

## María Freire

b. 1917, Montevideo, Uruguay - d. 2015, Montevideo, Uruguay



María Freire is one of the Southern Cone's most productive and engaged, if also one of the least-known, artists working in the Constructivist tradition. Freire trained at the *Círculo de Bellas Artes* in Montevideo from 1938 to 1943, studying under José Cuneo and Severino Pose and at the *Universidad del Trabajo* under Antonio Pose. Her first sculptures indicate the profound influence of African art on her work, something of an anomaly for an artist in South America at that time. In the early 1950s, after meeting her future husband, the artist José Pedro Costigliolo, her art became more influenced by European non-figurative art, such as Art Concrete group, Georges Vantongerloo, and Max Bill.

In 1952 she co-founded the *Arte No-Figurativo* group with Costigliolo in Montevideo, and exhibited with them in 1952 and 1953. Freire exhibited regularly in the National Salons from 1953 to 1972. In 1953 Freire and Costigliolo were invited to the 2nd Sao Paulo Biennial, where they came into contact with Brazil's enthusiasm for geometric abstraction. In 1957 Freire and Costigliolo won the "Gallinal" travel grant which they used to live and study in Paris and Amsterdam, and to travel throughout Europe until 1960, meeting many of the historical pioneers of abstract art, including Antoine Pevsner and Georges Vantongerloo. In

1959 they exhibited in Brussels, at the *Galerie Contemporain*. She was invited again to the Sao Paulo Biennial in 1957 and the XXXIII Venice Biennale in 1966.

Freire developed her work within a strict, yet variable formal vocabulary, often switching between periods of greater or lesser degrees of abstraction. Her series *Sudamérica*, worked on from 1958 to 1960, employed cut planes and polygonal forms in a reduced palette. Freire taught drawing in an Architecture Prep School and wrote art criticism for the journal "Acción" from 1962 to 1973. Around 1960, she began to experiment with looser forms of abstraction, and a more expressive range of colors, resulting in her series *Capricorn* and *Cordoba*, 1965-1975, and later on she would create volumetric disturbances by dividing the surface with repeated forms or by creating chromatic modulation sequences in her series *Variantes y Vibrantes*, 1975-1985. In 2000, she began to produce large-scale public sculpture in Uruguay.

### Main Solo Exhibitions

- 2016 *María Freire*, Museo de Bellas Artes Juan Manuel Blanes, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 2006 *Galería de las Misiones*, Punta del Este, Uruguay
- 1998 *Retrospectiva*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1992 Goethe Institute, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1990 *Exposición Retrospectiva*, Galería Bruzzone, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1987 *Cátedra Alicia Goyena*, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1977 *Galería Bruzzone*, Montevideo, Uruguay
- Golf Club*, Punta del Este, Uruguay
- 1976 *Galería Portal*, São Paulo, Brazil
- 1975 *Galería Aramayo*, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1970 *Galería Imagen*, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- Galería Moretti*, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1967 *Galería Lirolay*, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- 1966 *Pan-American Union*, Washington D.C.
- 1959 *Galerie Les Contemporains*, Brussels, Belgium
- 1958 *Ateneo Barcelonés*, Barcelona, Spain
- 1956 *Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo*, Brazil

- Museu de Arte Moderna de Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
 1955 Instituto de Estética. Facultad de Arquitectura, Montevideo, Uruguay  
 1954 Galería Salamanca, Montevideo, Uruguay

