



Meet Melecio Galván: Master Mexican Draftsman

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Edited by
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This catalogue accompanies the Blanton exhibition
*Meet Melecio Galván: The Secret Artist & His Mexican
Contemporaries* (March 23, 2024–August 5, 2024).

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BLANTON EDITIONS



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Director's Foreword

Simone J. Wicha

Director, Blanton Museum of Art

One of the Blanton's core values is to advance scholarship and to expand understandings of the diverse artists and art histories represented in our expansive collection. Our ground-breaking exhibition, *Meet Melecio Galván: The Secret Artist & His Mexican Contemporaries*, aptly reflects this commitment. This accompanying catalogue provides an important, in-depth introduction to this exceptional, yet underrecognized artist. Expertly researched by the Blanton's Curator of Latin American art, Vanessa K. Davidson, this first museum exhibition dedicated to Galván's work in the United States is long overdue.

The Blanton has an illustrious history of producing foundational scholarship that has reverberating effects in the field of Latin American art. The museum has long been a pioneer in spotlighting critical yet little-known artists and artistic movements. This began with our landmark 1974 exhibition *Joaquín Torres-García 1949–1974*. This first in-depth American museum show dedicated to this Uruguayan artist, was a pivotal project that helped to spur his belated recognition as a master of Modernism. In recent years, we have similarly featured such artists as Venezuelan Javier Téllez and Brazilian Clarissa Tossin, as well as Colombian Oscar Muñoz's first U.S. retrospective, striving to foster greater international renown of their innovative work. *Meet Melecio Galván* continues this tradition.

The Spanish version of this catalogue is only the fourth book published on Galván in that language; this edition is the very first published in English. Both break new ground, providing rare insights into the artist's life and work. In this book, leading Mexican scholar Dr. Maricela González Cruz Manjarrez provides art historical analysis, focusing on artworks in the Blanton's collection. Paper

Conservator Rachel Mochon contributes technical studies of Galván's methods and materials, based on close examination of the same Blanton drawings. These texts are complemented by powerful, first-hand accounts provided by Amaranta Galván Jiménez, Galván's only daughter. Taken together, these perspectives, histories, analyses, and insights help sketch a more complete picture of the artist's practice, his innovative techniques, and the arc of his life as he honed his craft. This book's digital format enables it to be shared far and wide, introducing this artist to many others around the world.

Many of the works illustrated here have never before been reproduced or exhibited. Drawn entirely from the Blanton's holdings, they demonstrate the importance of collecting the depth of an artist's body of work, as we are here able to present a great range of Galván's drawings from the late 1960s and early 1970s, a turning point in his practice. In the exhibition, these drawings are paired with masterworks by his Mexican contemporaries—visually reinserting Galván into his rightful place in the history of Neo-Figuration in Mexico. This art history is being re-written in this very book. Such new perspectives are vital for other scholars' ongoing research into Galván's body of work, which we hope our project will spur and inspire.

I am incredibly grateful to Amaranta Galván Jiménez for her collaboration on this project, which allows us all to “meet” Galván. We are also indebted to the collectors whose visionary foresight in donating these works made this project possible: Former English Professor at The University of Texas at Austin Thomas Cranfill, who gifted the Blanton its first Galván; Mr. John Guion; and Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey B. and June Gold, whose gift has now made the Blanton the largest institutional repository of Galván's work anywhere.

The new scholarship highlighted in this exhibition and on these pages illustrates the Blanton's dedication to elevating the field of Latin American art through original research and prescient collecting. We strive to explore yet uncharted territories and to build scaffolding for critical dialogue that fosters the emergence of new voices and new investigations, often engaging collaboratively in the re-writing of art history. This is a vision we will continue to fulfill in the works we acquire, display, study, and teach from. Today, you will meet Melecio Galván, and in the future, the Blanton will remain a museum where students, visitors, and scholars alike can always discover new and unexpected worlds.

Kinship

In this gallery, we explore the relationship between the artist and the viewer. The artist's work is often a reflection of their own life and experiences, and the viewer's interpretation is a reflection of their own life and experiences. The artist's work is often a reflection of their own life and experiences, and the viewer's interpretation is a reflection of their own life and experiences.

Family

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Informational text panel on the left wall.



Informational text panel on the right wall.



Introduction: The Artist Returns to Austin

Vanessa K. Davidson

Curator of Latin American Art, Blanton Museum of Art



Despite his tremendous talent, Mexican draftsman Melecio Galván (San Rafael, Mexico, 1945–Chalco, Mexico, 1982) was little known during his lifetime (Figure 1). As a socio-politically committed artist, he was wary of both the commercial gallery circuit and art institutions controlled by the state. He grew up in a working-class family in San Rafael, a town 60 kilometers from Mexico City, and died young at the age of 37, just when he was reaching the apogee of his mature style.¹ After Galván's premature death, renowned art historian Ida Rodríguez Prampolini addressed his reluctance at self-promotion. "The easy path for an artist like Melecio," she wrote in *Unomásuno*, "would have been to exploit his singularity, just as innumerable contemporary artists have done. But Melecio [...] practically withdraws from the world, and leaves us an exceptional body of work which, had he promoted it, would have revealed him for what he was: the most important draftsman in the country."² The following year, Galván's short yet exceptional career was featured in a comprehensive retrospective at Mexico City's Palacio de Bellas Artes: *Melecio Galván, A Retrospective View, 1965-1982*. This, the first major museum exhibition of his life's work, at once surprised even the city's most learned visitors and was met universally with great acclaim.

Melecio Galván's early years are insightfully elucidated in this volume in an interview with his only child, his beloved Amaranta Galván Jiménez, who now serves as the steward and curator of his collection and archives. As for his formal training, Galván studied intermittently at the National School of Fine Arts (heir of the centuries-old Academy of San Carlos Academia de San Carlos), at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) in Mexico City between 1965 and 1968 (Figure 2). He also participated in the school's less structured Experimental Workshop, but was otherwise

(Facing Page) Figure 1: Melecio Galván, *Man*, circa 1967–72, ink on paper, 10 1/4 × 14 1/2 in. (26 × 36.8 cm). Gift of Jeffrey B. Gold, 2020.88.

Galván's preferred medium was black and sepia ink on paper, and he created a prodigious output of drawings, focusing primarily on the human figure in seemingly infinite permutations. His studies of human anatomy ranged from reinterpretations of classical drawings to incursions into the grotesque. He depicted figures in acrobatic postures that test the limits of human physiology, and experimented with uncanny elements coexisting with the mundane, the latter typical of Magic Realism. He created sheet upon sheet of seemingly unremarkable characters, who he turned remarkable by the depth he imbued in their gazes, the subtlety he instilled in their body language, and the nuances he lent to their facial expressions. Sometimes he showed them in solitude, but often he united them in intimate relationships or divided them with gestures of enmity.

In the late-1970s and early-1980s, Galván increasingly produced images referencing socio-political conditions in Mexico. He personally witnessed the 1968 Tlateloco Massacre, and his political radicalization escalated when he became part of the *Grupo Mira* (1977–82), a militant cadre of artists dedicated to plying their art toward political ideals, which prompted his best-known series, the 1980 *Militarismo y represión* [*Militarism and Repression*]. Yet, in sum, in all of his diverse works, Galván explored the complex and intricate depths of human emotion, expression, and relationships—and the capacity of the pen in his hand to capture them within a single image.

At the Blanton, Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey B. and June Gold's 2020–2023 gift of 40 Galván drawings and one off-set lithograph has now joined six works donated between 1969 and 1983 by The University of Texas at Austin English Professor Thomas Cranfill, and one drawing donated by Mr. John



Figure 2: Melecio Galván, 1968; photographer unknown. Courtesy of Amaranta Galván Jiménez from the Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico.

Guion as a 1982 bequest. The Blanton Museum of Art thus now counts 48 of the artist's diverse works in its holdings, more than any other institution in the United States or in Mexico. These artworks are the subject of this focused exhibition—the first ever dedicated to Galván at a U.S. museum.

Galván's mastery of his medium is remarkable. The exhibition explores his drawings in all their formulations—from swift preparatory sketches to detailed representations—all signed by the artist as finished works. As evidenced by the checklist in the present volume, the disparate themes included here range from tender scenes of mother and child, to dynamic confrontations between figures, to trios of violinists playing silently together. Regardless of theme, the artist's execution in ink on paper is consummately accomplished. His drawings are as detailed and intricate as they are beautiful to behold. He commands the ink in scratchy, repeated, rhythmic lines that energize his figures, using the pen's nib to create surfaces that are nearly three-dimensional.

Galván's accomplished execution and technical inventions set him apart from such Mexican peers as Arnold Belkin, Rafael Coronel, Elvira Gascón, Carmen Parra, and Rufino Tamayo, among others, whose works from our permanent collection are interspersed in this exhibition to anchor Galván's practice in time and place. Also featured are several comparative works by José Luis Cuevas, who was a significant, more established figure for the younger artist to study as a counterpoint to his own work, as addressed in this catalogue by Dr. Maricela González Cruz Manjarrez, the foremost scholar to investigate Galván's practice.

In tandem with Galván's first U.S. museum exhibition, this catalogue, with identical versions in English and Spanish, is also the first book to be

published on the artist in English. Dr. González Cruz Manjarrez’s comprehensive 2014 publication *Melecio Galván y su espacio significativo: Las líneas de la memoria, 1968-1982* constitutes the first and only book to examine the artist’s production within its Mexican artistic, political, and cultural context. In this present volume, she trains her analysis on the drawings in the Blanton’s collection, which she encountered for the first time while undertaking this project. Discussing many of them stylistically in terms of *Interiorismo*, a style pertaining to the larger esthetic umbrella of Neo-Figuration in Mexico, she also addresses some works’ proximity to Renaissance imagery and others’ Magic Realist leanings, anchoring all these artworks within the evolution of the artist’s praxis at the time they were created.

Similarly, Ms. Mochon, a paper conservator at UT Austin’s Harry Ransom Center, also spotlights the Blanton artworks in her contribution to this catalogue. She has undertaken dual participation in this project: both technical and analytical. In 2022, she treated and ameliorated the condition of 10 vulnerable Galván drawings as part of the university’s Campus Conservation Initiative. She also examined each of the 48 works in the Blanton’s collection in minute detail. Ms. Mochon here presents a profound analysis of how the traces and furrows Galván left upon the page become clues to deciphering the secrets of the artist’s elusive methods and materials. Taken together, these two complementary texts present an in-depth examination of the context and creative process behind the Blanton’s drawings, which Galván produced between 1967 and 1976. Dr. González Cruz Manjarrez’s and Ms. Mochon’s parallel art historical and technical perspectives spotlight a crucial moment: a period of great experimentation, when the artist was approximating his mature style,



despite only being in his mid-20s. Gifted at drawing since childhood, he was a precocious, virtuosic artist, albeit quietly.

Figures 3 and 4:
Melecio Galván,
Untitled, 1970, ink on
paper, 23 × 15 3/4 in.
(58.4 × 40 cm). Gift
of Jeffrey B. Gold,
2021.79.a-b.

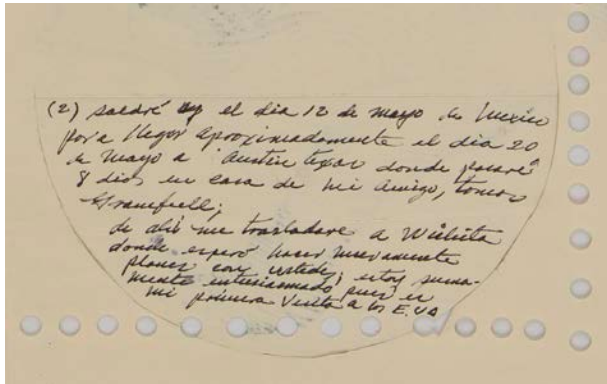
One of the most fascinating artworks, which merits a closer look, is a brilliant work donated by the Golds that reveals how the artist’s drawings have come full circle upon their return to Austin, now that they are housed at the Blanton (Figures 3 and 4). Galván’s 1970 *Untitled* is a vivid representation of two dynamic figures engaged in an exuberant dance, with a letter penned on the reverse side of the sheet: it constitutes a prescient example of Mexican Mail Art. The figures’ abdomens, heads, and extremities are neatly sliced into the evenly spaced, circular cuts comprising the text on the verso, which can be folded to the front to become part of the composition.³



Figure 5: *The Wichita Eagle*, June 4, 1970; newspaper clipping courtesy of Amaranta Galván Jiménez from the Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico.

Dated April 26, 1970, in this letter, Galván informs Louis Philippe Goldman and his wife Sondra Gresen, proprietors of Gallery G in Wichita, Kansas, of his plans for his first trip to the United States for his June 1970 exhibition there, which made headlines in *The Wichita Eagle* newspaper: “Classical Mexican Artist Visits Wichita on Tour” (Figure 5).⁴ Galván indicates that he will bring “between 30 to 40 recent works” for the exhibition; his hope is also to “make and leave a considerable amount [of work] at the Gallery.” This last line may help to explain why the majority of the Blanton’s drawings date from 1968 to 1970; many are precisely dated by day and month in the summer of 1970,⁵ created while the artist was exploring the U.S., and ostensibly left in the Goldmans’ hands upon his departure.⁶

In addition, Galván here informs his gallerists that, on his way to Wichita, he will first “spend eight days in Austin, Texas, in the house of my friend, Tomás Cranfill” (Figure 6). Professor Thomas Cranfill may have met Galván while teaching as a Fulbright Lecturer in American Literature from 1967 to 1968 at the UNAM, where the artist was simultaneously studying. Or, since Cranfill was both a scholar and an astute art collector with friends in the Mexican art world, perhaps the two met through common circles of artist friends.⁷ Regardless, it seems that they forged a fast friendship in Mexico. It is indeed remarkable that the clues to this elusive, “secret” artist’s presence here in Austin in 1970—when the Blanton was called the University Art Museum—should be found hidden within Galván’s messy handwriting, nearly overshadowed by the outstanding drawing on its reverse side. This connection suggests that the six artworks Professor Cranfill donated to the Blanton were most likely gifts from his friend, Melecio (Figure 7).



And thus, with these recent acquisitions and this celebratory exhibition, Melecio returns to Austin. It is our hope that this book contributes to new scholarship, as much in terms of stylistic analysis and contextual connections as in process and technique gleaned from marks upon the page. Insights may be derived from these expert texts, as well as from Amaranta Galván's recollections and extensive knowledge, and applied to works by Galván in other collections. Our aim is to expand understandings about the diverse threads—thematic, technical, biographical—that tie the artist's multifaceted works together into a rich tapestry. The reputation of this master draftsman should shift in the art historical record: from being considered a "secret" artist to earning overdue renown, as his quiet virtuosity merits far wider recognition. From San Rafael to Mexico City, to this previously undiscovered Austin sojourn—a city to which he has now returned, this time, to stay—Melecio Galván may only have wielded a pen, but he most assuredly made his mark.

Figure 6: Melecio Galván, *Untitled*, detail, 1976, ink on paper, 23 × 15 3/4 in. (58.4 × 40 cm). Gift of Jeffrey B. Gold, 2021.79.a-b.

Figure 7: Melecio, Antonio, y Juan Galván, circa 1968, unknown photographer. Courtesy of Amaranta Galván Jiménez from the Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico.

Endnotes

1 In 1982, Melecio Galván was murdered under suspicious circumstances, for reasons that remain unexplained, in the town of Chalco, near San Rafael, Mexico.

2 Ida Rodríguez Prampolini, "A la memoria de un gran artista," *Suplemento Cultural Sábado*, *Unomásuno*, September 4, 1982, p. 15.

3 At the Blanton, this work has been exhibited in a two-sided frame, so both recto and verso can be seen.

4 "Classical Mexican Artist Visits Wichita on Tour," *The Wichita Eagle*, June 4, 1970; copy of a newspaper clipping shared by Amaranta Galván Jiménez from the Melecio Galván Collection and Archive.

