in another time.

I completely enjoy the process of my art. During this process, I become immersed in searching for colors, forms, and spaces. All my thoughts go into the piece and I cannot rest until I finish. In my art, I follow no specific rules or patterns, but I depend on my instincts. My art takes life in the relationship between my materials and me. The piece asks me for the next step until complete harmony exists among the colors, texture, and light.

My materials include oil, acrylic, water color, ink, and charcoal, depending on my mood or what I have in mind. I usually prefer working with brushes because I can handle them as I wish. I have no color preferences. After applying the first color, the next color choice becomes apparent. The possibility to change colors and other details remains open throughout the process, although the main idea remains unchanged. Inspiration from impressionist and abstract art enables me to express my experiences within the context of Mother Nature and my Puerto Rican culture.



# “ESTAMPAS DE MI TIERRA- VIGNETTES OF MY LAND”

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

At times I have asked myself, “Why am I an artist? From where did this inclination toward the arts come?” Going through memories in an effort to answer these queries, my thoughts took me back to my childhood. I remember as a child that I did not get along well with the Three Kings, whom in the folk customs of Hispanic lands bring gifts to children in a way analogous to Santa Claus in the United States. I detested the Three Kings because they never visited me, and never gave me anything for Christmas. My mother would reassure me that if I behaved well, the Kings would bear me presents, but they never came. Consequently if I was going to play, I had to make my own toys. In our house, charcoal and wood were used to cook food in an iron stove. We lacked many basic things such as plumbing and electricity. My favorite pastime was to draw with a piece of charcoal taken from the kitchen of the wooden house. Unintentionally and without knowing it, I was acquiring and developing artistic skills to the point that when I started primary school I already knew how to draw well, leading to my selection to decorate the classroom with drawings which I later painted in tempera and crayon. With the passage of the years came the realization that, although the Three Kings never visited me, they gave me the greatest gift, the talent to be an artist and express myself aesthetically through my paintings.

Soon the reputation of my works began to spread among the Puerto Rican art public, so I began to paint with the idea of selling them. And so it went for many years as I created typical Boricua landscape scenes. Paintings were done in a hurry to sell them quickly. I always strove to be faithful to the colors that I perceived in the objects from nature: If the artist saw a blue sky, it was painted blue; trees that presented different green tonalities were treated as such. The goal was to paint, sell, and earn a living, nothing more.

Now on the other hand, with the opportunity that the University of Texas-Pan American Art Department and its Master of Fine Arts program have provided me for academic research and humanistic transcendence, after studying the output and the lives of many great artists, comes the awareness of the importance of the artist; of the responsibility toward history that rests on his/her shoulders proving that it is not a matter of painting simply to paint. Because of this I put a halt to my commercial production and began to meditate about the artist's calling and my works. Thoughts were directed toward how the work will be interpreted, about the message that they would reflect. Soon it was realized that a cultural debt and an enormous aesthetic responsibility were owed to future generations. An adjustment was made to my artistic production to paint deliberately, in a relaxed, unhurried manner, utilizing all of this artist's knowledge to get the work to speak for itself and narrate some stories.

This exhibition of paintings for my Master of Fine Arts degree is a retelling of my childhood and adolescent years, of the paths that I have walked: in short, of my experiences. I didn't invent this offering, and nobody told it to me; these are images that are present in my memories. I have wanted to make them known through the talent that God gave me and the different painting techniques that I have absorbed during my travels on the difficult road of artistic effort.

I belong to a somewhat different era from that of today. I come from a time when a child could walk through a whole town without fear of any harm. Thanks to those carefree times, I was able to live and enjoy all of the typical scenes and vignettes from the people and land all around me that serve today as the inspiration of this exhibition's theme: Daily scenes that perhaps escaped the attention of others, but not me, since I was captivated by each one of them as they still live in silence in the corners of my memory. These scenes that I represent in vibrant colors inspired by the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists have also inspired me to dedicate poems to them and the memories that they embody. Art has always been an inspiration for writers, and I did not want to squander this opportunity to write various poems to accompany my paintings. These poems will be presented in the final section of this essay. Each vignette evokes a different message, a different story, a different fount of inspiration, a different poem.

My works are simply an adorned retelling of my nostalgias with colors. In this exhibition I have sought to relate each work to all of the others. This oeuvre speaks for itself because I do not use symbols to communicate the messages, but instead simply optical forms. This intention to communicate solely through the use of forms, stains and colors is the practice that I have developed during my studies at the University of Texas-Pan American. This was the work during this period of study for the Master of Fine Arts degree in which I diverged from the traditional artistic style that had characterized my prior output in Puerto Rico toward a practice that involved the more direct consultation of European artists who participated in the Impressionist, Neo-Impressionist and Post-Impressionist movements.

