

LEO TAVELLA, My teacher – Influence on my work

Vilma Villaverde (Argentina)

Alicia Romero and Marcelo Gimenez on occasion of writing the prologue to my book “Leo Tavella
Laborador del Arte”, comment:

“Some time ago...

Interchanging our memories rose powerfully “La Ventana” (The Window) of Vilma Villaverde, a mixture between the “found object” that gives the title to the work and the ceramic bust of a nun, whose serenity views farther than its protecting reclusion. So that, working another good mixture, “Figura y Armario” (Figure and Wardrobe) of Leo Tavella; it is an unfortunate familiar scene, the bringing together of the furniture and the modeling reveals the truth that proposes the double intent. Both sculptures have “similarities”; to feel and figure the bond between subject -object; to formalize as a simultaneous procedure chance and determination. Later we learnt that the connection between the authors was also true in real life. Friendship in art.



“The Window” -1990-85x85x60 Cm.



“Figure and Wardrobe” -1978-200x120x80Cm.

Before...

“The personal experience of watching them teaching together in one of the several workshops of ceramic sculpture that they have given together; the carefulness, delicacy, humor, solvency and respect, and so the conviction of sharing a special love to teach. Fundamentally, the grateful feeling to Leo Tavella for having been witness to his action in defense of the expressive plurality

in life and in art; the liberties in an unrenounceable human condition, as the emotion as an essential impulse to truth”

Perhaps these words of Alicia and Marcelo, theorists that support the “work” of the ceramists of the region, showed me a reality that I had not perceived till today.

Many coincidences exist between my work and that of my teacher Leo Tavella. Coincidence that is intrinsically, conceptual, not only of its image.

The found object joined to modeling...

It rises in a precise moment of my work. We were dictating a course in Colombia when they offered to make an exhibition which we had to prepare in between classes. I felt quite lost and Leo suggested that I make the modeling with a found object... the generosity of the teacher... that is what he did, and he was offering it to me... in so simple a way that I did not notice that my work would grow in another direction, with a new perspective, that if it wasn't for that circumstantial chance I might not have discovered it.

Circumstance, chance, opportunity, coincidence... influence.

It is good to be able to recognize them without feeling ashamed... on the contrary, to understand that the great teacher is followed by the generation of disciples who admire him and to feel included in the stage of permanent of veneration that is a comfort.

The influence of Tavella in argentine ceramics is notorious, his growth as a painter and as a sculptor marked a track in all of us, the generation of pupils that had the opportunity to share his time.

Creator, acknowledged by his colleagues, he left a marked influence in ceramics; nothing was the same after this enlightened teacher, who recognizes that it was never his intention that others repeat what he was doing, but in spite of that he was and is the example that guides us, not only by his work, but also for the human being that transcends the artist and rules him from another place.

Leo loves ceramics and comments: “It's a direct material, the same as stone or wood”. It's a marvelous reflection.

Only from humility, ethics, and a profound and honest speech are conditions of Tavella that produce admiration to those who surround him. His sensibility helps to interpret the singularities of art. In his workshop everything is easy... everything is possible... free...

Investigator, curious, always trying something different, he tried a great variety of techniques, sometimes in drawing, with rags, ceramic, stone, wood, wire, damp papers and painting, to which we may add now works made on a tinted pad.

In this also he is a creator. As today he has great visual difficulty and his work is obstructed for this motive, he feels that if he wants to draw the linea he would wish, so that in his continuous exercise of genius, he now decided to draw on the back of the paper placed on a tinted pad. As the size of the commercial pads is small, you can see scattered around the workshop different samples in a greater size, superposed to conform “pads” of a large size where he is beginning to make these drawings that have a personal characteristics, as he remembers that many years ago, in the eighties, when he stayed for hours in front of the desk of the then director of the school of Oberá, professor Musso, in Misiones, he began to draw on the pad for stamps, obtaining interesting and different things. I believe he never imagined that that brief entertainment would help today to optimize the kind of drawings he makes.

I always emphasized the fact that Leo Tavella was a creator. It is quite common for an artist at certain moments of their career decide to look back in the history of art to continue working, and in this way become productions as “Homage to Henry Moore”, Matisse, Picasso, etc... works that reflect a pure inspiration from the works of a consecrated artist.

Everything is valid when working, I don't deny it, but I can emphasize the judgment used by

Leo Tavella who feeds back on his own work, taking drawings and works from his early beginning, around the 50s, to make them again with other techniques, of the many he practices.

Periods:

Between 1938 till 1942 he does painting and sculpture in San Francisco - Córdoba.

He begins with ceramics in the 50s in Buenos Aires.

His first ceramics had reminiscence of his sculpture made in plaster, where the texture was important.

He mixed different materials with the clay, chamote and sawdust and other elements that helped to bring out the texture.

His work continues in this way for years and there are outstanding works such as: Madonna I and Madonna II and the sculptural group that he sends a donation to the Museum "Ruffinengo" in Gálvez.



"Madonna with Child II"
-1957 100x35x25 Cm.



"Madonna with Child I"
-1952 120x50x45 Cm.



"Piety"
-1954 80x70x50 Cm.

Already in the 60's he comments: "When I entered the Annual Saloon I realized that almost all the works that were exposed could have been done in cement... and you hardly would guess the difference"

It was then that he decided to make a change in his work and to deepen his knowledge in the use of glazes, a change which would allow him to feel that he was working "with ceramics". There begin the smooth, very polished works, with brilliant glazes, and amid all the colors stands out the white faintly colored with pigments, which later was called the "Tavellas's white".

This stage of the work of Leo Tavella is remembered by everyone, as these works were very successful, here as well as abroad by mediation of the Argentine Centre of Ceramic Art. This period continues till the 70s.

Due to the military repression in those years, Tavella is influenced and begins to work in a more "realistic" way. He makes the work called "El Torturado" (the tortured). Textures return, and

the final result had nothing to do with the polished figures introduced in tubes, works which made him one of the Argentine ceramists acknowledged in international and also national surroundings, to the point that today he has practically no works of that period, perhaps because he always “sold cheap” as he says.

It didn't happen in the same way with the works he made in the 80s, which belong to the collection that remains in the garden of his house.

Together with his sculptural work in ceramics, he creates sculptures in other materials, such as stone, marble or wood, some experience in foundry of lead and aluminum and sculptures made totally in wood, in many cases, painted. He also has painting done on wood, and most of all “los trapos” (rags) which he always made and still continues, adding to it the new technique of drawing on a small pad.

Tavella says:

“It is difficult for me to talk in a philosophical sense of my works, as I think little and work a lot. I feel a constant impulse to do sculpture. This task is what I have most valued in my whole life. According to Rodin, what is nearest happiness is to work in what one loves best. As I always did what I liked, I came very near happiness. I hope that what I do is really valuable, since nature gave me this possibility”

Leo Tavella's Works



“Figure in Trident”
-1974 200x50x35 Cm.



“Figure in the Table”
-1976 140x80x60 Cm

Vilma Villaverde's Works



"Maternity" -2005 160x80x40 Cm.



"Figures" -2011-160x150x150 Cm.



"Innocence" - 2007 - 160x120x60 Cm.