5 At the time of this writing, exact provenance remains a mystery yet to unravel. Mr. Gold acquired the 41 Galván works donated to the Blanton (as well as others that he retained) at a 2019 estate sale on Invaluable.com. The lot's executors, "Curated Estates," would only reveal that the estate from which the artworks came was located in Lambertville, New Jersey. This is where the trail of provenance hits a dead end, with no clues as to why the Galván's personal letter to the Goldmans might have turned up in New Jersey, amongst other of his neglected artworks. The artist's letter would appear to indicate that many were presumably created in the United States and left for his gallerists to sell, although it remains

a mystery how this sheaf of small masterworks remained intact. It is notable that Mr. Goldman passed away in 2019 in Yardley, Pennsylvania, only 11.5 miles away from Lambertville; however, no transfer of ownership can be definitively established from Mr. Goldman's heirs to Curated Estates. Further research is required to trace these drawings from Galván's hand, through their ostensible path to Louis Goldman at Gallery G, to parts unknown, to their final home at the Blanton Museum of Art. Dr. Florencia Bazzano, the Blanton's Assistant Curator of Latin American Art, helped enormously to identify the precise dates of the drawings in our collection, and also in attempting to trace their provenance.

6 For information on Galván's United States sojourn, Cf. Maricela González Cruz Manjarrez, *Melecio Galván y su espacio significativo: Las líneas de la memoria, 1968-1982* (Mexico City: Bonilla Artigas Editores, 2014) pp. 67-72 and pp. 86-94. Also see Arnulfo Aquino Casas's more personalized accounts, in Aquino Casas, *Melecio Galván: La ternura, la violencia* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2010).

7 Professor Cranfill was not only a scholar, writer, and professor, but also an art collector who donated a great number of Latin American artworks to the Blanton over time. His familiarity with contemporaneous Mexican artists was evidenced by the selection of photography, writing, and artwork included in his 1959 book *The Muse in Mexico: A Mid-Century Miscellany* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1959).

Galván's lengthy eight-day stay at Professor Cranfill's home in Austin suggests they had developed a meaningful friendship.

[illegible]

The Depths of the Line: Melecio Galván in the Collection of the Blanton Museum of Art

Maricela González Cruz
Manjarrez

1. Paths and Shortcuts in Melecio Galván's Artwork

The Latin American art collection of the Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas in Austin is internationally known for the variety of its artists and for the quality of the artwork it houses. This collection now includes 47 drawings and one offset lithograph by Melecio Galván, created from 1967 to 1976; they are executed on paper and of variable formats.¹ These drawings span nine of the 17 years of his artistic production, which was carried out from 1965 to 1982; that is to say, they add up to a little more than half his career (Figure 1).

“Not promoting my father’s work is like murdering him all over again.”²

This was Amaranta Galván Jiménez’s compelling answer to the question of what it means to her to protect and disseminate Melecio Galván’s valuable legacy.³ I am grateful for the information she provided me, in which she confirms that her collection contains 1,176 pieces (taking into account his drawings, as well as his sketches and notes).⁴ There are also works outside of this repository, and outside of Mexico. The institution with the largest amount of the artist’s material is precisely the Blanton Museum of Art, with its 47 drawings and offset lithograph that are the subject of this exhibition. The National Center for Conservation and Registry of Movable Artistic Heritage (CENCROPAM), part of Mexico’s National Institute of Fine Arts and Literature (INBAL), preserves 45 of the artist’s works.

Another important cultural space with Melecio Galván’s drawings is the University Museum of Contemporary Art (MUAC), of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), which



Figure 1: Melecio Galván, photographed by Hans Beachman, 1969. Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico.



Figure 2: Melecio Galván, *Untitled (Two Horsemen)*, 1968, pen and ink on paper, 11 13/16 × 21 1/2 in. (30 × 54.6 cm). Gift of John Guion, 1982.726.

houses 28 drawings and notes (on loan from the Galván Archive) from the seminal series *Militarismo y represión*. Various institutions and individuals own his work (approximately some 70 pieces) through acquisitions, exchanges, gifts, or donations made by Amaranta Galván to art researchers and specialists. Twenty-two remain in the former home of the artist's parents. Several others were gifted by Melecio Galván. It is therefore difficult to track this last piece of information. Nevertheless, Amaranta has discovered six people who received drawings or illustrations directly from the artist. Some pieces were surely lost, since, despite the fact that Melecio Galván's production was abundant, his interest in preserving his creations was secondary to his overriding need to draw. In addition to this challenge, we believe that some drawings may also have remained in some of the spaces where he worked as an illustrator.

For this article, and with the purpose of simplifying things, Melecio Galván's artistic career has been divided into two broad phases by means of



Figure 3: Melecio Galván, *Madona*, 1968, ink on paper, 19 3/4 × 26 in. (50.2 × 66 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2023.57.

Figure 4: Melecio Galván, *Untitled*, circa 1970, ink on paper, 15 1/2 × 15 1/2 in. (39.4 × 39.4 cm). Gift of Jeffrey B. Gold, 2020.87.

chronological criteria;⁵ the first phase: from 1965 to 1976 (in which the drawings at the Blanton Museum of Art are included) and the second phase: from 1977 to 1982, the year he passed away.⁶

Galván's drawings in the Blanton collection⁷ are heterogeneous, given that, in this phase, the artist shows a greater flexibility in his search for the possibilities of drawing. In general terms, a proximity to Interiorism prevails, a variant of Neo-Figuration in Mexico. On the other hand, some works from this first period of production also manifest deliberate evocations of Renaissance artists, in which the sharpness of the line prevails, clearly defining the limits of representation. In other cases, the artist also recalls the Baroque, with rhythms and movements, established through the succession of multiple lines as well as the scale of lights and shadows. In such works, he highlights the pen's hatching, which accentuates his own gestural language, as do the complementary, whimsical shapes that accompany the figures. Additionally, he also connects these classical and Baroque explorations, even including (to a lesser extent) Magic Realism, when he displays all these modes together



in a single drawing. These influences can be seen in Figures 2–7, among others. However, as is usual in this phase, Neo-Figuration remains the conceptual orientation that forms the foundations of his works.

Subsequently, from 1977 to 1982, he created other types of proposals. Presenting a much more eclectic style, he openly incorporates forms of communication drawn from contemporary visual culture into his drawings, while remaining connected to the counterculture's leftist stance. His social concerns are clear in several of his drawings and illustrations. On other occasions, this social preoccupation takes on a veiled form, despite the fact that his critical, alternative perspective almost always acted as a foundation for his production. In this period of the late 1970s and early 1980s, he incorporates resources from graphic design, illustration, posters, advertising, and comic strips. Likewise, he questions the dominant artistic circuits and current formal artistic trends, as opposed to

Figure 5: Melecio Galván, *Doctors During Delivery*, 1970, ink on paper, 17 1/8 × 20 3/4 in. (43.5 × 52.7 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2, 2020.81.

Figure 6: Melecio Galván, *The Helena by Toulouse Lautrec*, circa 1970, lithograph, 26 × 20 in. (66 × 50.8 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2023.48.

(Facing Page) Figure 7: Melecio Galván, *Figures*, 1970, ink on paper, 24 1/4 × 18 1/2 in. (61.6 × 47 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2, 2021.82.



the early years of his career, when he even took part in the aforementioned circuits and trends (Figure 8).

Although Melecio Galván grew up in a rural environment (which he always appreciated),⁸ during the periods in which he lived in Mexico City and in the United States, he managed to interact and fit in with other cultural modalities and with urban living. In Mexico City, he irregularly attended (from 1965 to 1968) the National School of Visual Arts (formerly known as the Academy of San Carlos), of UNAM, and while he was there he participated in the Group 65⁹ and the Free Workshop or Experimental Workshop. Although his stay in San Carlos was brief, it turned out to be a convenient space to establish deep friendships, broaden his cultural perspective, and to affirm his knowledge or his artistic inclinations. In addition, it also enabled him to socialize with artists, coexist with diverse artistic movements, and redefine technical proposals in the media of drawing.

Another important aspect is that in this school, groups of students and teachers carried out various individual and collective actions, such as exhibitions, workshops, and trips. Among these activities, the self-advocating, critical, and anti-establishment actions undertaken in support of the 1968 student movement were especially important (Figure 9).

In the first phase of his career, Galván held solo exhibitions on two occasions (in 1968 and 1969) at Antonio Souza's influential Gallery of the Contemporaries, located in the Zona Rosa, a fashionable place among intellectuals.¹⁰ In this gallery, well-established artists were presented and, at the same time, new artists were promoted. In 1970, Melecio Galván presented his artwork in several contrasting exhibitions. In January and February,



Figure 8: Melecio Galván next to his father Francisco Galván Ortiz in the Paso de Cortés, State of Mexico, unknown photographer, circa 1970. Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico.



Figure 9: Melecio Galván next to a sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico City, unknown photographer, 1966. Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico.

some of his black ink and sepia drawings are exhibited at the former Gallery G in Wichita, Kansas, which were very well received by the local press and public. And in April, he exhibited drawings in his hometown, San Rafael, in the State of Mexico, as part of the 35th anniversary festivities for the founding of the Paper Mill Industry Workers' Union.¹¹ Understandably, in that location the artistic parameters were extremely traditional and his work was poorly understood. That year, he also returned to the United States to exhibit his works at the aforementioned Gallery G in Wichita, Kansas and in Wisconsin at the Laporte Gallery¹² in Racine County, and he participated in a group exhibition paying homage to Antonio Souza at the UNAM's Casa del Lago (Lake House). This was a place of openness, where cultural and artistic activities were promoted by encouraging experimentation, workshops, new techniques, the interrelationship between music, dance, visual arts, photography, and theater. This exhibition was titled: *From Abstraction to Happening*. The title itself already indicates the diversity of the exhibition's artistic proposals.

1971 was a significant year for the draftsman, when several experiences produced changes in his artistic and social perspective, among these: his participation in community work, his proximity to an intense alternative culture, as well as an increasingly clearer definition of his left-wing orientation. All this was favored by his trip to California, United States, where he stayed in Livingston, Merced, and San Francisco. There, together with other artists and friends, he made murals for Chicano communities, contributed to the newspaper *¡Basta ya!* [*Enough already!*] with posters and illustrations, assumed an anti-establishment inclination, and deepened his experiences with psychedelia, graphic novels, advertising, rock music, equestrianism, and hallucinogens.



Figure 10: Melecio Galván, *Man*, circa 1970, ink on paper, 10 1/4 x 14 1/2 in. (26 x 36.8 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2020.88.



In this regard, several pieces in the collection of the Blanton Museum of Art are associated with the aforementioned influences, such as *Man*, 1969 (Figure 10), where the drawing's graphic elements are based on the repetition of wavy lines with distinct tonal gradations, which give volume and form to the character's torso. His hair is just as consistent with the sensation of distortion, expressed by a movement that seems to introduce new or unknown perceptions of reality and recalls certain graphic elements of 1960's rock album covers. In the drawing *Midnight Cowboy*, made in 1970 (Figure 11), he alludes to John Schlesinger's film, where he efficiently and crudely expresses the social situation of disenchantment and marginalization in some social sectors of the United States. Finally, two works demonstrate his phase of experimentation with rock music, drugs, and altered states of consciousness: *Two Figures Under the Effects*



Figure 11: Melecio Galván, *Midnight Cowboy*, 1970, ink on paper, 24 3/8 x 18 1/2 in. (61.9 x 47 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2021.85.

Figure 12: Melecio Galván, *2 Figures Under the Effects of Hashish*, 1970, ink on paper, 18 7/8 x 13 1/4 in. (48 x 33.7 cm).

of *Hashish*, 1970, and *Portrait of Mick Jagger*, 1970 (Figuras 12-13).

Regarding his work as an illustrator,¹³ among the last exhibitions when he was alive, the following stand out: the individual exhibition in May 1972 at the Galería de Librerías Gandhi (the Gandhi Bookstores Gallery) in Mexico City, where he presented 26 drawings. In certain works, he moves closer to Pop art, Op art (optical art), and psychedelia, and, in some others, he vividly recreates environments from Gabriel García Márquez's novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Also noteworthy is the 1977 joint exhibition with Heraclio Ramírez, entitled *Expression-Illustration* and presented at the Gallery of the School of Design and Crafts of the National Institute of Fine Arts, also in Mexico City. In this, the exhibition's name is already symptomatic, because his drawings are oriented towards visual communication. The influence of graphic design and comic strips is clearly seen in these drawings; moreover, by this time, his distancing from consecrated art or the art market is obvious. The artwork presented in that exhibition is critical for the most part; in other cases, it is playful.

From 1977 to 1982, Galván worked as an illustrator, especially for the cultural supplement *The Fine Arts Weekly* of the National Institute of Fine Arts, where he published excellent and proactive illustrations that enrich the texts. Around the same time, from 1977 until 1981, he formed part of the artistic-political production of the Mira Group,¹⁴ whose most outstanding and award-winning work was the *Graphic Communiqué Number 1*. He openly embraced a participatory art: he coordinated his work with Mira, collaborating also with the Mexican Front of Cultural Workers Groups. Likewise, he was involved with social experiences in solidarity with unions and political groups. Additionally,



Figure 13: Melecio Galván, *Portrait of Mick Jagger*, 1970, ink on paper, 40 × 26 in. (101.6 × 66 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2023.56.

he was included in exhibitions like *Art, Popular Struggles in Mexico 1968-1978*, at the University Museum of Science and Art (MUCA) of UNAM, among other activities related to his political and artistic interests.

Although Melecio Galván's nature was reserved and introverted, and his capacity as a draftsman was focused more on what is internal and to an almost artisanal rigor, he knew how to integrate himself into the avant-garde cultural dynamics of those years, getting caught up in their social effervescence. Moreover, within artist groups and among his fellow illustrators, his work was respected and valued thanks to his artistic ability, his discipline, naturalness, and consistency. Two series stand out in this phase: *Militarism and Repression* (1980–1981), where his mastery is evident in 15 ink drawings, and his series of illustrations for Juan de la Cabada's book, *Melodic Incidents from an Irrational World* (1981), in which he makes a very original tribute to the Mexican artist Leopoldo Méndez.

There are marked differences between the second phase, from 1977 to 1982, and the first one, from 1965 to 1976, which encompasses drawings from the Blanton Museum of Art's collection. Yet in both, his production as a draftsman maintains an underlying humanistic sense, a concern for the purpose of life and an impressive mastery of technique.

The categories that underlie Galván's artistic practice are linked to his intentionality, his experiences, and his acuity. In addition, they are linked to his ability to interpret and project onto paper both visual art forms and his life experiences. All this enabled him to develop a unique form of expression. Likewise, his work echoes social manifestations and esthetic postures characteristic of the sixties



and seventies. Melecio Galván was a great artist of his time and has been considered one of the best Mexican draftsmen of the 20th century by his own colleagues and by art specialists and critics.¹⁵ Unfortunately, his premature death at the age of 37 cut off his brilliant career. Alberto Castro Leñero, artist and illustrator and his co-worker at the Center for the Study of Media and Advanced Procedures in Education (CEMPAE), in 1984, recalled Melecio as "...a true virtuoso of the stylograph, an artist of fine and regular points."¹⁶

In correspondence with the renowned scholar Teresa del Conde, Alberto Castro Leñero also commented on his working life with Galván and defined his perception of the artist: "Melecio was the star of the team. We admired his talent, the impeccable ease with which he would weave his drawings. His boundless imagination. His sensitive and precise strokes. Melecio was a master. A virtuoso, he was the oldest... He had a strong personality, sarcastic, affective, intelligent, anti-establishment and, at times, tormented."¹⁷

Among the drawings in the Blanton's collection, there are several self-portraits of the artist. In some



Figure 14: Melecio Galván, *My Family*, 1969, sanguine on paper, 25 9/16 × 38 1/16 in. (65 × 96.7 cm). Gift of Thomas Cranfill, 1981.74.

Figure 15: Melecio Galván, *Self-portrait*, 1968, ink on paper, 24 7/8 × 19 in. (63.2 × 48.3 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2022.284.

of them, it is evident that they are self-portraits, as in the drawing of his family where he appears as a child, seated on one of his father's legs (detail of *My Family*, Figure 14), or in the 1968 *Self-portrait* (Figure 15).