## CHAPTER II

### INFLUENCES

Basically I have borrowed the art techniques of George Seurat, Claude Monet and Vincent Van Gogh to express my own art interpretation of my childhood memories during the decades of the 1950's and 60's. I have always believed that art should be a free endeavor, that the artist should express yearnings, convictions, emotions in the form and manner that he or she feels compelled to follow.

The painting *Costa del Sur* (Fig. 1) reflects the direct influence of Vincent Van Gogh (Fig. 2) and George Seurat (Fig.3). Van Gogh's impact is through his powerful lines and thick brush strokes. The basic trait of Seurat's Pointillism was the use of complementary colors to create an optical illusion in the eye of the beholder so that he or she would perceive new color tonalities. This method influenced me, but I implemented it in a different way that emphasized monochromatic values. Similarly, Claude Monet's (Fig. 4) uses of complementary colors and the suggestion or impression achieved through his brushstrokes have constituted an inspiration and direct influence.<sup>1</sup>

George Pierre Seurat was born 2 December 1859 and died 29 March 1891 at the tender age of 31, a victim of Diphtheria. This French painter founded Neo-Impressionism and the Pointillist technique that has influenced many painters. He advocated that a painter could use color to create harmony and emotion in the same way that a composer utilizes sound and metrics to achieve these in music. He thought that the knowledge and perception of these optical laws

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<sup>1</sup> Peter. Impressionist Art. London. Ingo F. Walther. 1992. Pages 112,113, 362-365, 280,288, 314, 315.

could be used to create a new artistic language based upon its own heuristic system.

Accordingly, he sought to implement this new means of expression through lines, composition and the intensity of hues, calling it Chromoluminarism. Seurat's theories may be summarized thusly: feelings of joy can be communicated through the predominance of luminous tonalities, warm colors and the use of lines directed upward. On the contrary, calm was achieved through the balanced use of light and darkness, by the balance between cold and warm colors and by the dominance of horizontal lines. Sadness is captured by using dark and cold tonalities and lines that flow downward.<sup>2</sup>

A second major influence on my work besides the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists discussed above is the admiration and pride felt for Puerto Rican artists such as Francisco Oller, Ramón Frade, and Miguel Pou. These nineteenth-century artists, pioneers in recreating our nation's customs and landscapes, are an inspiration to focus on the traditional values of the island.

Francisco Oller,<sup>3</sup> born in Bayamón, Puerto Rico 17 June 1833 is considered the only Latin American painter to play an important role in the Impressionist movement. His most important masterpiece is the 1893 painting about a Boricua wake *El Velorio, Florón o Baquiné*<sup>4</sup>(Fig. 5). This work represents the wake of a child who died at about the age of seven.

According to local tradition, since a child dies too young to have knowingly committed any sin, a *Baquiné* was celebrated if the child had been born to slaves, or instead a Florón ceremony if the child had been white. This consisted of a vigil over the body that was placed on a table adorned

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<sup>2</sup>Feist, Peter. Impressionist Art. London. Ingo F. Walther. 1992. Page 280.

<sup>3</sup>Sarramía, Tomás. Figuras de Puerto Rico. Hato Rey, Puerto Rico. Publicaciones Puertorriqueñas, inc. 2001. Pages 179, 180.

<sup>4</sup>Rosa, Cesáreo and Melón Esther. Biografías Puertorriqueñas, Perfil Histórico de un Pueblo. San Juan, Puerto Rico. Caribe Grolier, inc.1991. Pages 453-455.



with flowers while everyone celebrated with great joy, singing, dancing, playing, eating and drinking over the salvation of the child's soul due to his innocence. All was joy save for the mother's grief. This painting communicates a powerful emotional and intellectual charge due to the inherent contradiction of behaviors in this bizarre circumstance.

Ramón Frade,<sup>5</sup> born in Cayey in 1875, is another painter who fixed his gaze on natural boricua scenes, as in his "*El Pan Nuestro*" (Fig. 6), "Our Daily Bread," completed in 1905. In this work a peasant bears a bunch of bananas, the fruit of his arduous labors in the fields of the fatherland. This writer was six years old when Frade passed away in 1954.

Miguel Pou,<sup>6</sup> a direct influence upon this writer, was born in Ponce in 1880. His artistic motivation was simply the love of his land since, according to his own words, "An artist is a true patriot who fights and struggles to bequeath the legacy of his imaginings to his fatherland." His paintings capture the freshness of the Borinquén landscape. He depicted not only the rural aspect, as in his *Paisaje de Puerto Rico* and *Ramo de flores*, but also the limited urban panorama of his epoch, as in *El Hamaquero*, "*La Promesa*" (Fig.7), and *Coches de la Plaza de Ponce*. His dominion over color made him the patriarch of island hues and linked him to Impressionism. During his life he participated in 64 exhibitions including 17 solo shows. His achievements garnered five gold medals, including one from the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture. He died in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1968.