### Group Exhibitions

- 2016 *The Illusive Eye*, El Museo del Barrio, New York  
 2010 *Bright Geometry*, Cecilia de Torres, Ltd., New York  
 Sites of Latin American Abstraction, MoLAA, Long Beach, California  
 2008 Sites of Latin American Abstraction, CIFO, Miami, Florida  
 2005 *Homenaje al Centenario del Círculo de Bellas Artes - MNAV*, Montevideo, Uruguay  
 Daros-Latinamerica, Zurich  
*Works on & off paper, Modern and Contemporary*, Cecilia de Torres, Ltd., New York  
 2004 Latin American Art: Contexts and Accomplices, Sainsbury Centre, Norwich, United Kingdom  
 2003 4<sup>th</sup> Bienal do Mercosul – Porte Alegre, Brazil  
 2002 Museo Rufino Tamayo, México City, México  
 2001 *Arte Abstracto del Rio de la Plata*, The Americas Society, New York  
 1998 Museo Extremeño Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo, Badajoz, Spain  
 1997 Latin American Art, First site at the Minorities, Colchester, UK  
*Arte Madí*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid  
 1996 *Selection of Works from the University of Essex Collection of Latin American Art*, Bolivar Hall, London, UK  
 Premio Figari - Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales, Montevideo, Uruguay  
 1995 *90 años en el Arte Nacional*, Círculo de Bellas Artes, Montevideo, Uruguay  
*Propuestas estéticas*, Círculo Miró, Museo del Gaucho y de la Moneda, Montevideo  
 1994 *Constructivism in Latin America*, University Gallery, University of Essex, Colchester, UK  
 Salón de artes plásticas, Salto, Uruguay  
 1994 *Propuestas estéticas*, Círculo Miró, Museo del Gaucho y de la Moneda, Montevideo, Uruguay  
 Salón de Arte Embajada Mujeres de América, cuartel de Dragones, Maldonado, Uruguay  
 1993 *Colección pinturas*, Palacio Legislativo, Montevideo, Uruguay  
 1992 *From Torres-García to Soto*, Art Museum of the Americas, Washington, D.C.  
 1990 *La mujer en el arte*, Cámara del Libro, Montevideo, Uruguay  
 1983 *Pintores uruguayos*, Alianza Francesa, Montevideo, Uruguay  
 1982 *Embajada Mujeres de América*, Palacio Municipal, Montevideo, Uruguay  
 1980 Salón de la mujer, Congreso Latinoamericano Wizo, Montevideo, Uruguay  
 1979 *Pintores uruguayos*, Sala Vieytes, Montevideo, Uruguay  
 1977 *Pintores geométricos*, Instituto Anglo Uruguayo, Uruguay  
*12 artistas contemporáneos*, Club de Golf, Montevideo, Uruguay  
 1972 Salones Nacionales y Municipales de Arte Plásticas, Uruguay  
 1971 Pintores uruguayos, Museo Dámaso Arce Olavarría, Argentina  
 1970 Primer Bienal de Pintura de Uruguay, Punta del Este, Uruguay  
 1966 XXXIII Biennale de Venezia, Venice, Italy

- 1964 Primer Salón de Pintura General Electric, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1962 *Forma & Espacio*, Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile
- 1961 *De Blanes a nuestros días*, Punta del Este, Uruguay  
*Pintores sudamericanos*, Galería Sudamericana, New York
- 1957 Bienal de Sao Paulo, Brazil
- 1956 *Seis pintores modernos*, Facultas de Humanidades, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1955 *19 artistas de hoy*, Subte Municipal, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1954 *Retrospectiva Pintura Uruguaya*, Homenaje a UNESCO, Museo Blanes, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1953 Bienal de Sao Paulo, Brazil
- 1953 Salones Nacionales y Municipales de Arte Plásticas, Uruguay

**Education and Professional Activities**

- 1938/43 Sculpture and Painting, Círculo de Bellas Artes, Universidad del Trabajo, Uruguay
- 1950/66 Teaching, History and Artistic culture, Architectural Training
- 1952 Co-Founder: Arte No-Figurativo
- 1957/60 Gallinal Grant, study trip to Europe
- 1958 Paris, Louvre School, art courses
- 1962/73 Art criticism for the newspaper *Acción*
- 1966 Study trip to Europe
- 1978 Municipal government selects Freire and José Pedro Costigliolo to design the beachfront pavements in Montevideo and Punta del Este, Uruguay