In other drawings, he makes an appearance, but not as part of a detailed or expressive self-portrait, but rather his presence is assumed because it is an evocation of his activity as a draftsman. Such is the case with: *The Thinker* or with *Y, F*, and *Untitled* (Figures 17-19)¹⁸. Considering these drawings alongside some self-portraits belonging to his Archive, comparisons can be made of his face. Galvan also inserts himself in his work by constructing scenes in which several self-portraits are introduced in spatial or temporal sequences. In them, either the artist is reflecting, accompanied by some work in progress, or he is reclining, drawing on a drafting table, or tabletop, holding drawing utensils in his hand. In *Self-portrait* (Figure 20), rather than portraying himself, he reveals himself as an example within a scene charged with a certain irony, since in the lower part, next to his signature, he writes: "the draftsman drowning in mud."¹⁹ Curiously, this drawing is atypical of his style, since in order to accentuate the effect of the mud he creates some variegation; the figure's contours are defined thanks to two thick, somewhat rigid lines, and the background blends with the character in the foreground, without showing in the drawing the cleanliness of the work or the lightness of the lines, characteristic of his art.

2. Neo-Figuration

Broadly speaking, it is possible to consider Galván's drawings in the Blanton collection as part of Neo-Figuration, an artistic expression that reaches



Figure 16: Melecio Galván, *The Thinker*, 1968, pen and ink with grey wash on paper, 21 5/16 × 10 1/4 in. (54.2 × 26.1 cm). Gift of Thomas Cranfill 1973; transfer from the Harry Ransom Center, 1982.944.



Figure 17: Melecio Galván, *Y*, 1969, ink on paper, 19 3/4 × 26 in. (50.2 × 66 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2022.276.

Figure 18: Melecio Galván, *F*, 1968, ink on paper, 25 7/8 × 19 5/8 in. (65.7 × 49.8 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2022.281



Figure 19: Melecio Galván, *Untitled*, 1968, ink on paper, 19 3/4 × 26 in. (50.2 × 66 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2022.282.

Figure 20: Melecio Galván, *The Drowned Draftsman*, 1970, ink on paper, 21 1/8 × 13 1/8 in. (53.7 × 33.3 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2020.82.a-b.

prominence in the 1950s and 1960s.²⁰ In this movement, there is a return to representation and realism, but with an intention definitively far from academic norms, from social realism, as well as from the various formalist trends related to abstraction (essentially abstract expressionism and geometric abstract art). For this reason, some authors have found that in Neo-Figuration, a kind of third option is chosen, reassuming proposals made by diverse artistic movements, but with the fundamental objective of evincing the focus on what is internal, the subjectivity, or the crisis of the human condition.

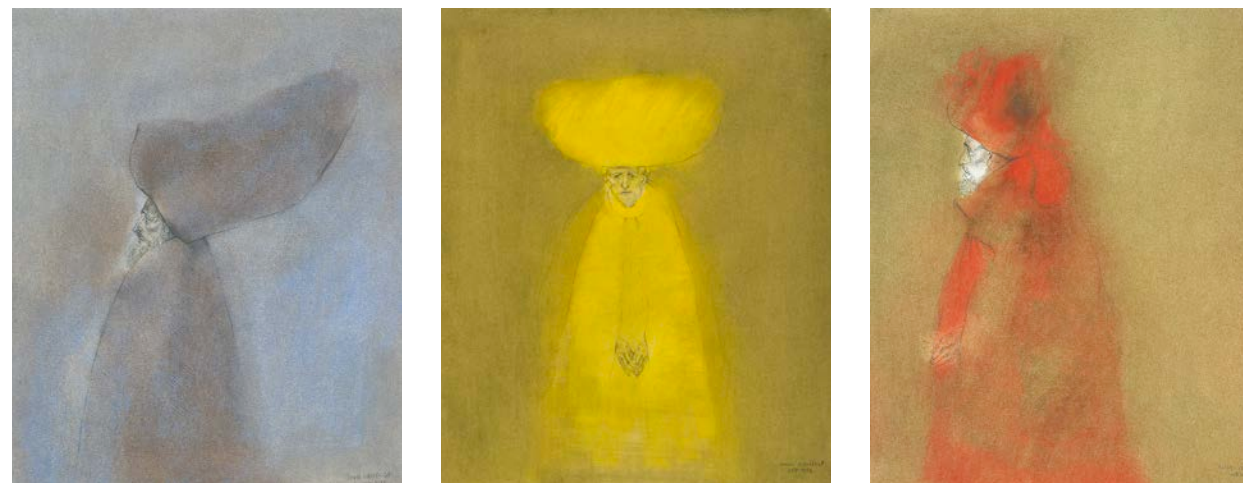
Despite the fact that a somewhat lax and imprecise humanism is assumed in Neo-Figuration, the intention of its explorations is very clear relating to disenchantment or doubts stemming from the two dominant social systems' polarization during the Cold War. Close to Informalism and Expressionism, this artistic trend moves within eclecticism and subjectivity. Likewise, it proposes visual, technical, and conceptual liberties, where accidents, chance,

and stains are exposed. In addition, it makes manifest the alternation of figures in multiple or discontinuous contexts in order to emphasize relativity. On other occasions, ruptures with normalcy are made apparent through the emphasis of “social symptoms,” incongruities, vulnerability, deformations, ambiguities, and exaggerations, with the aim of disconcerting and compelling reflection.²¹ In Neo-Figuration, chaos and basic instincts burst forth to reveal the dehumanization, to denounce violence and cruelty through the drama and complexity of contemporary life. Among the distinguished artists in this movement are Francis Bacon, Jean Dubuffet, or Lucian Freud.

3. Galván and His Contemporaries in the Collection of Latin American Art of the Blanton Museum of Art

The Blanton collection of Latin American art includes works by artists close to Neo-Figuration, the New Presence group and The Interiorists. Although some of Melecio Galván's drawings appear to be very elaborate sketches rather than finished works, it is possible to establish visual and conceptual links between these and other works in the Blanton's Latin American art collection corresponding to these years. This is the case with the three works by Rafael Coronel: *Untitled (Red, Blue and Purple, and Yellow)*, all from 1968 (Figures 21-23); *The Judges*, by Silvia Pardo, from 1969 (Figure 24), and Galván's work: *La Celestina* (Figure 25).

The work *La Celestina* is unfinished. This is evident by the overlapping and somewhat crude lines of black ink on the face of the main figure, which break with the general treatment of the drawing, done in sepia inks with delicate strokes. Moreover, in the upper left corner, it can be seen



that the paper was detached from a sketchbook. In contrast, Rafael Coronel's works, in color ink with watercolors, are finished, as are those of Silvia Pardo, made in graphite, ink, gouache and diluted ink. She, like Galván, presents several figures, playing with filled spaces and emptiness. Both give shape to the figures through the suggestion of sizes, but they also do it directly, using only lines, which emphasizes the drawing's neatness.

The three artists' approaches are fine and intuitive. They coincide with their intention of establishing a direct dialogue between the observer and the representation, which they reduce to a minimum of figures, without references or contexts, with monochrome backgrounds, if only perhaps with minimal elements, such as geometric shapes, whose function resides in balancing the composition. In these works, the figures, their attire, and their features are only insinuated, presenting themselves in the form of somewhat somber sketches, in order to suggest psychological atmospheres, where the importance lies in showing uncertainty by revealing the interiority of the human condition. They share other common characteristics, such as an ethereal quality, impersonal spaces, solitary, evasive characters with visions that are rather oneiric or poetic.

Figure 22: Rafael Coronel (Zacatecas, Mexico, 1932–Cuernavaca, Mexico, 2019), *Untitled (Yellow)*, 1968, colored ink and gouache, 13 7/16 × 16 3/8 in. (34.2 × 41.6 cm). Gift of Barbara Duncan, G2973.12.2.

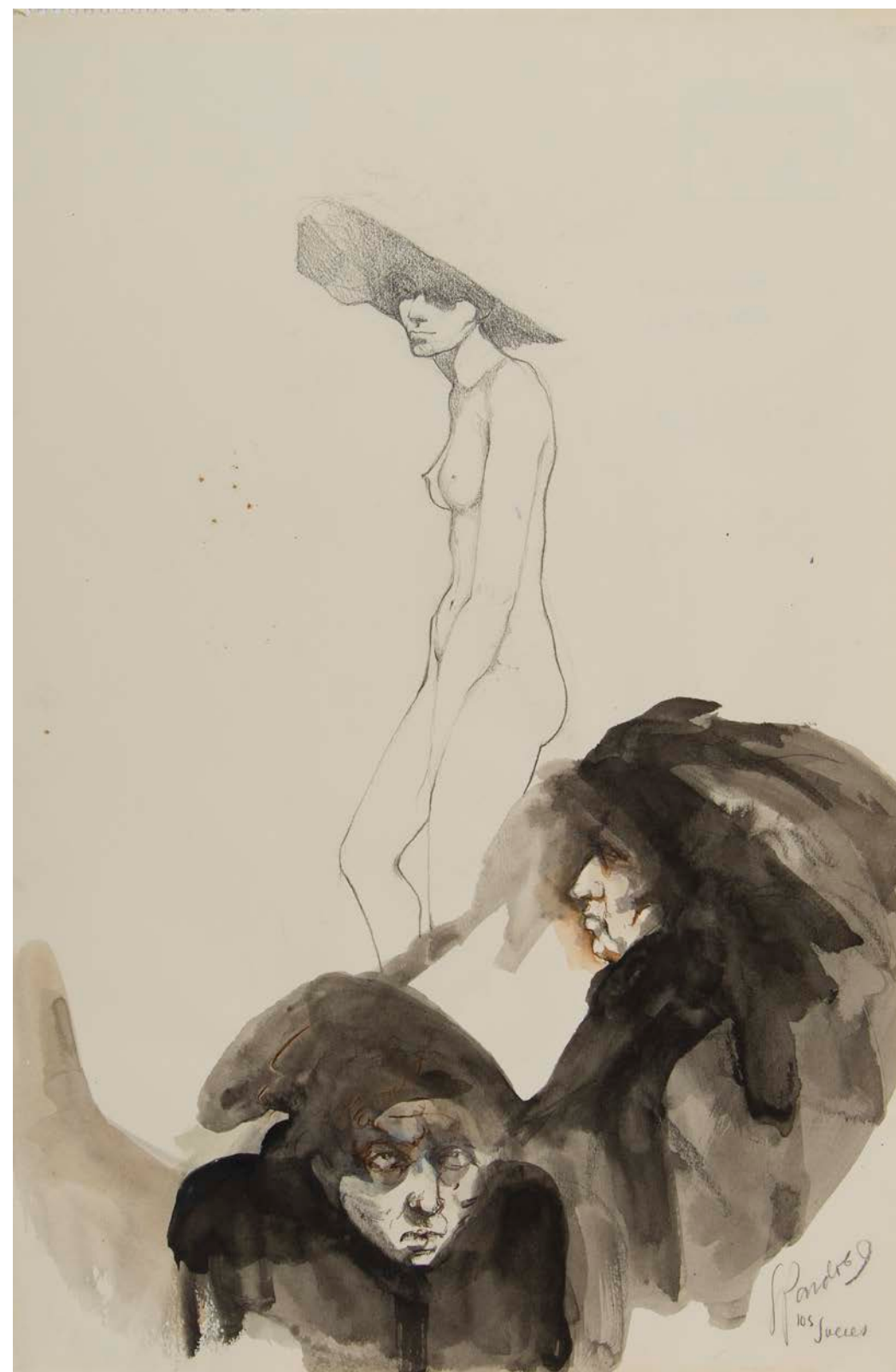
Figure 21: Rafael Coronel (Zacatecas, Mexico, 1932–Cuernavaca, Mexico, 2019), *Untitled (Blue and Purple)*, 1968, colored ink and gouache, 17 1/16 × 14 1/16 in. (43.3 × 35.7 cm). Gift of Barbara Duncan, G2973.12.4.

Figure 23: Rafael Coronel (Zacatecas, Mexico, 1932–Cuernavaca, Mexico, 2019), *Untitled (Red)*, 1968, colored ink and gouache, 17 × 14 in. (43.2 × 35.6 cm). Gift of Barbara Duncan, G2973.12.3.



(Facing Page) Figure 24:
Silvia Pardo (Mexico City,
1941–2008), *The Judges*,
1969, graphite, ink, gouache,
and ink wash on paper, 17
15/16 × 12 in. (45.5 × 30.5
cm). Gift of Thomas Cranfill,
1969; transfer from the Harry
Ransom Center, 1982.1085.

Figure 25: Melecio Galván,
Celestina, 1967, ink on paper,
23 1/4 × 29 1/2 in. (59.1 × 74.9
cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey
B. Gold, 2023.52





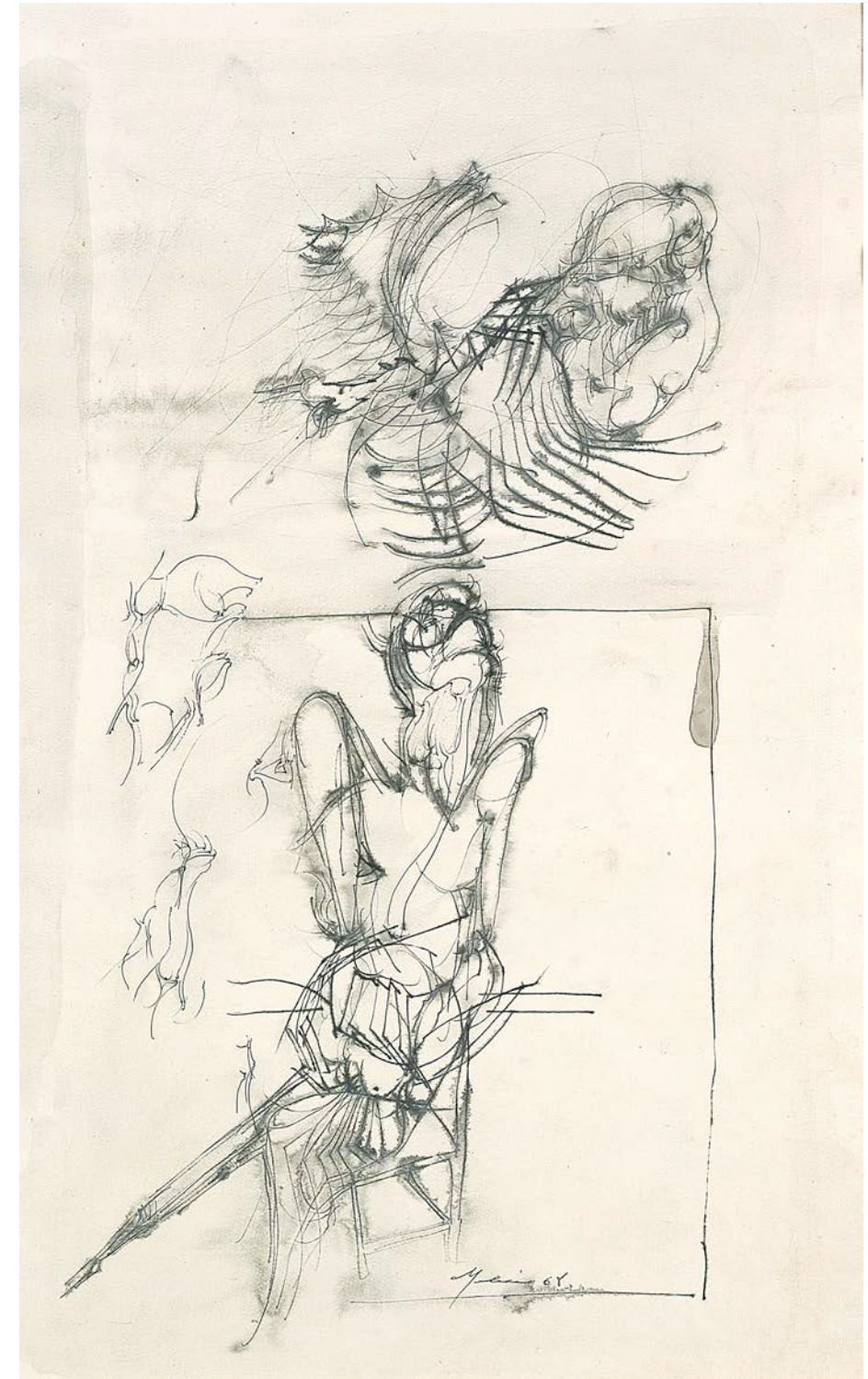
In Galván's artwork from this phase, the elucidation of the human condition is relevant. His fundamental interest lies in testifying to the human being's inherent potential, since he is not interested in describing concrete actions or precisely characterizing attributes or physical traits. Among other works, this is evident in Figures 26-28, in ink on paper, black or sepia, and in black ink with minimal details in reddish tones, as a visual counterpoint. In the drawings, his design intentions are achieved through the quality of the drawn line, the sensorial effects of hatching and foreshortening, the contained movement, and the fine details of the representation.