I recall as an adolescent that I had the luck of seeing in person, in my native town, a white-haired middle-aged man named Epifanio Irrizarry who was conducting a painting class for

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<sup>5</sup>Rosa, Cesáreo and Melón Esther. *Biografías Puertorriqueñas, Perfil Histórico de un Pueblo*. San Juan, Puerto Rico. Caribe Grolier, inc.1991. Pages 253, 253, 254.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. Pages 499, 500.

his pupils. Although I was not his pupil, he let me observe him as he taught. Don Epifanio Irizarry was the first artist whom I saw working in person. I enjoyed how he managed his watercolors. He would wet the paper by throwing water on it with his hands from a distance of about two feet. As the drops fell onto the paper that had been set upon a table, he seemed to be conducting a symphony orchestra. He took advantage of the little puddles of water on the paper to form figures out of them. He drew with a brown spatula, normally using a dark brown, as the color dispersed itself in the water. Then he would add other colors according to the subject that he was depicting. The water made the colors come together, it seemed like magic. Next were the final touches, some detail or other before the paper dried completely.

Irizarry was not a traditional Puerto Rican painter. He was instead a very modern contemporary artist. His work dovetails very nicely with the Impressionist movement. This was an antecedent and example for my own comprehensive exploration of the innate possibilities of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism during my stay at the University of Texas-Pan American. Irizarry broke with the island's traditional line of painting practice that predominated at that time. While the borinquén painters Ramón Frade, Francisco Oller and Miguel Pou dedicated themselves more to delineation and traditional technique, Irizarry broke with these standards and introduced a new path toward visualizing objects. This was made evident in his looser and freer approach. Frequently he does not pinpoint the meaning or intent of his subject matter, instead leaving the meanings up to the free interpretation of the viewer, while others lean toward abstraction. Boricua customs and traditions, expressed in his own style, constituted his subject matter.

Meanwhile José Azaustre, a Spanish painter who was my master during part of the decade of the 1980s, maintained that painting consisted of drawing in colors. One day with

much aplomb and a little irony he told the students that if they wanted to be artists they had to learn to draw. If they couldn't draw, he remarked, they were better off painting abstract art. Taking part as his pupil for three years created in me a new artistic vision, a new means of utilizing colors. This is when I learned how to use cool colors and bring out the warm ones. Azaustre is a true master of the management of cool colors: his output is exquisite, worthy of admiration.

It was my joy that all of my adolescence and part of my young adulthood were passed among artists such as Wichie Torres, Iván Moura, Jorge Romero, and Don Iván Rosario. These cultural luminaries of the city of Ponce fed my anxiousness to seek beyond mere colors. Colors enable us as artists to speak, to express ourselves as if it were a language. If the color for which we seek does not exist, it is our role as artists to invent it. All of these creators and friends were a direct influence on my artist formation.

On the other hand, although Van Gogh, Monet and Seurat are indirect European influences, I have taken advantage of their techniques and their studies of color to express tropical themes that exist solely in my memories. I have always lived with great joy in my heart because God gave me the luck of birth in a very picturesque place along with the power to express it on canvas. I grew up in an optimal natural amphitheatre - valleys, mountains, beaches, rivers, forests – among a people who did everything with grace, in the middle of Caribbean folklore, among working people. More than a task, capturing the history of a people's epoch is a responsibility that falls on the shoulders.

### CHAPTER III

#### CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The first painting to be discussed here, “*Los mirones son de palo,*” (Fig. 8) which can be translated “The Onlookers Must Keep Still,” takes place during an ordinary afternoon inside a wooden house in a barrio, a house like the one where I saw light for the first time, where I grew up and adapted to the circumstances of the environment that forged my principles as a human being. In such a place as this I passed the best years of my life, where I learned to share, to respect, and to look on the beautiful and positive side of life.

In this painting I present some neighbors who are playing dominoes while three spectators, standing like statues, take in the game. These witnesses may not speak; the price of their entertainment is to remain silent, since it is said that the game of dominoes was invented by a deaf mute. The sleeping dog and the people with no intention of budging emphasize the silence and tranquility of this scene. The religious element of these Puerto Rican families is marked. The devotional image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that appears on the back left wall and the crucifix to the right of the window bespeak this strong religious tradition. Woman is an active and important part of daily life and is the protagonist of much of my oeuvre. My intent with this vignette is to project an atmosphere of nostalgia, peace and quiet.

