

HUTCHINSON MODERN & CONTEMPORARY

ESTEBAN LISA

Esteban Lisa (born 1895, Hinojosa de San Vicente, Toledo, Spain – died Buenos Aires, Argentina 1983).

At the age of fifteen, Esteban Lisa left his parents in Toledo, Spain to live with an aunt and uncle who ran a tavern in Buenos Aires. Lisa worked at the tavern for ten years before joining the Argentine Postal Service. In his spare time, he studied at the Escuela Nacional de Artes (The National School of Arts) in Buenos Aires, from which he graduated as a Professor of Drawing and Painting in 1925. Lisa then began offering painting and drawing classes in his own home. Between the late 1920s and early 1930s, he taught art classes at the Escuela de Adultos (School of Adults) in Buenos Aires. Lisa retired from both the Postal Service and the Escuela de Adultos at the age of sixty, and founded his own art school in Buenos Aires, the Escuela de Arte Moderno “Las Cuatro Dimensiones” (“The Four Dimensions” School of Modern Art) in 1955.

While working in civil service and education, Lisa established a significant artistic career. He painted from the 1930s through the late 1970s, yet he avoided public recognition and was nearly absent from the Buenos Aires art scene. Lisa never exhibited in public; however, he interacted avidly with writers and fellow artists. He was mostly drawn to the art of Paul Klee, Joan Miró, and Pablo Picasso, and also to theories pertaining to the cosmos and the occult.

Scholars have partitioned Lisa’s *oeuvre* into distinct phases. His early works contain muted, earthy tones that flirt with figuration through organic compositions suggesting flowers or even landscapes. By 1940, however, his palette becomes richer and livelier, and his works lean more towards abstraction. While the artist’s earlier compositions do include orthogonal lines and geometric elements, his later work incorporates more animated renditions of linear forms and dashes, as well as variances on spherical shapes such as spirals, dots, and circles. Some of Lisa’s best-known series are his: *Composiciones (Compositions)* which he began circa 1935; *Actos espaciales (Spatial Acts)*, created between 1954 and 1957; and *Juegos con líneas y colores (Playing with Lines and Colors)*, created between 1951 and the 1970s.

While Lisa worked across various media—creating collages, pencil drawings, and pastels—the majority of his works are rendered in oil on cardboard or paper, in a small format. As a result, these paintings are both intimate and highly expressive. They demonstrate a deep engagement with line and color, often hovering in the in-between space of figuration and abstraction. In 1977, Lisa abandoned painting and continued teaching it only to close family and friends.

Beyond his significant contributions to the visual arts, Lisa was also an avid writer. He authored more than twelve books, many of which were dedicated to his interest in “cosmovision,” a theory the artist derived based upon Einsteinian-Kantian principles concerned with space-time communication.

Lisa’s work can be found in a number of private and public collections including: the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires; Jack S. Blanton Museum, Austin; Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA), Long Beach, CA; Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation (CIFO), Miami; Fundación Ortega y Gasset, Madrid; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Fundación Juan March, Madrid; and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, amongst others.