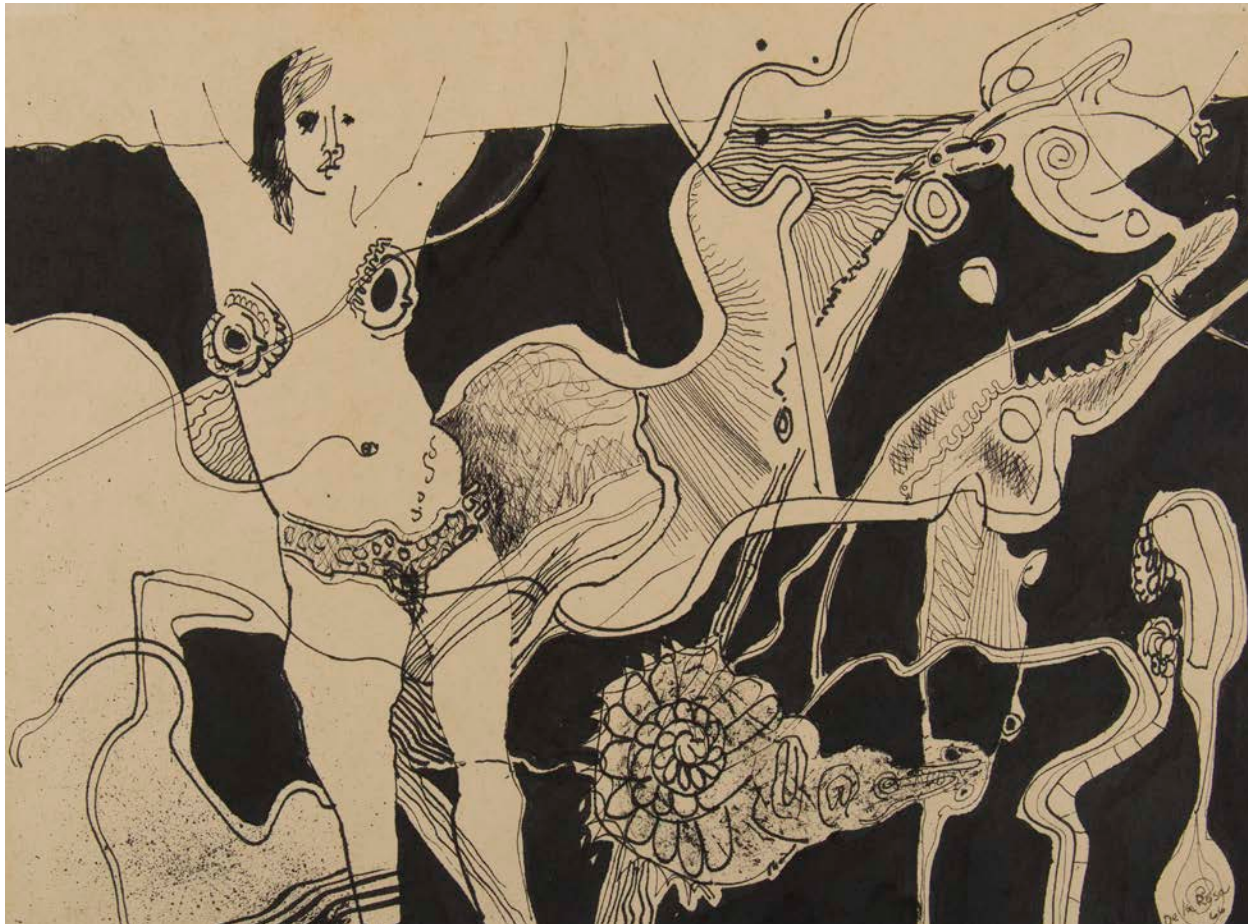
From this perspective, it is possible to observe how he shares with draftsmen, like Juan Manuel de la Rosa, Arturo Pastrana, and Héctor Xavier, the investigation into structure and displacement of the bodies, facial gesticulations, the intention of

(Facing Page)
Figure 26: Melecio Galván, *Seated Figure*, 1968, pen and ink with wash, 24 15/16 × 15 7/16 in. (63.4 × 39.2 cm). Gift of Thomas Cranfill 1973; transfer from the Harry Ransom Center, 1983.42.

Figure 27: Melecio Galván, *Untitled*, circa 1967-72, ink on paper, 26 × 19 in. (66 × 48.3 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2022.278.

Figure 28: Melecio Galván, *Conversation*, 1970, ink on paper, 26 × 19 in. (66 × 48.3 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2023.53.





evinced movement, of showing figures sconded in the space, as well as the talent capable of showing and revealing (as a method of dissection) the internal constitution of the human being (Figures 29-31). In these works, the artists delve into corporeality and skeletal structure, discover the potential and interrelationships between characters and the covert or manifest attitudes that drive them.

4. Melecio Galván and José Luis Cuevas

In this exhibition of Galván's works from the Latin American art collection, presented and curated by the Blanton Museum of Art, there are some simi-

Figure 29: Juan Manuel de la Rosa (Sierra Hermosa, Mexico, 1945-2021), *Erotic Seagull*, 1966, ink on paper, 9 5/8 × 12 5/8 in. (24.5 × 32 cm). Gift of Thomas Cranfill, 1969; transfer from the Harry Ransom Center, 1982.888.



Figure 30: Arturo Pastrana Vásquez (Mexico, 1944), *Untitled* (two grotesque figures), 1968, pen and ink with wash, 8 7/16 × 11 in. (21.5 × 28 cm). Gift of Thomas Cranfill, 1980.95.



Figure 31: Héctor Xavier (Tuxpán, Mexico, 1921–Mexico City, 1994), *Reclined Abstraction*, 1965, ink and watercolor, 9 9/16 × 12 3/8 in. (24.3 × 31.4 cm). Gift of Thomas Cranfill, 1973; transfer from the Harry Ransom Center, 1982.1215.



Figure 32: Melecio Galván, *Myths*, circa 1970, ink on paper, 16 1/4 x 22 in. (41.3 x 55.9 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2021.77.



Figure 33: Melecio Galván, *Oedipus Series*, 1967, lithograph, 25 1/2 x 19 3/4 in. (64.8 x 50.2 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2022.280.

Figure 34: Melecio Galván, *Untitled*, circa 1970, ink on paper, 12 1/2 x 14 in. (31.8 x 35.6 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2021.78.

larities between some of José Luis Cuevas' works²² with the 47 works by Melecio Galván (Figures 32-35). Said similarities can be noted in their treatment of spaces, whether divided, defined, or complemented with backgrounds of geometric shapes on which deformed, grotesque, animated figures, with sensationalist treatments are presented. They also share a material diversification accentuated with impastos and textures, and an instability created through a dynamism whose tensions are reminiscent of the Baroque.

In the first phase of Melecio Galván's career, an artistic association with Cuevas is frequently established, somewhat justifiably, because both showed an obvious capacity as draftsmen, as well as a penchant for pointing out social corruption and for adding ironic overtones to their artwork. However, whereas Cuevas was an exhibitionist and egocentric artist, concerned with creating myths that supported his "genius", a character, moreover, driven and protected by circles of power, by the

art market and cultural elites, Galván, by contrast, was a sincere artist, who made use of his own resources, without receiving institutional, private, or state support, and whose questioning was given through critical, practical, solidary expressions consistent with his way of life. In a way, Galván played with this comparison to Cuevas,²³ because he was sure of himself and knew very well his capacity as a draftsman. In addition, he was aware that the basis on which he supported his creations rested on a social proposal, both ethical and political, since he always had an uncompromising stance towards reality. Despite their contrasting characters, both artists, at this phase, can be understood as two exponents of Neo-Figuration. Conclusively, it is worth quoting contemporary art specialist Ida Rodríguez Prampolini, who puts them in their rightful place:

Among the members of the Mira Group, Melecio Galván was a strange being, perhaps the least able to integrate into a society that does not easily offer adequate paths to an honest and extremely sensitive man. The easy way out for an artist like Melecio would have been to take on the role of someone with a psychologically fragile condition, perhaps even a little sickly, a character who would exploit his singularity just as countless contemporary artists have done... But Melecio... practically withdraws from the world and leaves us an exceptional body of work which, had he promoted it, would have revealed him for who he was, the most important draftsman in the country. The visual order used by Melecio in his drawings... is the reverse of the order used by another Mexican draftsman, José Luis Cuevas, who, in his intense and skillful monologue, is locked in a circuit of compulsive and unhinged self-talk. In Melecio, the circuit opens in motivations, except on some occasions,

that are always directed outwards; in Cuevas, the arrows are accurately launched against himself, the only target of his torments.²⁴

5. Final Considerations

Melecio Galván occupies a special place in Mexican art because, in addition to his extraordinary ability as a draftsman, he managed to reach visual depths that denote a penetrating gaze, a sensitivity and capacity for observation whose strokes reveal his artistic certainty. The depths of the lines within his drawings additionally manifest his need to delve into and extract a humanistic significance from the social abysses (Figure 35).

An experienced expert of the numerous possibilities of drawing, as illustrated by the technical level achieved and the impeccable craftsmanship of his artwork, he generally created with black or sepia inks and, to a lesser extent, with soft and vivid colors. His drawings are predominantly in ink, although he also executed some works with watercolors, acrylics, charcoal, colored pencil, and lithographs, among other techniques. The refined lines stand out due to the dexterity and rapidity with which he made them. His ability was such that he not only made lines with ink, but the nib pen itself served him as a pliable tool with which he could either superficially trace lines on the paper or make marks whose depth left visible tracks as if it were a relief. In his drawings, there generally appears one character or very few figures. This is one of the principal characteristics of his artwork: the figures are the ones that directly and simply uphold the drawing. To a lesser extent, he presents some descriptive scenes, like in *Conflict* or *Pagan Memories* (Plates 39 and 37). Rarely, he either highlights clearly defined atmospheres, as in *Hail*²⁵, or



Figure 35: Melecio Galván, *Self-portrait*, undated, ink on paper. Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico.

shows splotches and shadows: *Untitled* (Plates 41 and 36).

The drawings usually have no title, since, for him, it is not necessary to qualify what is represented. His intention is not to show a closed work, with a rigid order and control, where rationality prevails. He does not seek to represent something as such, but rather through representations that are open, imprecise or even multiple to suggest a concept or give shape to an emotion, to a memory, to a life experience. In this, he coincides with some of the basic ideas of Neo-Figuration.

The speed with which he develops his practice as a draftsman makes possible the almost instantaneous transfer of his idea. The brain activity and the conveyance of this activity to paper through precise lines speaks to us about the complexity of the process of his drawings, of the dialogues with himself and with other expressions of language. In the seventies,²⁶ he incorporated, in some works, elements such as handwritten texts or graphic designs, which lend a different perspective to the intentionality of his drawings. This happens, for example, in the work *Brothers* and in *Untitled* (Plates 18, 29–30), where he even makes small perforations around the drawing, as a frame, and plays with circles placed over the characters to amplify, to point out, or to highlight various readings within the same artwork, understood as a space open to diverse interpretations.

The realism of his drawings is found outside of conventional representation. In his representations, the two-dimensionality is made explicit because what he intends to show is an intellectual approach based on rhetorical forms, on fantasy, on metaphors or allegories, addressed to an active observer, to be further developed based on distinct

interpretations. In synthesis, Melecio Galván's drawings are situated within a Neo-Figuration that moves on the modern threshold of indeterminacy, of that which is unfinished as an esthetic project. At the same time, he thoroughly assumes his eclecticism thanks to his ability to stay between the limits of the classical and the modern, given that, in his realism, the form is more important for what it means: the freedom not to transgress the principles of his own conscience.

Endnotes

1 The largest drawings are 25.98 x 39.76 in. and 19.69 x 25.98 in.

2 Author’s personal interview with Amaranta Galván Jiménez, September 2023.

3 For many years, Amaranta has been devoted to the repository. Lovingly and overcoming all kinds of obstacles, she has been in charge of ordering, cataloging, conserving, guarding, and making public both the artist’s work and his career through publications, exhibitions, interviews, conferences, and round tables.

4 In addition to the artist’s letters, photographs, various documents, magazines, and books.

5 There are several possibilities in approaching his works: chronologically, by genres, functionality, techniques, expression, etc. Amaranta has organized the material in the Melecio Galván Collection and Archive by date, style, subject matter, and media.

6 Despite official statements, everything indicates that the artist was tortured and murdered.

7 The collection includes bequests and donations from Dr. Thomas Cranfill and from Mr. John Guion, some dating back to 1967, although 41 of the 48 pieces were gifted from 2020 to 2022 by Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey B. and June Gold.

8 See the drawing from the Blanton collection: *Mi Familia, 1969* (Figure 14). In the Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, there are family photographs that were reproduced in drawings with

varied expressive approaches. It should be noted that Melecio’s father was a good draftsman and he liked music, and he fostered artistic appreciation and creativity in his family, especially in Melecio.

9 This was a group of students from the former Academy of San Carlos, who belonged to or were close to the 1965 generation. The students called themselves the “Group 65,” they gathered together to carry out artistic exercises, to organize visual art exhibitions, conferences, trips, etc.

10 According to José Luis Cuevas, it is referred to as the Zona Rosa (Pink Zone) because “It is too daring to be white, too timid to be red...”, <https://www.imagenradio.com.mx/frases-para-recordar-jose-luis-cuevas>, accessed September 2023.

11 His training as a draftsman began from a very early age in a rural area, where he had two important models: the community living in solidarity, ingrained among the San Rafael residents, in Tlalmanalco, State of Mexico, and the presence of the San Rafael Paper Mill (one of the most productive mills in the country, which had suitable communal spaces with a labor organization and a material infrastructure, which for years were the models to follow). His father, who encouraged his artistic ability and provided him with paper to use for his drawings, worked in this factory..

12 Amaranta Galván mentions that in addition to the invitations to one of the shows at the former Gallery G in Wichita and at the Laporte Gallery (invitation based

on a lithograph from the 1967 series *Oedipus*, see Plates 1 and 45), there are also newspapers with notes from John P. Simoni, Ray Smith, and letters from Thomas Griffin, Louis and Sandra Goldman, among others, in which they mention Melecio Galván.

13 When he used to dedicate himself to illustration as a way of earning income, working for several government branches.

14 Composed of Melecio Galván, Arnulfo Aquino, Eduardo Garduño, Rebeca Hidalgo, Saúl Martínez, Silvia Paz Paredes, Salvador Paleo, and Jorge Pérez Vega, many of them friends and former classmates from San Carlos.

15 Specialists belonging to different movements and with different approaches have recognized Melecio Galván’s importance both during the draftsman’s lifetime and in later years. Among them, we can cite: Fernando Cantú Jauckens, Teresa del Conde, Lelia Driben, Carlos Blas Galindo, Alberto Híjar, Alberto Castro Leñero, Ida Rodríguez Prampolini, as well as various visual artists and Galván’s fellow contemporary illustrators.

16 Fernando Cantú Jauckens, “Inquiries About Melecio Galván”, part 3 of *Sábado*, the supplement for the newspaper *Unomásuno*, February 18, 1984.

17 Maricela González Cruz Manjarrez, *Melecio Galván y su espacio significativo. Las líneas de la memoria, 1968-1982* (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, UNAM and Editorial Bonilla Artigas, Col. Pública Estética, 3, 2018), 229.

18 It is also feasible that he appears in Figure 4 and Figure 7 due to the character’s similar physical characteristics in these drawings.

19 I am grateful for the kindness of Dr. Vanessa K. Davidson, Curator of Latin American Art at the Blanton Museum of Art, for providing me with a photographic register with details of the artist’s manuscripts, inserted in some of his drawings. This is the case with this drawing.