The epoch of the sugarcane plantations in Puerto Rico was very important to its economic development, thanks to the humble workers who labored from dawn to dusk. Along with coffee,

it was the principal source for jobs around the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> Woman's role was indispensable as she ran the home while the man worked. Women's presence in my work is vital; I present them even engaged in the most arduous tasks because of their crucial importance in the social and economic development of our people that inspires every local artist. The painting "La Aguadora" ("The Water Bearer") (Fig.9) shows the sugar cane peasants hard at work while a woman with her child brings water and some kind of sustenance. It was customary for the woman to walk from her home to the workplace bearing food and water for the laborers, who worked very hard under the intense Caribbean sun. Practically the whole southern coast of my country was planted with sugar cane. As a group, we boys frequently made our way to the plantations to ingest it. The cane cutters enjoyed our presence and gave us chunks of cane to eat. Due to my fond memory of their kindness and humanity, it is through this work *La Aguadora* that tribute is rendered to those workers whose effort and hard work helped to forge the future of new economic perspectives for our island. The respect and admiration that I feel for each one of these protagonists is manifest in each of my creations.

The technique utilized in this piece is the outcome of a combination of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist approaches. It was realized without any prior drawing or design, but instead the direct application of colors to canvas due to my confidence in what I wanted to express. The intentionality of this explosion of colors that I wanted to project was engraved in my mind. As I customarily do, I leave open the possibility for the spectator to enter the work and imagine scenes in his mind following the suggestions that I provide at different points within the picture.

In my youthful memories, not everything was work. There were also fiestas (a festive gathering), dances, music and songs. In the works "*Fiesta de Barrio*" (Fig.10), and "*Bomba y Plena*", (Fig.11) I emphasize woman's presence as the heart and soul of the traditional dance

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<sup>7</sup>Vivas, José Luis. *Historia de Puerto Rico*. New York, NY. Las Americas Publishing Co. 1962. Page 92, 101.

known as “*Bomba y Plena*”. These Afro-Caribbean rhythms are of direct African heritage. They were brought to Puerto Rico by slaves at the beginning of the sixteenth century who were the property of the Spanish landowners and colonizers. Although the slaves were emancipated in 1898, their strong contribution to folk musical tradition still endures among our people as a mixture of Spanish, Taino, and African practices.<sup>8</sup>

The Taino were the indigenous inhabitants of the island of Puerto Rico and many of the other neighboring Caribbean islands before the arrival of the Spanish and the Africans. Different musical practices were derived from the African heritage, but the *bomba y plena* became the most popular. The word “bomba”<sup>9</sup> refers to the drum. This dance is an interaction between dancers and drummers, a kind of contest between the former and the rhythms of the latter. What always drew my attention in these dances was the respect that they evinced. Although these are dances with very sensual rhythms, the woman, who is the protagonist, makes use of her feminine dexterities in the contortions’ of her body while the man’s movements are more reserved. The joy is contagious during these bomba y plena festivals. Whoever hears the music wants to dance to it regardless of age. To express the movements, these paintings utilize a pointillist technique of strong brush strokes combined with harmonious stains of primary colors and their complementary.

As far back as I can remember, I have always been struck by the unity between women in my island culture. Whether as members of the family or as friends, they have always walked in pairs. Normally the elder counsels the younger. Consequently in my painting “*El Sermón*” (The Advice) (Fig. 12) I recreate the very common scene from the days of my youth where an older woman advises the younger one. I seek to communicate an atmosphere of tranquility in which

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<sup>8</sup>Vivas, José Luis. *Historia de Puerto Rico*. New York, NY. Las Americas Publishing Co. 1962. Page 63, 162.

<sup>9</sup>Malavet Vega, Pedro. *Historia de la Canción Popular en Puerto Rico*. Santo Domingo. Editora Corripio. 1992. Page 488.

love and humility walk hand in hand. The standing lady admonishes a young girl who accepts the advice with acquiescence. In the girl's lap is a book that denotes the education and wisdom that will serve as the battering ram to open the path of the future, of self-realization. I present a wooden bench, upon which the young woman sits, and the coastal landscape visible through the window denote the nation's economic and ecological situation during the 1950's and 60's.

## CHAPTER IV

### MUSICAL INFLUENCES

In reality I have no special preference for one of my works over the others. Each has its place and narrates something different. Nevertheless, “*La Parranda*” (Fig. 13) could be one of my favorites, perhaps since it is the most recent or perhaps due to this writer’s active participation as a singer and instrumentalist in this tradition that is practically a Puerto Rican cultural icon. The word *parranda*<sup>10</sup> can be translated into English as “festival” or more aptly “itinerant festival.” The tradition by which musical bands go house to house to play is very ancient. The Spanish poet Vicente Espinel<sup>11</sup> (1550-1624) invented what is today called the *Espinela*. This is a variant of the Spanish sonnet form known as the *décima*<sup>12</sup> that contains ten octosyllabic lines in rhyme. Puerto Rico, influenced by Spanish culture, adopted this form to its autochthonous musical tradition. This led to the improvisation of songs with jocular, romantic, religious and patriotic themes among others. The improvisation is very difficult because the performer must compose his song while singing it so that it matches the last line of the *décima*, which is the only clue that has been provided to him before he starts. During the course of the *parranda*, the singer interprets the song in his or her own way and then the rest of the players chime in as a chorus.