20 Alessandro Armato, in: “Monstruos desde el sur. La construcción de la neofiguración como tendencia artística en Latinoamérica,” considers important for the promotion of Neo-Figuration, the 1959 exhibition *New Images of Man*, at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, and the publication *The Insiders* (in 1960), by Selden Rodman, who highlights José Luis Cuevas as a neo-figurative artist in Latin America. Finally, there is the propagation of said movement in Latin America through the links between José Luis Cuevas himself, the art critic Marta Traba, and the civil servant and cultural promoter within the Organization of American States (OAS) José Gómez Sicre (former head of the Visual Arts section of this organization). Alessandro Armato, “Monstruos desde el sur. La construcción de la neofiguración como tendencia artística en Latinoamérica [Monsters from the South. The Construction of Neo-Figuration as an Artistic Movement in Latin America],” (<https://revistasacademicas.unsam.edu.ar/index.php/tarea/article/view/348>) accessed August 2023, 189-191.

21 Parallel to visual Neo-Figuration, in contemporary thought from the 1960s to the 1980s, political and philosophical approaches were developed that expressed a radical social questioning with the deconstruction of rationalism, power, and its institutions. At that time, Marxism, existentialism, and what has been defined as post-structuralism prevailed. This is evident in authors such as Foucault, Althusser, Sartre, Deleuze, and Derrida, among many others.

22 The Blanton Art Museum holds 60 works by José Luis Cuevas in total.

23 For example, in the newspaper *El Herald de México* (in February 1968), a note appeared with drawings and texts that Galván had made as an invitation to his exhibition at the Contemporaries Art Gallery. Via figures with comic strip speech bubbles, he draws a figure “In Cuevas style,” as he himself called it. In the speech bubble, and with a great sense of humor, he wrote the following: “In this time of Cuevists, of mafias, of city chroniclers, of supposed mutants, of psychedelic decals, of Mexican hippies in their kindergarten phase... This is He, Melecio Galván... Today, February 1st, will be his glamorous and psychedelic debut for the good of the already decadent and boring pictorial movements of Mexico. You are all cordially invited.” Courtesy of the Melecio Galván Collection and Archive.

24 Ida Rodríguez Prampolini, “A la memoria de un gran artista,” Sunday cultural supplement of the newspaper *Unomásuno*, September 4, 1982, 15.

25 Each hailstone was intentionally, meticulously represented, provoking the desired effect in the drawing.

26 This he does especially when working with illustration, not unconnected to the expressive resources employed by other artists of the time when they also resorted to various expressive gestures, such as including cut-outs, tearing the paper, adding three-dimensional elements embedded into the works and writing on them, among other things.



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Scratching the Surface: A Closer Look at the Materials and Techniques of Melecio Galván's Works on Paper

Rachel Mochon

Introduction

Within his short yet prolific artistic career, Melecio Galván (1945–1982) demonstrated true mastery of his drawing materials across numerous artistic formats, including sketches, finished drawings, collaborative publications, murals, prints, and works inspired by comics and graphic novels. While his subjects ranged from political messages to reinterpretations of classical art history, the dynamism with which he depicted the human body dominates his work and distinguishes Galván from his contemporaries.

During his formal artistic training at the National School of Fine Arts (part of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, or UNAM) in Mexico City (1965–68), Galván discovered some of his greatest artistic influences: Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Albrecht Dürer, Pablo Picasso, and M. C. Escher.¹ The influence of Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci's work upon the young artist, specifically their fascination with the grotesque and mutations of animals and humans, is well documented.² Galván often borrowed similar compositions and line work to reference or imitate the Old Masters of the Renaissance (Plate 43). His figures, often with elongated or distorted features, create a sense of expression and movement that have earned him a reputation as a

neo-figurative artist.³ Although forever founded upon the figure, his style encompasses elements of the abstract, geometric, grotesque, and dynamic. Whether in quick sketches or more detailed compositions, Galván frequently achieves a sense of movement or narrative within singular images.

This identification of Galván as a neo-figurative artist speaks to the context in which he was working. In the wake of student uprisings and the massacre of 1968 in Tlatelolco that Galván himself witnessed,⁴ artistic practice in Mexico shifted away from traditional, formalist approaches toward experimentation. Galván participated in Grupo 65, a student group that aimed to revitalize artistic teaching in favor of the avant-garde.⁵ The students were turning toward abstraction, Neo-Figuration, and geometry.⁶ These principles and ideals later evolved into the founding of Grupo Mira (1977–1982), a politically focused group of artists committed to cultural and political reform through art.⁷ Galván's participation in these movements and artistic explorations clearly shaped his style and identity as an artist.

While his fascination with the human figure persisted throughout his career, this article will focus on the materials and techniques that contribute to the expressive nature of Galván's figures, looking specifically

at a selection of drawings dating from 1968 to 1972. Beyond subject matter and stylistic choices, Galván's non-traditional use of pen, ink, and paper elevate the dynamism of the human body on the page. He used a number of techniques, including scratching into the paper with a sharp nibbed pen, to build up three-dimensional drawings with undulating surfaces and raised or pilled paper fibers. Through adept pen implementation, paper selection, and water application, he controlled the formation of shadows and the bleeding of the ink. Galván's works demonstrate a deep understanding of materials and the confluence of subtle effects to create powerful images.

Material Selection

The majority of Galván's existing works were done in pen and ink on paper. Approximately seventy percent of the drawings are monochromatic.⁸ Among the drawings featured in this exhibition, Galván consistently used matte orange or black inks, some of which exhibit high gloss. While some drawings made from 1968 to 1972 include felt-tipped pen, Galván drew the majority with nibbed pens, both those that require dipping into a container of ink and those with reservoir cartridges. Amaranta Galván Jiménez, Galván's only daughter, manages his collection and archive. She recalls her father cleaning the six

interchangeable nibs of his Staedtler pen. She also has memories of his using commercially available inks, such as Pelikan India ink.

It is important to note that *China ink*, *India ink*, and *sepia* have different definitions depending on the source. For example, *India ink* and *sepia* are both terms used to describe a dark ink made from cuttlefish ink sacs, beginning in the 18th century. Later, the term *India ink* became synonymous with *China ink*, a black ink made from lampblack and gum or glue. Today, *India ink* refers to a waterproof black ink with a shellac binder that renders a glossy surface, and the term *sepia* has been widely adopted by manufacturers to describe brown ink, regardless of the source.⁹ All three terms have been used to describe Galván's drawing media.¹⁰ According to his daughter Amaranta, Galván only used readily available manufactured inks.¹¹ It is more likely that the term *sepia* was used to describe the color of Galván's brown ink, as opposed to the source of the colorant. Commercial inks often have proprietary formulas that change frequently. Microscopic examination of the drawings alone cannot identify the inks or their makeup and binders. Even with scientific analysis, there are limits to complete identification of specific inks. Despite the unknown formulations of Galván's inks, what is most interesting is how the media interacts with the paper substrate.

In her interview in this volume, Amaranta notes the variety of drawing substrates during stages of Melecio Galván's life. For example, he made some childhood drawings on paper and in notebooks produced in the San Rafael paper mill, where his father worked. In art school, he drew select works on bond paper and cardboard. Most significantly, Amaranta alludes to her father's appreciation of high-quality papers, recalling trips to the stationery stores of Mexico City as a child.¹² Among the works of the exhibition, two specific types of artist's paper appear frequently: Strathmore Fiesta and Ingres. Strathmore Fiesta paper is a machine-made, wove paper of white or cream whose deckled edge comes in a range of colors.¹³ Galván primarily used the sheets with magenta, pale blue, or green deckled edges. Some of his powerful images (Plates 22 and 27) are drawn with orange ink on full sheets (26 × 40 in.) with magenta deckles on the long edges. Other sheets were cut down, likely by the artist, and only have a deckle along one edge. In contrast, the Ingres drawing paper (Plates 32 and 39) is a machine-made, laid drawing paper with a harder surface and heavier texture than the Strathmore. Select sheets have the watermark INGRES and countermark PMF ITALIA. The thickness, surface texture, and hardness of these papers influence the way in which Galván's ink sits on the sheet. The works demonstrate



Figure 1: Melecio Galván, *Self-portrait*, det., 1968, ink on paper, 24 7/8 × 19 in. (63.2 × 48.3 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2022.284. In this detail of the face in Galván's self-portrait, low angled light reveals the shadows of deeply incised lines, made with a sharp nibbed pen. Some of the lines are blind stylus marks, meaning no ink was applied. The pen ran dry at the ends of most of the inked lines, creating a similar effect.

Galván's understanding of the play between these materials to achieve a range of effects.

Material Techniques

Knowing the specific materials Galván used helps us understand several of his techniques. In combination, these techniques create the sense of movement and expression in his works. Galván's use of a sharp nibbed pen to incise the paper is the most significant and distinctive technique he used to achieve such dynamism. He performed the same motion with or without ink to produce different effects. Without ink, the sharp nib carved out deep crevices with steep banks of paper fibers, resulting in shadows on either side of the line. The incising left behind a subtle, hazy line, as the paper fibers accumulated along the edges (Figure 1 and Plate 5). With ink, the results were more complex. The pressure with which the artist applied the pen to paper determined the amount of ink deposited and the width of the line (Figure 2 and Plate 44). The moats made by the pen filled with ink. The raised, inked paper fibers on either side are reminiscent of the burs along the edge of a dry-point line from a Dürer copper plate. These fibers create a blurred appearance that contributes to a sense of vibration.

These blurred effects are amplified

further in cases where the drawing ink bled. By tearing into the paper with the pen, Galván made the ink penetrate the softer internal fibers, where it was absorbed and spread laterally. The degree of bleed depended on the amount of ink applied to the sheet and the type of paper used. Softer papers were more receptive to scratching in, while heavier, calendered,¹⁴ hard-sized, or coated papers proved more physically resistant to the pen nib. The Strathmore Fiesta (Figure 2 and Plate 44) and Ingres (Figure 3 and Plate 32) papers both produced soft ink bleed, but ink on the Ingres paper tended to spread more laterally, creating branched patterns. In another example (Figure 4 and Plate 41), Galván punctured the sheet with small, dotted marks. He held the pen in place, allowing the ink to bleed out to different degrees. By using three types of paper and altering the technique of a single tool, Galván achieved three distinct styles of ink bleed in Figures 2–4. These examples demonstrate the significance of his paper selection to the overall image, as well as his radical experimentation in achieving different results using an economy of means.

In several cases, evidence indicates that Galván wetted his papers with water before drawing with pen, exacerbating ink bleed. Distinct from watercolor or wash applied as broad areas of color or tone, this technique



Figure 3: Melecio Galván, *Midnight Cowboy*, det., 1970, ink on paper, 24 3/8 × 18 1/2 in. (61.9 × 47 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2021.85. The screen texture of the Ingres machine-made, laid paper can be seen in this detail of the upper center of *Midnight Cowboy*. The image also reveals the characteristic branched pattern of the lateral ink bleed that appears on several of Galván's drawings on this paper.



Figure 2: Melecio Galván, *Conversation*, det., 1970, ink on paper, 26 × 19 in. (66 × 48.3 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2023.53. In this upper right detail, heavily inked paper fibers accumulated along the edges of the incised lines to create a three-dimensional, fuzzy effect. More ink and heavier pressure created more disruption to the fibers. Additionally, the drawn lines also exhibit lateral ink bleed on the Strathmore Fiesta paper.

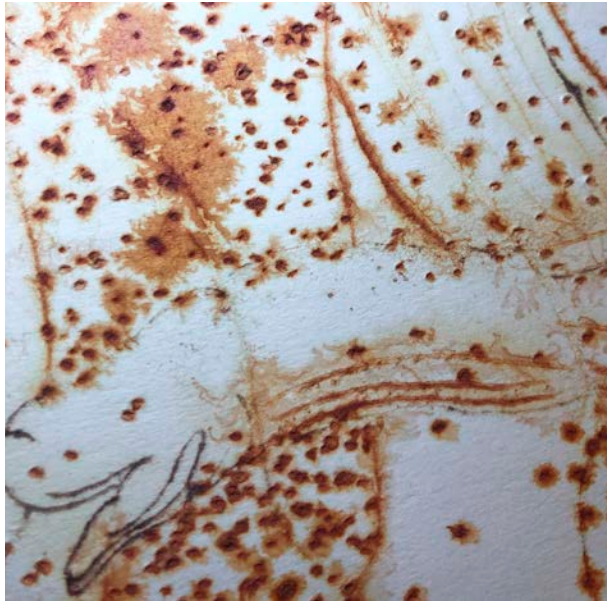


Figure 4: Melecio Galván, *Hail*, det., 1970, ink on paper, 22 1/2 × 28 1/2 in. (57.2 × 72.4 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2023.49. This lower left detail of *Hail* shows the technique of stippling with a pen. The heavy pressure of the pen left deep impressions in the form of dots. Increased dwell time on the paper resulted in more extensive ink bleed from the center of the mark.



Figure 5: Melecio Galván, *Eight Figures*, det., 1970, ink on paper, 40 × 26 in. (101.6 × 66 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2023.54. An overall image of *Eight Figures* in raking light reveals the undulations of the paper surrounding the heads or dense areas of line work. The rippling of the paper is likely the result of applying water to the sheet in advance of drawing, a technique that exacerbates ink bleed.

simply allowed the drawing ink to travel more easily from the incised pen line laterally across the surface. In examples such as the work shown in Figures 5–6 and Plate 23, the undulations and rippling in the sheet, specifically surrounding the figures, indicate the expansion and contraction of the paper after applying water. The effect resembles the ring left from a wet coffee cup set on a piece of printer paper. In the drawing, shadows emanate from the faces like halos. The ink bleed and undulations both contribute to the movement and dimensionality of the drawing. In a second example (Figure 7 and Plate 10) the paper does not exhibit undulations. However, it appears that Galván applied a wet brush both before and after application of the ink, creating a soft gray tonal haze in addition to the ink bleed.

In the works shown in Figures 2–4 and Plates 44, 32, and 41, Galván may also have applied water to the paper before drawing. But these drawings lack evidence of brush marks or paper undulations that indicate moisture. As such, the extent to which Galván used water remains unclear. Nevertheless, all these works speak to his expert selection of materials and manipulation of inherent yet nuanced physical responses, like ink bleed and paper's reactivity to moisture. Galván's blurred line work and three-dimensional surfaces serve to illustrate how he marshalled technique to achieve a



Figure 6: Melecio Galván, *Eight Figures*, det., 1970, ink on paper, 40 × 26 in. (101.6 × 66 cm). Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2023.54. This image of the lower left of *Eight Figures* details the lateral ink bleed. It is likely accentuated by application of moisture to the sheet, as well as the deeply inscribed lines of the pen.

stylistic synthesis as unique as his varied imagery, as well as the distortions that characterize his incursions into the grotesque.

Conclusion

The works of Melecio Galván demonstrate thoughtful selection of paper and command of drawing implements. He controlled less predictable factors such as bleeding ink and paper undulation. The confidence in his pen strokes starkly contrasts with the natural haze and shadow of ink bleed and incising in the paper. These techniques and natural effects combine with more traditional techniques like the use of close parallel lines. Together, they create the appearance of quivering movement through the expressive faces and bodies of Galván's subjects. While the influence of da Vinci and Michelangelo is clear, Galván distinguishes himself among neo-figurative artists through his mastery of modern materials in a tumultuous period of artistic experimentation in Mexico.



Figure 7: Melecio Galván, *Seated Figure*, det., 1968, pen and ink with wash on paper, 24 15/16 × 15 7/16 in. (63.4 × 39.2 cm). Gift of Thomas Cranfill 1973; transfer from the Harry Ransom Center, 1983.42. This central detail of *Seated Figure* is a second example of ink bleed. It likely resulted from water applied to the sheet before drawing. In areas surrounding the figures, it appears a wet brush was also used after drawing, picking up just some of the drawing ink to create a soft gray tonal haze in addition to the bleed.

Endnotes

1 Maricela González Cruz Manjarrez, “Melecio Galván: el dibujo como certidumbre,” *Decires*, Revista del Centro de Enseñanza para Extranjeros, vol. 12, no. 15 (2010), p. 13.

2 Leila Driben, *Melecio Galván: El artista secreto* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1992), p. 13; Amaranta Galván Jiménez, interview by Dr. Vanessa Davidson, curator of Latin American art, the Blanton Museum of Art, October 13, 2023.

3 González Cruz Manjarrez, “Melecio Galván,” p. 13.

4 Arnulfo Aquino Casas, *Melecio Galván: la ternura, la violencia* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura, 2010), p. 12.

5 González Cruz Manjarrez, “Melecio Galván,” p. 13.

6 Aquino Casas, *Melecio Galván*, p. 21.

7 “Grupo Mira,” Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo, accessed December 2023, <https://muac.unam.mx/exposicion/grupo-mira#>.

8 Galván Jiménez, interview.

9 Conservation and Art Materials Encyclopedia Online (CAMEO), “India ink,” last updated August 15, 2020, https://cameo.mfa.org/wiki/India_ink. See also Renée Wolcott, ed., *Descriptive Terminology for Works of Art on Paper* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2014), http://www.philamuseum.org/doc_downloads/conservation/

[descriptiveTerminologyforArton-Paper.pdf](#).

10 González Cruz Manjarrez, “Melecio Galván,” p. 11; Galván Jiménez, interview.

11 Amaranta Galván Jiménez, email exchange with Vanessa Davidson, February 20, 2024.

12 Galván Jiménez, interview.

13 Strathmore’s Fiesta line was first introduced in 1939 with decorative colored deckled edges. A 1949 Strathmore booklet advertises, “Strathmore Fiesta is a paper for gay moods of sparkling events—style showings, sale offerings, exhibits, menus, programs. It is a versatile paper that puts a party atmosphere into a small job or will carry an atmosphere of pomp and dignity for major occasions.” Scholars have identified other examples of artwork on this paper by artists such as Arshile Gorky and Elizabeth Catlett. Amy Hughes, paper conservator, National Gallery of Art, email correspondence with the author, August 31, 2023.

14 Calendered papers are heavily pressed during the paper manufacturing process. This results in a slick, firm sheet of compressed fibers. It is less absorbent and therefore harder to penetrate with a sharp pen, also making it more resistant to bleeding. Lawrence Houston, “Calendered,” American Institute for Conservation (AIC) Wiki, last updated July 31, 2023, <https://www.conservation-wiki.com/wiki/Calendered>.

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Close to Home: A Conversation with Amaranta Galván Jiménez

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Preface

Seeking to learn more about the life and legacy of Melecio Galván Sánchez, an extraordinary “secret” artist about whom there is little known biographical information, I interviewed his daughter, Ms. Amaranta Galván Jiménez, in October 2023. Amaranta is the tireless promoter of her father’s lifework, and the steward and curator of his collection and archives. As Galván’s only child, she and her father were very close. She was only 12 years old when he was killed, a devastating loss to her, her family, and their friends. Amaranta has worked her entire life to keep his legacy alive.

My questions here remained close to home, as it were. They revolved around family, friends, and childhood memories, but also around Amaranta’s knowledge of the artist’s materials and methods as he drew his undersung masterpieces, tucked away in a private corner of the dining room next to his mother’s sewing machine. The results of our conversation are revelatory, uncovering insights into the artist’s personality and family life never before brought to light. I hope this will constitute the initial foundation for a much larger conversation about Galván’s work in the U.S. as well as in Mexico, since the exuberant, unique drawings of this master draftsman merit further study on both sides of the border.



Figure 1: Amado, Alfredo, Pancho, and Melecio Galván in Tijuana, 1966, unknown photographer. Courtesy of Amaranta Galván Jiménez, Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico.



Figure 2: Galván Sánchez Family, 1948, unknown photographer. From left to right, standing behind: Nicéforo (8 years old), Beto (13 years old); seated in front: Juan (6 years old), Felipa, Pancho, and Melecio (3 years old) on his father’s lap. Courtesy of Amaranta Galván Jiménez, Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico.

VKD First of all, many thanks, Amaranta, for participating in this project with the Blanton. I would like you to please describe your role in the diffusion and promotion of your father's legacy in Mexico and abroad. When did you begin this work, and what does it consist of? What is the scope of your collection in terms of the number of works of art, as well as the dates when they were created?

AGJ I have been the steward and promoter of my father's work since 1997, when I began classifying and cataloging his work with the help of the National Fund for Culture and the Arts (FONCA), a federal government program for promoting and encouraging artistic creation.

For years, I have been working on various matters regarding the Melecio Galván Collection and Archive. In general terms, principal activities involve organizing and presenting exhibitions, developing various forms of promotion, as well as giving my own support by providing information to specialists and cultural institutions. In this sense, I undertake, among other things, the following activities: selecting the artwork, planning, coordinating, and organizing curatorial proposals; authorizing image use; as well as providing support for the exhibitions, such as the process of packing, shipping, storing, and delivering the artwork.



Figure 3: Melecio Galván in Juchipila, Zacatecas, 1966, unknown photographer. Courtesy of Amaranta Galván Jiménez, Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico.



Figure 4: Melecio Galván and fellow art students, 1968, unknown photographer. Courtesy of Amaranta Galván Jiménez, Melecio Galván Collection and Archive., Mexico

I have classified and cataloged the collection of 1,200 works (including notes, sketches, and finished artwork). I have also organized Melecio Galván's archive in order to develop the collection's database. I research, gather, and document said information. I perform preventative conservation and stabilization measures on his work.

Currently, the collection consists of 1,176 pieces (including notes, sketches, and finished works). There are 55 pieces framed and packaged; the rest have been placed in polypropylene bags, as a first level of protection, and some are assembled in black portfolios. In general, the works in this collection cover a period of 17 years (1965–1982) of my father's production.

VKD What is the ultimate, final destination of the archive and collection of works that you house, steward, and protect? Will they go into any particular museum collection, or will these materials remain in the Melecio Galván Collection and Archive as an independent entity in Mexico City, supported by the government in recognition of their great artistic, historical, and cultural importance?

AGJ We plan to keep a core with what we consider to be the collection's important pieces:

- The series *Militarism and Repression*, composed of 15 works measuring 17.72 x 25.59 in. and his 13 notes measuring 11.02 x 8.27 in., which can be found on loan to the University Museum of Contemporary Art (MUAC) of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).
- The series of three works for *The Amarantas* in comic strip format.
- *The Boy and The Television*, a series of seven pieces in comic strip format.
- *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, an illustration in comic strip format from the book by Gabriel García Márquez.
- The portfolio with *Incidents of An Irrational World* (15 illustrations), *Missal*, and *Notebook*.

I want to keep these core works together, and to continue my father's line of work regarding his involvement in projects, studies, and exhibitions with content that garners political, social critique in defense of human, environmental, and animal rights. Of course, I am interested in forming a foundation to continue this work, but if that is not to be, I hope that some institution might be interested in acquiring them and carrying on with this responsibility.

It is worth mentioning that I do not receive any financial subsidies of any kind. I have accomplished this work with the support and solidarity of a large list of specialists, academics, and critics, such as the designer Aarón Moysen and the conservator Gerardo Ugalde. The General Directorate of Popular, Indigenous and Urban Cultures (DGCPIU), where I worked as an administrative worker for 26 years, authorized a commission for me at the National Center for Research, Documentation, and Information on the Visual Arts (CENIDIAP) in 2006 until July 16 of this year.

My father's work is recognized as that of "one of the best draftsmen that Mexico has had in the last century," in the words of Maestro Francisco Toledo, from whom we have a letter from July 26, 2004, in which he endorses Galván's work by considering it to have great artistic and cultural value for the country. Many art critics have confirmed this opinion.

VKD Could you please speak about your father's family history? Were his parents—your paternal grandparents—in favor of him becoming an artist, and did they encourage him to dedicate himself to his art?

AGJ My father was the fifth of eight children, born to a farmworker father, Francisco Galván García, and a peasant mother, Felipa Sánchez Ortiz. My

grandfather worked in the fields since he was a boy and, subsequently, in the San Rafael paper mill, which is why he settled down and made his home in this town. He worked in the mill, in the fields, and in trades, such as shoe-making. My grandmother helped him with the harvest, and they sold the produce that they got from the fields in order to finance their children's studies.

My uncles also worked in the area since they were boys, just like my father, with activities such as selling Jello desserts, shining shoes at the entrance to the public restrooms, selling firewood, or helping ladies carry their shopping bags at the market.

My grandfather used to organize drawing competitions between his sons after dinner, and my father was a good draftsman. He liked music. He was proud to have learned the solfège method and used to play the harmonica. My grandmother was quiet, but she had a sharp eye and possessed great wisdom in listening to and encouraging her sons to aspire to a better life with their studies as a tool. Her motto was always: "There is no better inheritance than education." That is why five of them earned undergraduate degrees (business administration, accounting, mathematics, engineering, and the visual arts) and focused on ones that would make employment and economic options possible. They had a rule

that whoever was not good at school would have to go work at the mill.

My father moved to Mexico City to study at a vocational school for the equivalent of an associate degree in business administration. There, he shared an apartment with his two older brothers. As was the rule among brothers, after finishing their studies at secondary school, they studied and worked to help the next one. Mel (my dad) did not get good grades, but somewhere he found a call for applications from the Academy of San Carlos. He presented it to his brothers after they saw his grades, telling them: "I want to be an artist. This is what I want." According to my uncles' accounts, they met with my grandparents and they agreed to support him since they had known since his childhood and adolescence of his love and talent for drawing.

My grandfather would bring him paper with which to make his drawings, and there is artwork he has done using the paper produced by the San Rafael paper mill. There are even notebooks that were made by that paper mill. It seems to me a question of identity, as well as an esthetic and political stance, for him to continue his production on these materials, just like not signing or presenting proposals that were not considered art. At that time in Mexico, drawing was considered to be part of the creative process and not a finished artwork.

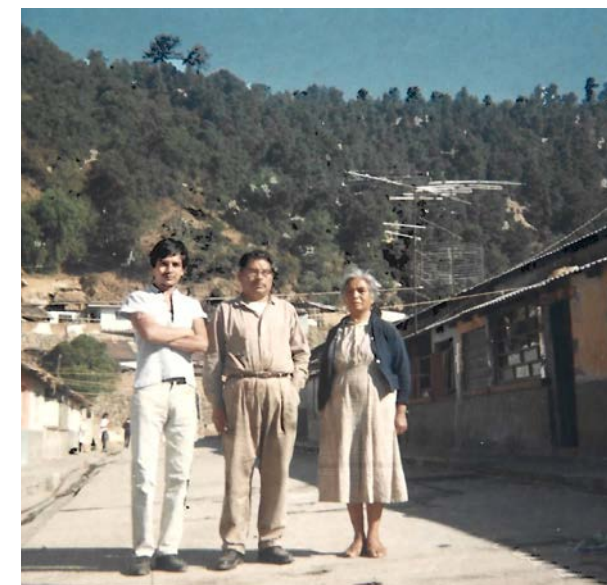


Figure 5: Melecio and his parents, Francisco Galván and Felipa Sánchez, 1967, unknown photographer. Courtesy of Amaranta Galván Jiménez, Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico.



Figure 6: Melecio on a swing, 1967, unknown photographer. Courtesy of Amaranta Galván Jiménez, Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico.

Initially, my father only got irregular and intermittent jobs as an illustrator. These were the early years (1970–1975), when he joined the Center for the Study of Advanced Educational Media and Procedures (CEMPAE). However, from 1968 to 1970, his work was well received in Antonio Souza's gallery in Mexico City, in the former Gallery G in Wichita, Kansas, and in the Laporte Gallery in Racine, Wisconsin. But after 1971, my father began distancing himself from the galleries. When he could not find work or did not have exhibitions in galleries, my grandparents were his patrons, giving economic support to him, my mother, and I. They were always proud of their *Picorro*. My grandfather was the one who financed his expenses and my grandmother was his companion and a listening ear while he drew during the early morning hours. My father would work at his drafting table, and she, on one side, at her sewing machine.

VKD What was your mother's role in your father's development as an artist? Did she also encourage him?

AGJ My mother also worked by cleaning houses, selling candy, baking cakes, making stuffed toys, and giving dance classes in order to support my dad. When he joined the CEMPAE in Mexico City, we were living in San Juan Tehuixtltlán and my mom would fill jars of water to bathe him with a handheld shower. Being

pregnant, she was left in the care of her brother Armando when my father traveled to the United States to mount exhibitions of his artwork at art galleries in Wichita, Kansas, and in Racine, Wisconsin. He also took advantage of his stay to travel to northern California, where he participated in the Chicano Civil Rights Movement. My father returned to Mexico in 1970 to establish himself as an illustrator in various print media. In 1977, he divorced my mother. They had a difficult divorce. I imagine that life with the additional burden of a daughter was not easy for either of them, but even when I took my father's work into my custody, she was also a patron: she would prepare food for when museum personnel would come to collect the work and, if we did not have the financial resources, she would help us pay for gas.

VKD Did your father ever speak to you about what, in his youth, sparked this desire to become an artist?

AGJ I was 12 years old when he was murdered, but he used to show me the little "La Central" matchboxes, where they feature landscapes by various artists. We would read comics like *The Lone Ranger*, *Fantomas* (he had a collection of both), *Los Agachados* by Rius. Many nights, he would show me *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, by Winsor McCay, narrating the stories for me. To discover in the clouds, in the marks

on the walls, or in the cracks on the floor the shapes of dragons, rabbits, lambs, dogs, or butterflies was our favorite game.

In my grandparents' house, there is preserved a picture of *The Mona Lisa*, which he did in secondary school and which my grandparents always showed, accompanied with "he always liked to draw." Some of his classmates from primary and secondary school have told me that he would help them with their drawings and that teachers even caught him drawing during classes.

VKD What are your first memories of your father working at home in his studio?

AGJ His studio was his drafting desk in the corner of the room that served as the dining room, next to my grandmother's sewing machine. And the record player was indispensable for playing music while he worked; he greatly appreciated a diverse range of music, from Pink Floyd, The Alan Parsons Project, The Rolling Stones, Electric Light Orchestra, Mozart, Vivaldi, Beethoven, and Bach, to Violeta Parra and Chabuca Grande, among many other musicians.

VKD What can you tell us about his methods and his practice, and where he procured his materials? Did he have a favorite art supply store in Mexico City? We would like to

document the precise kinds of paper and ink that he used to create his drawings.

AGJ From 1965 to 1969, he used a nib pen, India ink of different colors and sepia, as well as cotton paper. I used to do my homework on my grandmother's sewing machine table, next to my father, and I remember seeing him meticulously cleaning his Staedtler stylographs with six different nibs, as well as his red mechanical pencil of the same brand, not to mention the Pelikan India ink. Occasionally, he would use fabric to imprint textures or he would devise a kind of cotton swab with the pencil erasers to soften the pastel lines, which was another material that he used, as well as the 36 Prismacolor colors and colored or inkless pens to make strokes without lines. I got to see him use a thread counter to make strokes and to create splotches, which then became part of the drawing. Once, I spilled the ink and he made a marvelous drawing of a turtle using that same splotch of ink.

For me, to this day, going to the stationery stores in downtown Mexico City is a delight because of the memories it brings back. I used to go to one in particular with my father, and he always came out with something that he bought for me while stocking his materials. I don't remember the name of the store, but surely, from its materials, it specialized in art.

VKD Your father's principal production was pen and ink drawings. I am certain that he must have experimented with painting in the course of his life, but we only have two examples out of the 48 works in our collection in which he used watercolor and gouache. Do you know if he produced paintings on canvas as well?

AGJ Of his work, 70 percent is in one ink color, but he also explored other art forms which reveal periods or phases of interest and study.

In his time at the academy, much of his work was made with sepia, opaque watercolors, aniline on Bond paper and on another kind, like paperboard except that it contains cotton, such as in the artworks in the Blanton's collection. In the Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, there are three oil paintings from that early phase at the academy. There are also three zinc plates and one in linoleum, with their respective author and printer proofs.

In 1969, he undertook forays into the use of acrylic and gouache, like in the series of illustrations in comic book format for *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which continued until approximately 1974.

During his academy phase, he used nib pens until 1970, when his change to stylographs was already noticeable. He explored textures with



Figure 7: Melecio Galván on the steps of the San Rafael sports complex, State of Mexico, circa 1980, unknown photographer. Courtesy of Amaranta Galván Jiménez, Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico.



Figure 8: Melecio Galván exhibition at the Casino Cosmopolita in San Rafael, State of Mexico, 1970, photograph by A. Moysén. Courtesy of Amaranta Galván Jiménez, Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico.

fabrics, ties to organic material, like brushstrokes and splotches. These latter ones were carried over into a few other phases.