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<sup>10</sup> Rosa-Nieves, Cesáreo. *Voz Folklórica de Puerto Rico*. San Juan, Puerto Rico. Caribe Grolier, inc. 1991. Pages 53-55.

<sup>11</sup> Navarro, Alberto. *Vicente Espinel; Músico, Poeta, Novelista Andaluz*. España. Universidad de Salamanca. 1977. Pages 170, 176, 178.

<sup>12</sup> Rosa-Nieves, Cesáreo. *Voz Folklórica de Puerto Rico*. San Juan, Puerto Rico. Caribe Grolier, inc. 1991. Pages 39-48.



These parrandas occur at Christmas time. A group of musicians gathers to visit the abodes of relatives and friends to perform traditional songs for them. Their instruments are typically the guitar, the *güiro*,<sup>13</sup> the *maracas*<sup>14</sup> or rattles, the instrument called *la sinfonía*, the *pandereta*<sup>15</sup> and the *cuatro*.<sup>16</sup> Normally the parrandas are done as a surprise, without prior notification of the people whom the parranda will visit. They almost always happen at night in hopes that the family chosen to enjoy the performance will be asleep. Upon receiving the visit of the *parranderos*, as the participants in the parrandas are called, the heads of the household regale them with sweets, appetizers and drinks. The beverage is normally called *pitorro* or *ron cañita*, a clandestine rum with high alcoholic content that is made in Puerto Rico from sugar cane. The custom is to have two or three more parrandas that same night. Those who have been visited already by the parranda have to join it, so that its size continues to grow over the course of the night.

The *cuatro*, an instrument native to Puerto Rico with ten strings and a wooden sound box or body, is similar to the guitar, especially with regard to the fingerboard. From the time of the Spanish colonization, the *Jibaro*<sup>17</sup> masses, unable to import foreign musical instruments due to their own poverty, have been led by their love of music to concoct their own instrument. Since its origin it has been used primarily for Boricua folk music, especially at Christmas time. The *cuatro* is the musical heart and soul of the parranda due to its sharpness, its brilliance and the quality of its distinct sound. It is this instrument that carries the melody and creates the musical flourishes that lend a spark of joy to this cultural configuration. Consequently it is the typical

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<sup>13</sup>Rosa-Nieves Cesáreo. Gran Enciclopedia de Puerto Rico Vol. 3. San Juan, Puerto Rico. Scholastic, Inc.- Caribe Grolier, Inc. 2004. Page 228.

<sup>14</sup>Ortiz, Fernando. Las Maracas. Cuba. Letras Cubanas. 1997. Page 42.

<sup>15</sup>Lavajo Valdez, Joaquín. Piano, Voces y Panderetas. Madrid, España. Ediciones Endimión. 1988. Page 175.

<sup>16</sup>Malavet Vega, Pedro. Historia de la Canción Popular en Puerto Rico. Santo Domingo. Editora Corripio. 1992. Page 491.

<sup>17</sup>Laguerre, Enrique and Melón Esther. El Jibaro de Puerto Rico, Símbolo y Figura. Sharon, Connecticut. Troutman Press. 1968. Page 249.

instrument and national musical symbol for Puerto Rico, without doubt one of our cultural bulwarks.

The cuatro resembles the lute and the Spanish guitar. It is made of dense woods such as the *güaragüao* while the lid is of soft wood such as the *yagrumo*. Both the *güaragüao* and the *yagrumo* are trees native to Puerto Rico. The length of the vibrating strings, in other words the distance between the cuatro's bridge and its *cejuela* is 20.25 inches. Originally it sported only four strings – hence the name of the instrument, “cuatro,” but starting around 1875 it became customary to make it as it is today, with five pairs of strings that link it to the Moorish lute of Andalusia.

The guitar executes the chords and establishes the tone of the musical piece being played while “la sinfonía” is a keyed wind instrument that adorns the happy parranda with brilliant flourishes. The percussion is provided by the *pandereta*, the *güiro* and the *maracas*. La *pandereta* is a small instrument of diminutive height consisting of a goat's skin that is stretched over a wooden or metallic sphere, with cracks in which little bells or castanets are set to function as rattles. Since it does not have a sound box it lacks depth of sound. Different sonorous textures are realized via this instrument: striking the skin with the palm of the hand, rubbing the skin with the fingers or continuously with the tip of the thumb, striking the *pandereta* with the fist, shaking it without hitting it, or causing a metallic trill with the castanets.