Beginning in 1975, his preference was to use illustration board (this is how it is ordered in stationery or art supply stores in Mexico) and the stylograph, to later explore pastel technique in the period from 1980 to 1982.

VKD In your private collection, are there many works in color? Was there any reason behind your father's predilection for black or sepia on white?

AGJ There is a considerable number in the collection in color from different phases and with various materials.

In the archive, we have books he owned, and there are various ones about Leonardo da Vinci, who, as far as I can tell, was one of his teachers, whom he observed at length and from whom he learned the way of drawing, anatomy, and exploration, as well as not signing his artwork. There is also a catalog of an exhibition of his anatomical drawings from Queen Elizabeth's collection that was displayed in Mexico, which is why I believe that Da Vinci was one of his early influences in using sepia.

As for his use of the black India ink, I believe his fondness for graphic novels, Mexican comic strips, and the challenge in how it does not allow for

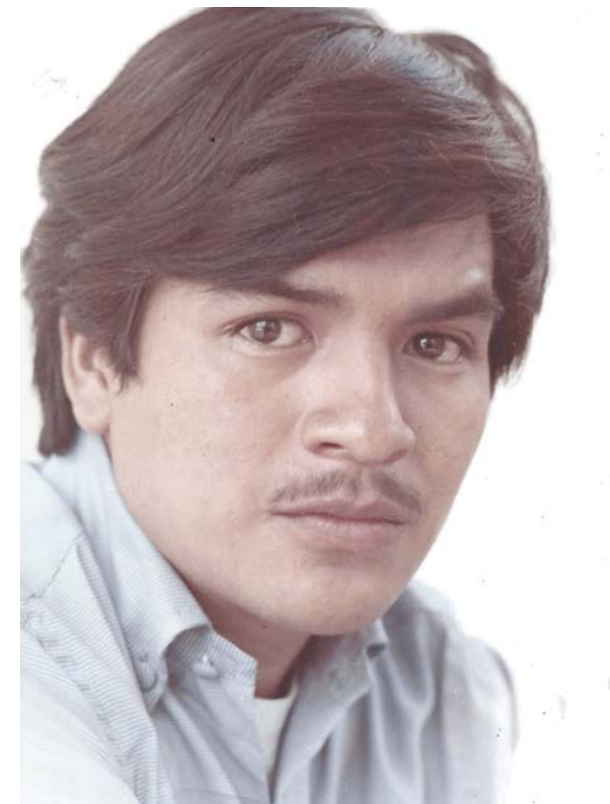


Figure 9: Melecio Galván, 23 years old, 1968, unknown photographer. Courtesy of Amaranta Galván Jiménez, Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico.

errors are possible motives behind his decision, as well as his attachment to drawing, which was considered an inferior art or medium for the basis of artistic creation. He sought to overcome these suppositions and to demonstrate its potential, so favoring drawing represented an additional challenge for him, with its demands for achieving light and shadow, depth, volume, and even film-like movement and sequences.

I think that his drawing style had a tendency towards animation, to achieve movement and sequence. We enjoyed going to the movie theater in San Rafael, located there since before I was born, and where we saw iconic films such as *The Shining*, *The Exorcist*, and *Jaws*, among others, and a myriad of Walt Disney's children's productions. I find a synthesis in his drawings and a narrative intent (although nonsequential) and his love of illustration in the final phase of his career. Likewise, I also perceive his possible interest in mass reproduction and popular media at that time, such as illustration and graphic novels, through which he established a bridge of communication between classical drawing and contemporary languages. And yes, this has been a constant since his early phases.

VKD It seems to me that the main theme underlying all of Galván's work is the exploration of human relationships: interpersonal relationships and

his ability to capture emotions via the pen in his hand. To this, one adds his exploration of anatomical studies, the grotesque, and political themes. I wonder if you could comment on his choice of subjects? Did he ever discuss his themes with you or his family, or with the artists who frequented your home?

AGJ I concur with his investigation of human and interpersonal relationships, to which I add social and political relationships and their mutation or evolution. His awareness of class is very clear, not only in his work but also in his esthetic, political, and human stance and in his unswerving decision to leave the art market and make a living from his creative capacity as an illustrator.

I added a reference to mutation and evolution because these are detected from his sketches at the academy (in the anatomical studies he made and in his fusion of humans with animals), carrying them forward as a common thread culminating in the *Militarism and Repression* series. To this, I would add his explorations of the mechanical and even of goldsmithing techniques.

I remember we would make observations through a microscope that he gave me for Three King's Day, examining insects and how to discover them in the environment and him making sketches. I also remember how we

would look together at the animals in magazines like *National Geographic*. The rich oral family tradition of telling stories around the stove about local myths and legends fueled his imagination, along with graphic novels and even the illustrated Bible.

He chatted with Arnulfo Aquino and Jorge Pérez Vega and he got along very well with Eduardo Garduño and Arturo Pastrana in regards to drawing, with whom he shared this interest and creative pedilections. They frequently went to San Rafael and San Juan and spent days conversing and observing— in between the alcohol they consumed.

VKD Who were the other artists with whom he established intimate friendships? I know that his work had a lot of influence on the artists who worked around him, and that he himself was influenced by others who worked in the same milieu. What can you tell us about these relationships?

AGJ The members of the Mira Group, were, without the shadow of a doubt, close: Arnulfo Aquino Casas, Rebeca Hidalgo Wong, Arnulfo's wife at that time; Jorge Pérez Vega, Eduardo Garduño, Salvador Paleo and Silvia Paz Paredes. At the National Center for Conservation and Registry of Movable Artistic Heritage (CENCROPAM), he maintained friendships with Arturo Pastrana, Saúl Martínez, Alberto Castro Leñero,

Miguel Castro Leñero, Francisco Castro Leñero and Jaime Levy, among others. At the *Semanario de Bellas Artes* [*Fine Arts Weekly*], he was friends with Heraclio Ramírez. He was very close to them all, and, in an interview they conducted, he recounted how they trained in Chapultepec and why they joined a cultural, artistic, and social activism group in Central America.

Antonio Souza's gallery brought him closer to the artwork production done by artists such as Francisco Toledo, Rafael Coronel and Pedro Coronel, among various others. I believe that at the academy he investigated José Luis Cuevas' drawing, but Melecio chose different subjects, different approaches with respect to exploration of humanity, and he also explored diversity within drawing itself. I understand that there were moments where he happened to meet and get to know these established artists, but he did not have a close relationship with them. It was his work that served as a crucible for him.

At the *Semanario de Bellas Artes* [*Fine Arts Weekly*], he also had close ties with writers, poets, playwrights, visual artists, dancers, actors, promoters, and historians, with whom he was connected through his job as an illustrator for various articles. In some cases, when they aroused his admiration and interest, he gifted them his artwork. There is a letter from the

Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén in which he thanked him for his illustration of a large, green alligator for his poem to the island of Cuba.

Within the archive, there are English, Italian, and American art magazines, which shows his cultural curiosity. His supportive stance was also internationalist; for example, the archive holds a letter of thanks from the Bertrand Russell Community Foundation for the donation of two works for their auction to support fundraising for the defense of human rights and political refugees.

VKD I know that your father exhibited at the Antonio Souza Gallery in Mexico City, and also at the Gandhi Bookstore. He also exhibited in the United States: for example, at the former Gallery G in Wichita, Kansas, and at the Laporte Gallery in Racine, Wisconsin. But otherwise, why was he so reluctant to exhibit his work during his lifetime? Could you tell us why he was so reluctant for his work to achieve the recognition it merited through solo exhibitions and shows in Mexican galleries?

AGJ His work was well received in the galleries, but I remember (from comments by his colleagues) that he was exasperated by the constant loss of artwork during shipment to the galleries. Moreover, his personal commitment to the farmworker class consciousness also caused him to

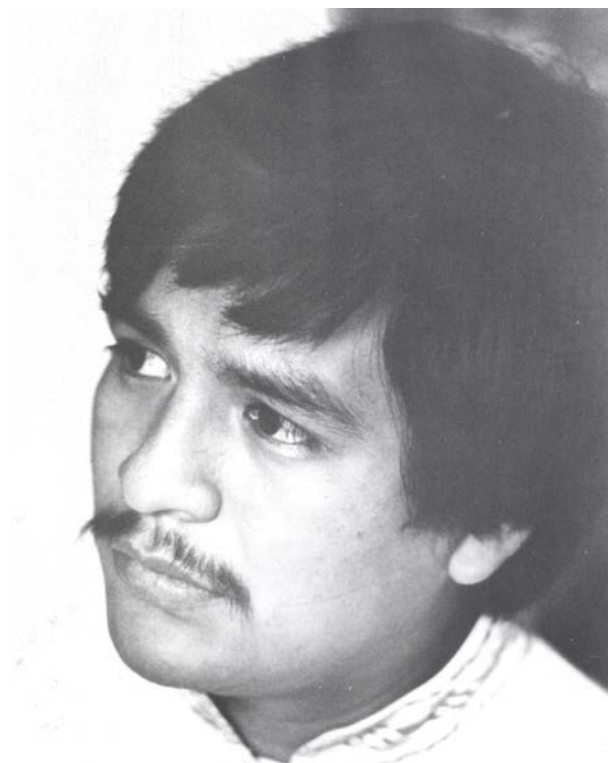


Figure 10: Melecio Galván Sánchez, undated, unknown photographer. Courtesy of Amaranta Galván Jiménez, Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico.

move away from the commercial galleries. He had witnessed the student massacre on October 2, 1968 at the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Tlatelolco, Mexico. Because of this, I believe he decided to withdraw from the galleries and work as an illustrator, which also allowed him to produce artwork with topics and ideas dealing with political and social criticism, giving him freedom in his subjects and processes.

VKD Could you further clarify his active engagement as an illustrator? What were the books, newspapers, or magazines to which he used to contribute illustrations?

AGJ Upon returning from his stay in the United States, he sought work as an illustrator, which nurtured his imagination, stimulated his capacity for visual communication, and allowed him to step outside his comfort zone by freely developing themes, techniques, and visual proposals. He participated, just to provide some examples, in the following publications: books about expression and communication, edited by CEMPAE: the *Bulletin* of the National Commission of the United Mexican States for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (CONALMEX-UNESCO), 1975; the magazine *Solidaridad del Correo Campesino* [*Peasant Courier's Solidarity*], published by las Bodegas Rurales of the National Company of



Figure 11: Melecio Galván, Amaranta Galván Jiménez, and Peluchín the dog in San Juan, Teuxtitlan, circa 1975, unknown photographer. Courtesy of Amaranta Galván Jiménez, Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico.



Figure 12: From left to right: Antuna, Eloy, Ponce, Aquino, and Melecio Galván on the closing day of Galván's exhibition Expo-68, 1968, unknown photographer. Courtesy of Amaranta Galván Jiménez, Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico.

Popular Subsistence (CONASUPO), 1976; a magazine published by the General Coordination of Artistic Education, National Institute of Fine Arts (INBA) / Secretary of Public Education (SEP), 1981; the *Semanario de Bellas Artes* [*Fine Arts Weekly*], 1975-1982; and the magazine *La Chispa* [*The Spark*], in which he illustrated an article about Alexander von Humboldt in 1982.

VKD Your father also traveled to California and had experiences with the Chicano Movement in Northern California, participating in the *¡Basta Ya!* [*Enough Already!*] magazine, and also painting murals. Do you have any records of that time? Did he pass on any memories or experiences from that period of his life?

AGJ Arnulfo Aquino Casas, with whom he traveled and worked, as well as Rebeca Hidalgo Wong, Aquino's partner, shared details from this time in his book *Melecio Galván. La ternura, la violencia* [*Melecio Galván: The Tenderness, the Violence*]. They made murals and he illustrated the magazine.

VKD Let's return to the Mira Group that your father participated in, a collective of students dedicated to expressing political themes in their art. Was your father politically radical, and was he vociferous about his political views?



Figure 13: Melecio Galván with colleagues at Center for the Study of Media and Advanced Procedures in Education (CEMPAE), circa 1975, unknown photographer. Courtesy of Amaranta Galván Jiménez, Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico.



Figure 14: Melecio Galván with friends, undated, unknown photographer. Courtesy of Amaranta Galván Jiménez, Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico.

AGJ The abuse of authority, influence peddling, and corruption are current issues in many societies, and the violence they unleash affects various sectors indiscriminately. With the Mira Group, he made esthetic-political proposals in which he maturely and critically expressed the early concerns from his time at the Academy of San Carlos. His generation was interested in searching for new artistic and political proposals. Since entering the Academy, he expressed these interests and questions, although he did so in a random manner. Furthermore, he participated in the Graphics of 68, both in its exhibitions and in the various ways it was presented at the Academy.

The 1968 massacre in the Tlatelolco Plaza makes it clear that the term “radical” has different interpretations according to the position of whoever is doing the interpreting, and I think that my father was a conscientious being. His personality was reserved and quiet; he would listen in order to process the information and translate it into a visual language with an ability to synthesize and emphasize. Firm in his convictions, he would defend them if necessary.

VKD Finally, do you have any special treasured memory of your father that you feel reveals his personality or his way of being that you would like to share? How do you conceive of Melecio Galván's legacy in the Mexican

art world of the 20th century?

AGJ My father worked from home when he joined the *Semanario de Bellas Artes* and would travel to Mexico City to deliver work, collect his salary, visit his friends, go to the Mira Group meetings or attend an exhibition, cultural or artistic activity that interested him. Since he did not usually stay for more than a week, we spent a lot of time together and were able to build a lot of memories, for which I am grateful. Among them, I am grateful for the impulse he gave me to reach beyond my limits so that I might be able to explore all possible universes.

We had long chats on our hikes in the woods and during our games with shapes, clouds, and shadows. He was the one who would regularly pick me up at the end of primary school, returning on foot along the beautiful tree-lined avenue of San Rafael, accompanied by Trotsky (our dog). I remember afternoons at the movies or visits to stationery stores in downtown Mexico City. With me, he was always loving, warm, supportive, accommodating. He encouraged me to stand up for myself against other children, to lose my fear of the night, to fly kites with wishes or dreams to fulfill, and to not feel bad about poor grades in school, to tell the truth no matter how embarrassing it was. He dressed me in overalls with a railroad cap and suede shoes to play spinning

tops, marbles, or cars with the neighborhood children. His generosity to his own kin or to strangers reflected his personality and consistency in his daily life.

My father's work brings to Mexican art his technical perfection; the proposed fusion of the rigor of classical drawing with other media and means of communication, such as illustration, comic strips, and graphic novels, neographic art with the Mira Group; and the poster to be conceived as an animation project. In my opinion, he clearly explored, alternated, and fused these languages together from 1975 to 1982. When the group known as the Breakaway Generation in Mexico was at its peak, galleries were interested in their artwork and they dominated the market. He came into contact with these artists and their works through Antonio Souza's gallery, being younger in age than the aforementioned group. His classmates at the Academy of San Carlos were interested in social issues and political critique through neographics as a means of mass distribution. This not only makes him an extraordinary draftsman, but also a contemporary artist ahead of his time.

VKD Clearly, without a doubt. Your father was a brilliant innovator, at the same time artistically advanced and in tune with the themes of his time. Maestro Melecio Galván would undoubtedly be delighted that it is

precisely you who oversees the care and promotion of his artistic legacy. Thank you so much for these very essential and perceptive reflections in presenting your father's work to the public in the United States.

Editor's Notes

1 The Mira Group was one of the most important political art collectives of the seventies, of which Melecio Galván was a member.

2 The "Graphics of 68" alludes to this collective's graphic production displayed in the streets, artworks designed to be activated and viewed within the public sphere. Their posters and banners made it possible to strengthen the voice of protest, to bring together a new, visual imaginary for the student movement, and to give a visual testimony to the demands of said movement. This movement emerged in 1968 in response to the brutal repression by the then-president Gustavo Díaz Ordaz. The anonymity of the Graphics of 68 was a necessary security measure, since the movement went underground as the political repression mounted. Nevertheless, the displayed images survived censorship and repression; at that time, they were considered subversive tools and, consequently, dangerous.

Exhibition Installation Views



The exhibition *Meet Melecio Galván: The Secret Artist & His Mexican Contemporaries* was on view in the Paper Vault Gallery of the Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, March 23, 2024–August 5, 2024. It constituted the first museum exhibition dedicated to this artist in the United States.