The *güiro* is an instrument made from a plant. This *güiro*, sometimes called *güícharo*, is held in the left hand while with the right it is rubbed with a scraper made of flexible wire with wood on its surface to keep the rhythm during the musical performance. The *maracas* are shell music instruments made from the *higüera* tree. To make them, you take two *higüeras* of approximately the same size and their procured pulp is extracted to hollow them out and then

allowed to dry out. Subsequently, using the same holes that were made previously to extract the pulp, seeds are introduced inside them, then the hole is filled and sealed with a little stick that will serve as the *mango* or handle so that they can be easily shaken by the musician. The two maracas maintain the rhythm of the musical composition.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

This Master of Fine Art Exhibition constitutes a very personal satisfaction due to the new technical mastery I've acquired from the UTPA Art Department that led to the decision to institute this new period of artistic interpretation. This interpretive strategy or means of visualizing art has evolved over time. Development for an artist is very important, especially in the competitive world of art. Without changes in the processes of artistic self-expression, it would all be monotonous; there would be no contrast between one work of art from the next. It is of the essence to adjust the subject matter to the artist's style. The fragmentation of color makes the display of colors more pleasing in this body of work. Application of strokes with differing or contrasting values lends a modern touch to the work and provides the spectator with the opportunity to imagine other presences. This does not change the original trajectory of my career due to the fact that spaces are left where an action or possible forms are merely suggested. This gives the viewer the freedom to visualize other possible contexts or add further protagonists in the realm of the imagination.

At a very young age I had the desire to be an artist, without knowing then how arduous a career it is. The path followed so far has not been easy, but it has been exciting and fulfilling. The path has been steep and at times it has had to be constructed. Every moment I tell myself that I am an artist and that I will be an eternal student of art because every day we must learn something new. When all of the effort employed in constructing this vocation is tallied, the resulting realization is that the satisfactions have been much greater than the pain of any

obstacles in the road. The acceptance of this new body of work among distinguished circles motivates me to continue to create new works from new perspectives. The subject matter of these works is not different from that employed by other Puerto Rican artists in what they have bequeathed to us: What is different is the strategy of presenting these themes, the technique and style followed in their realization.

From an analysis of this new body of work compared to my prior creations, it becomes easy to see that these works are the product of a fusion of influences from European Impressionist, Neo-Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists with the Boricua painters of folk custom. The mergers of these two pictorial strategies with my personal experiences and recollection have determined the final artistic result.

POEMS



**Los mirones son de palo**

Tarde

¿Cuándo es tarde?

Si la luz del alma, sigue alumbrando  
Y el perro que ladra no está ladrando.

La vela del Cristo no está presente  
Y es que la luz de afuera aun sigue fuerte

¿Cuándo es tarde?

Si el duro banco lo están usando

Y los vecinos siguen charlando  
En la única mesa que están jugando...

Y el pájaro que canta sigue cantando  
La vieja canción que me gusta tanto

¿Cuándo es tarde?

Si el color rojizo entra por la ventana

Pintando de tarde la oscura sala  
Y las estatuas de palo que están paradas  
Observando en silencio cada jugada  
No dicen nada, no dicen nada....

Cuando es tarde.



### **El Pan Nuestro**

Con la intensa luz del día  
Que acumula el calor costero  
Se une este barrio entero  
Trabajando en armonía  
Y siguiendo la melodía  
De estos alegres colores  
Donde poetas y pintores  
Disfrutan de este paisaje  
Brindándoles un homenaje  
A todos los pescadores.



### **Elena**

Te soné, pintando  
Con el ritmo en tus caderas  
Y un caminao de primera  
Que me tiene a mí pensando

Que es lo que esta pasando  
Cuando a solas estoy contigo?  
Como el aire que respiro  
Vives en mi pensamiento  
Pues tus sensuales movimientos  
Acaparan mi destino



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- <sup>6</sup> Ibid. Pages 499, 500.
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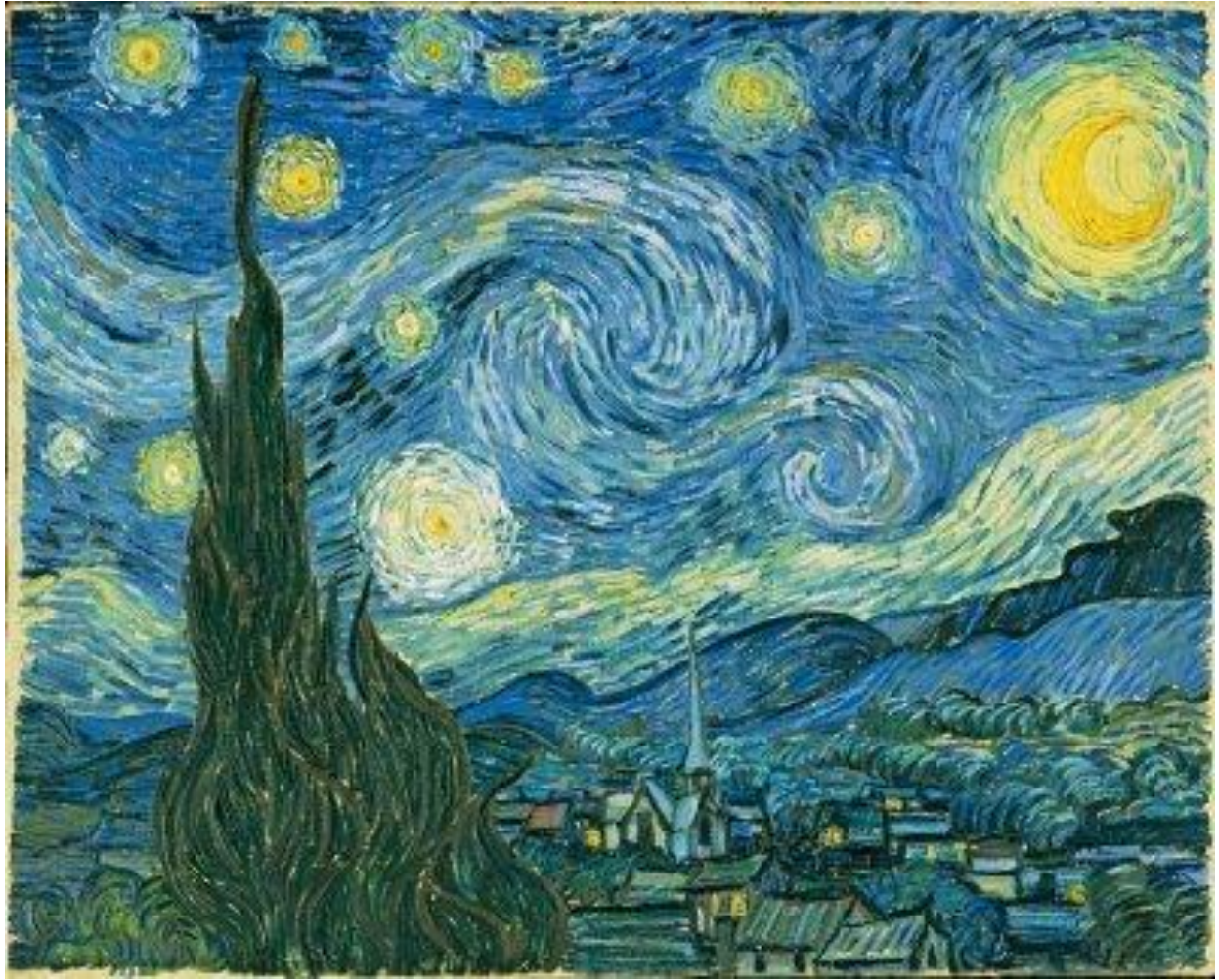
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FIGURES



Costa Del Sur (Fig. 1)  
48" X 60"  
Oil on Canvas



The Starry Night (Fig. 2)  
Vincent Van Gogh  
Van Gogh Image Gallery



French (Fig. 3)  
George Seurat  
Hydecollection.org.



House of Parliament (Fig. 4)  
Claude Monet  
Alunsalt.co



“El Velorio” (Fig. 5)  
Francisco Oller  
<http://www.preb.com/imagen/elvelorio.htm>

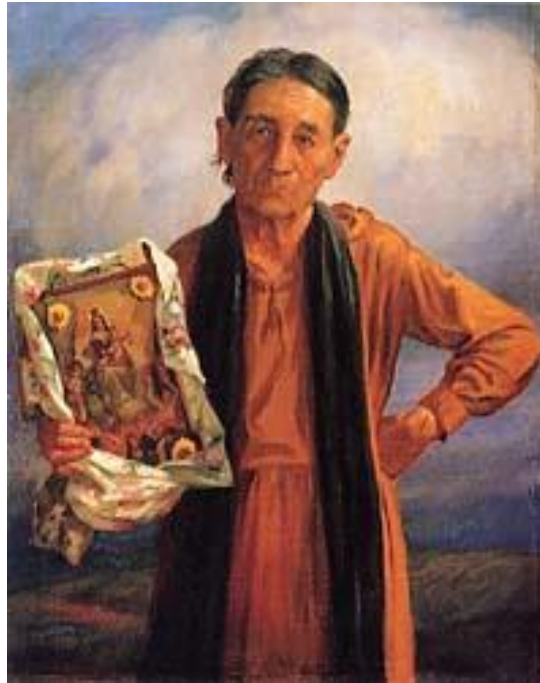


“El Pan Nuestro” (Fig. 6)

Ramón Frade

Courtesy of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, San Juan, Puerto Rico.





“La Promesa” (Fig. 7)  
Miguel Poe  
[puertoricanpainter.com](http://puertoricanpainter.com)



“Los Mirones sin de Palo” (Fig. 8)  
48” X 60”  
Oil on canvas



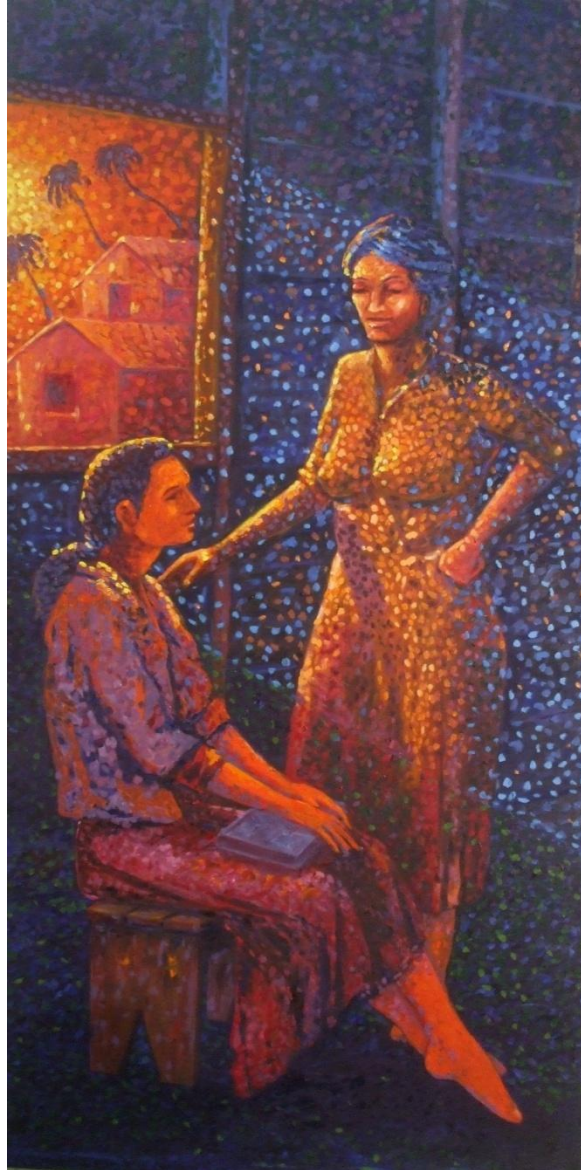
“La Aguadora” (Fig. 9)  
30” X 60”  
Oil on canvas



“Fiesta de Barrio” (Fig. 10)  
30” X 60”  
Oil on canvas



Bomba y Plena (Fig. 11)  
32" X 60"  
Oil on canvas



“El Sermón” (Fig. 12)  
(34” X 72”)  
Oil on Canvas



“La Parranda” (Fig. 13)  
48” X 72”  
Oil on canvas

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ángel Berríos was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico on September 7, 1948. He graduated from Ponce High School, Ponce, Puerto Rico in 1967. In 1971 Ángel Berríos served to the US Army until 1973. In 1977 he obtained a Bachelor Degree in Fine Arts from the Inter American University of Puerto Rico. He is working in his Master of Fine Arts at the University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg, Texas; his degree will be awarded on December 2010. Ángel Berríos, have been living at 4225 Country Colony, Edinburg, Texas 78541 since 2006. He has been an active artist since the decade of the seventies creating original drawings, watercolors and oil paintings. Angel Berríos's last ten years of professional experiences in the art industry include the following; 2010 UTPA, Edinburg, Texas, 2010 San Juan Hotel, Puerto Rico, 2009 Art House, McAllen, Texas, 2008, El Capitolio, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 2007- 2009 Art Walk, McAllen, Texas, 2007 The Loft Gallery, McAllen, Texas, 2006 Convention Center (group exhibit), McAllen, Texas, 2005 Aguadilla Museum (Group exhibit), Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, 2005 San German Museum, San German, Puerto Rico, 2004 Metropolitan Hospital, San Juan, Puerto Rico, and 2000 Las Americas Art Museum, (group exhibit) Miami, Florida. Angel Berríos has been a professional plastic artist since 1969 to present. His art collections are part of the San German Art Museum, San German, Puerto Rico, Jeffrey Williams (founder of Indiano Williams Law Firm) San Juan, Puerto Rico, Rafael Hernandez Colon, San Juan, Puerto Rico (former governor of Puerto Rico), Salvador Vassallo (founder and owner of Vassallo's Industry) Ponce, Puerto Rico, Ronaldo Jarabo, Puerto Rico former Chamber Speaker of Representatives.