Support for this exhibition at the Blanton was provided in part by Ellen and David Berman.

Kinship
In the 1960s, as the Black Power movement gained momentum, the Black Arts Movement (BAM) emerged. The Black Arts Movement was a part of the Black Power movement and was dedicated to the creation of Black art that reflected the Black experience. The Black Arts Movement was a response to the Black Power movement and was a part of the Black Arts Movement.

Family
The Black Arts Movement was a response to the Black Power movement and was a part of the Black Arts Movement. The Black Arts Movement was a response to the Black Power movement and was a part of the Black Arts Movement. The Black Arts Movement was a response to the Black Power movement and was a part of the Black Arts Movement.



Informational text panel on the left wall.



Informational text panel on the right wall.





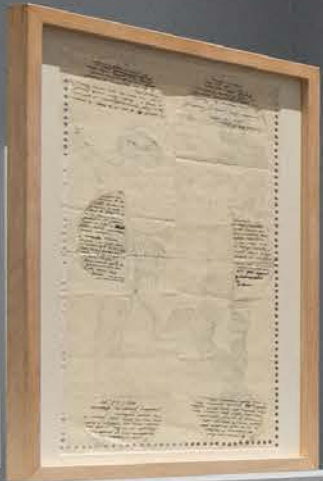
Marcelo Galante
 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (National youth festival, 1979)
 Ink on paper
 Coll. of James and Jeffrey B. Cole, 2002, 74 x 6

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Meet Melicio Galván
The Surreal Artist & His Mexican Contemporaries

Shaped by surrealism, Melicio Galván (1909-1989) was a surrealist artist who lived and worked in Mexico. He was a member of the Surrealist movement in Mexico, which was founded by Salvador Dalí and Joan Miró. Galván's work is characterized by its surrealist and abstract nature, often featuring distorted figures and landscapes. He was a key figure in the Mexican Surrealist movement, which was a branch of the international Surrealist movement. Galván's work was influenced by the work of Salvador Dalí and Joan Miró, and he was a member of the Surrealist movement in Mexico. He was a key figure in the Mexican Surrealist movement, which was a branch of the international Surrealist movement. Galván's work was influenced by the work of Salvador Dalí and Joan Miró, and he was a member of the Surrealist movement in Mexico.



Two informational cards are placed on a pedestal in front of the large artwork. The cards contain text in Spanish, providing context for the exhibition.



Kinship

In the gallery, we meet Melicio Galván (San Rafael, Mexico, 1909-1989) through his self-portraits and his portraits of his family and community. Also included are colorful folk-art inspired and abstract (surrealist) new work made by David García Márquez (De Huesada, State of Sinaloa, de Mexico) in the same year, 1989, about his experience living in the United States.

Familia

Este galería nos presenta a Melicio Galván (San Rafael, México, 1909-1989) a través de sus autorretratos y sus retratos de su familia y su comunidad. También se incluyen obras coloridas inspiradas en el arte popular (surrealista) nuevas obras hechas por David García Márquez (De Huesada, Estado de Sinaloa, México) en el mismo año, 1989, sobre su experiencia viviendo en los Estados Unidos.



Two informational cards are placed on the wall next to the artworks on the right.





Chalcidius from left
Melchior Gabutin
La Hibernie de Toulouse-Lautrec [The Hibernia by Toulouse-Lautrec], 1908
 Lithograph
 Gift of Peter and Judith B. Clark, 2022. 40
José Luis Cuevas
Notes on Paris y Madrid [Notes from Paris and Madrid], 1955
 Pencil and ink on paper
 Long-term loan from Colección Bismont, Lyon, Torino, and Craig Thomas, Los Angeles
Elvira Gascon
Retrato de Bismont [Portrait of Bismont], 1961
 Ink on paper
 Gift of Thomas Condit, 2015. Donated from the Bismont Collection
 Center, PJA/202.021
 These drawings and portraits illustrate three distinct artistic approaches to technique and to the notion of artistic Bismont. Melchior Gabutin's rather serene profile portrait of "La Hibernie" or Hibernia Vary, who was a favorite model for French artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, gives a sense of parallel flow throughout the composition in terms of light and rhythm. Elvira Gascon, on the other hand, depicts somewhat-erect French poet Pierre de Bismont with starkly, chaotically created and overlapping strokes, creating a somewhat frenetic picture of the poet. Finally, in between these Madrid and Paris, José Luis Cuevas includes a series of four portraits of Bismont, or Bismont viewed during his work. Dark, cross-hatched lines lead volume to his figure's body, repeated, sharp diagonals reflect the surface and create movement. Although all three artists worked at the same time and within the same city, these images reflect some of the many ways to apply pen and ink to paper.



JULIUS AND SUZAN GRICEMAN GALLERIES





Small informational label for the artwork on the left.



Small informational label for the artwork in the center-right.



Small informational label for the artwork on the far right.



Orozco, from left
Rufino Tamayo
 Oaxaca, Mexico, 1899–Mexico City, Mexico, 1991
El Apocalipsis de San Juan [The Apocalypse of Saint John],
 1958
 Lithograph
 Gift of Judy S. and Charles W. Tan, 2011.126

Melicio Gálvez
 His initials (the initials) [Untitled (The Horseman)], 1968
 Ink on paper
 Bequest of John Gálvez, 1992.126

 His initials [Untitled], circa 1978
 Ink on paper
 Gift of Jane and John B. Gálvez, 2002.48

 Commemorating a well-known incident in representing the human
 figure, Melicio Gálvez took previous two approaches in
 depicting man on horseback. Originally, his early 1960s drawing
 of two horsemen is more realistically rendered than his 1978
 second sketch, in which the horse on the right appears as
 horse in mid-air. An important precedent for these works
 was mid-20th-century Mexican artist Rufino Tamayo's lithograph
 portfolio, *El Apocalipsis de San Juan*, which he had produced in
 France in 1939. Tamayo's style is often described as "figurative
 abstraction," inspired as much by Mexican pre-Columbian
 and folk art as by international abstract modernism.

 The artist's horse of the lithograph *El Apocalipsis de San Juan* traditionally represents pestilence and disease.
 Tamayo's horse and rider barrel forward into the darkness,
 surrounded by dynamic blue strokes that form a whirlpool
 of energy. Gálvez employed similar stylistically repeated
 lines to create movement in his *Untitled (The Horseman)*, also
 seen in his depiction of *Winged Gears* in the series. He employed
 this linear device throughout his drawing practice. Both
 Gálvez and Tamayo sought nontraditional means of creating
 movement across various media. Their expressive style works
 from the figures with the abstract, but neither quite ever
 completely relinquished the figure.









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Variations on

(Continued from page 34)
Meléndez Galván
Papeete de medianoche (Midnight Drawing), 1979
 Ink on paper
 Gift of Don and John B. 1144.202.11

María Rangel Sánchez
Mujer en Maracaibo, 1979 (approx.)
Mujer en Maracaibo (Children's Drawing), 1967
 Watercolor
 Bequest of John B. 1144.202.11

Arturo Portuño Viquez
Manos, 1964
Manos (Two Women's Hands) (Drawing), 1964
 Pencil and ink on paper
 Gift of Thomas Cradock, 1980.10

Created between 1967 and 1970, these works by Meléndez Galván and his companion, Arturo Portuño Viquez, and María Rangel Sánchez, demonstrate widely different means of portraying individuals, historical figures, and all members of the social. Galván and Portuño were students and associates of the Dominican National Autonomous University (UNAM), and both participated in the Grupo 65. This group of student revolutionaries formed the *Revolution for the New Group* (1977-82), a new cultural center of artists dedicated to giving their art social political value.

By 1960, Galván and Portuño were closely familiar with María Rangel's work. A decade prior, Rangel studied at La Esmeralda, a well-known art school, as well as in the UNAM in the early 1950s. Inspired by the art of Mexican Surrealist Leonora Carrington and Remedios Varo, Rangel incorporated surreal elements into her work. In her *Children's Drawing*, Rangel's magical beings, dressed in colorful, patterned and adorned with intricate legs and glowing faces. Portuño also portrayed communication between industrial workers in *Two Women's Hands*, presenting two mechanical figures.

social vehicles, still in the form of caricatures. Galván's 1979 drawing is based on a series of a different kind: the *Manos* (Drawing), ink on paper, which depicts two individuals, one of whom is a woman, in a state of intense physical contact. Drawing on wet paper to produce blurring lines, evoking the quick landscape of a hot-melted lead, Galván depicts two individuals, one of whom is a woman, in a state of intense physical contact. Drawing on wet paper to produce blurring lines, evoking the quick landscape of a hot-melted lead, Galván depicts two individuals, one of whom is a woman, in a state of intense physical contact.





Marcel Duchamp
Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)
1912
Pencil on paper
17 x 11 in. (43 x 28 cm)
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Gift of the People of the United States
1929



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Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)
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17 x 11 in. (43 x 28 cm)
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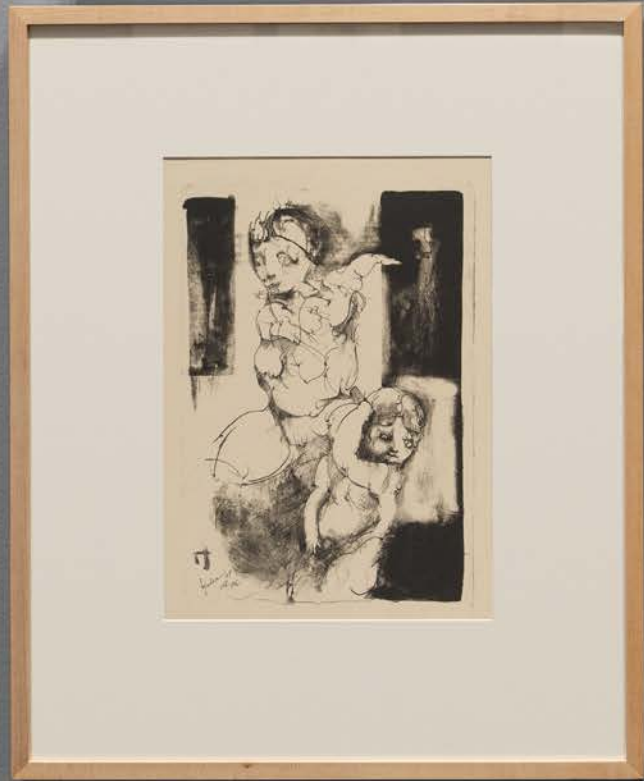
1930s-1940s
 Pablo Picasso
 The Artist and His Mother (1937)
 Oil on paper, 100 x 130 cm
 The artist's mother, María Picasso, is depicted in a seated position, looking towards the viewer. The artist, Pablo Picasso, is shown in profile, looking down at his work. The painting is a study for the final work, 'The Artist and His Mother'.

The artist's mother, María Picasso, is depicted in a seated position, looking towards the viewer. The artist, Pablo Picasso, is shown in profile, looking down at his work. The painting is a study for the final work, 'The Artist and His Mother'.



Pablo Picasso
 The Artist and His Mother (1937)
 Oil on paper, 100 x 130 cm

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**Artworks by Melecio Galván
in the Collection of the
Blanton Museum of Art,
The University of Texas at
Austin**



Plate 1
 Melecio Galván
Oedipus Series, 1967
 Lithograph
 25 1/2 × 19 3/4 in. (64.8 × 50.2 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2022.280



Plate 2
 Melecio Galván
La Celestina, 1967
 Ink on paper
 23 1/4 × 29 1/2 in. (59.1 × 74.9 cm)
 Promised gift of Jeffrey B. Gold, 2023.52



Plate 3
Melecio Galván
Untitled, 1968
 Ink on paper
 19 3/4 × 26 in. (50.2 × 66 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2022.282



Plate 4
Melecio Galván
Madona, 1968
 Ink on paper
 19 3/4 × 26 in. (50.2 × 66 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2023.57



Plate 5
Melecio Galván
Self-portrait, 1968
 Ink on paper
 24 7/8 × 19 in. (63.2 × 48.3 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2022.284



Plate 6
Melecio Galván
The Thinker, 1968
 Pen and ink with grey wash on paper
 21 5/16 × 10 1/4 in. (54.2 × 26.1 cm)
 Gift of Thomas Cranfill, 1973; transfer from the
 Harry Ransom Center, 1982.944

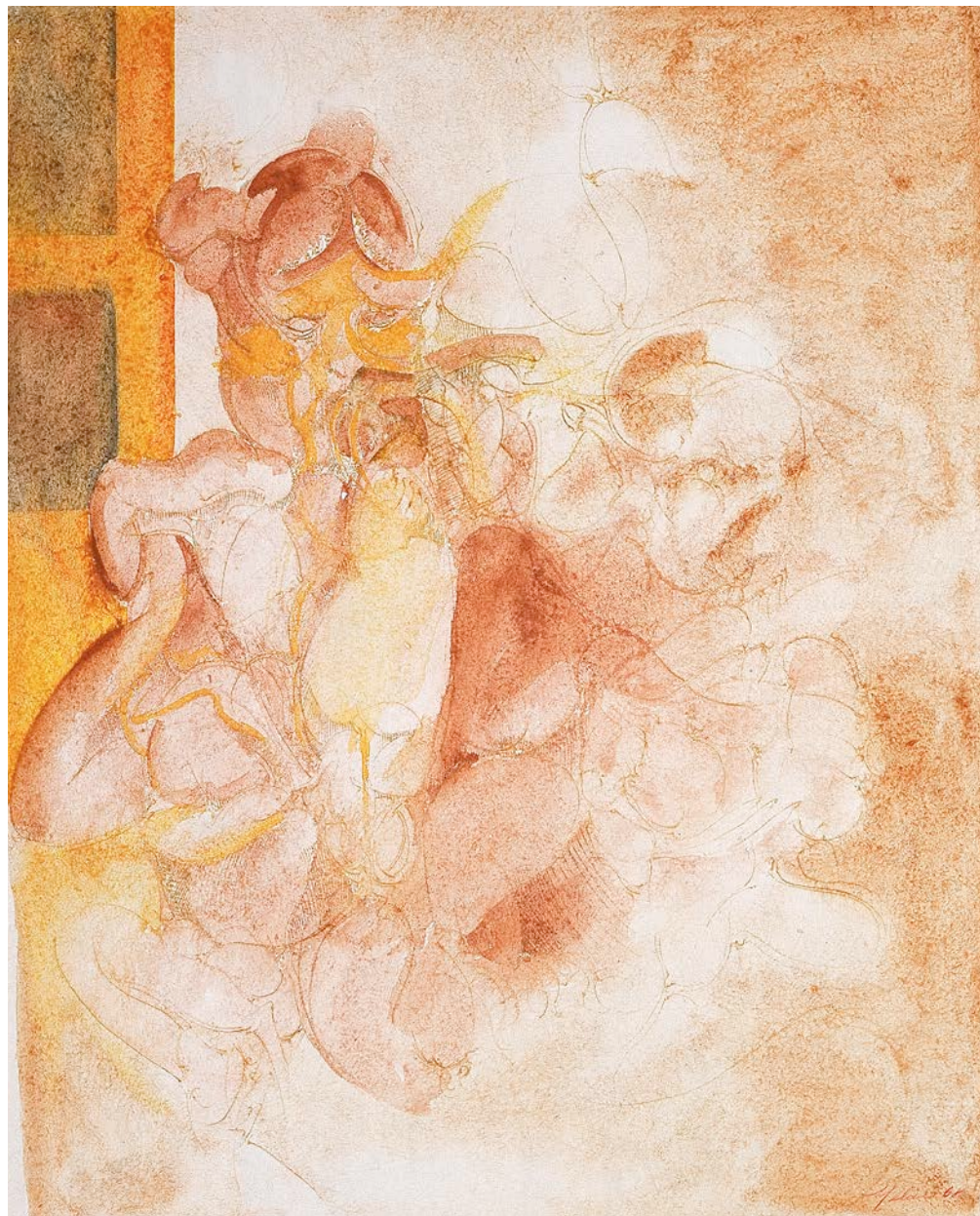


Plate 7
 Melecio Galván
Bagpiper, 1968
 Pen and brown ink with red chalk and colored
 washes on paper
 22 9/16 × 18 3/16 in. (57.3 × 46.2 cm)
 Gift of Thomas Cranfill, 1969; transfer from the
 Harry Ransom Center, 1982.943

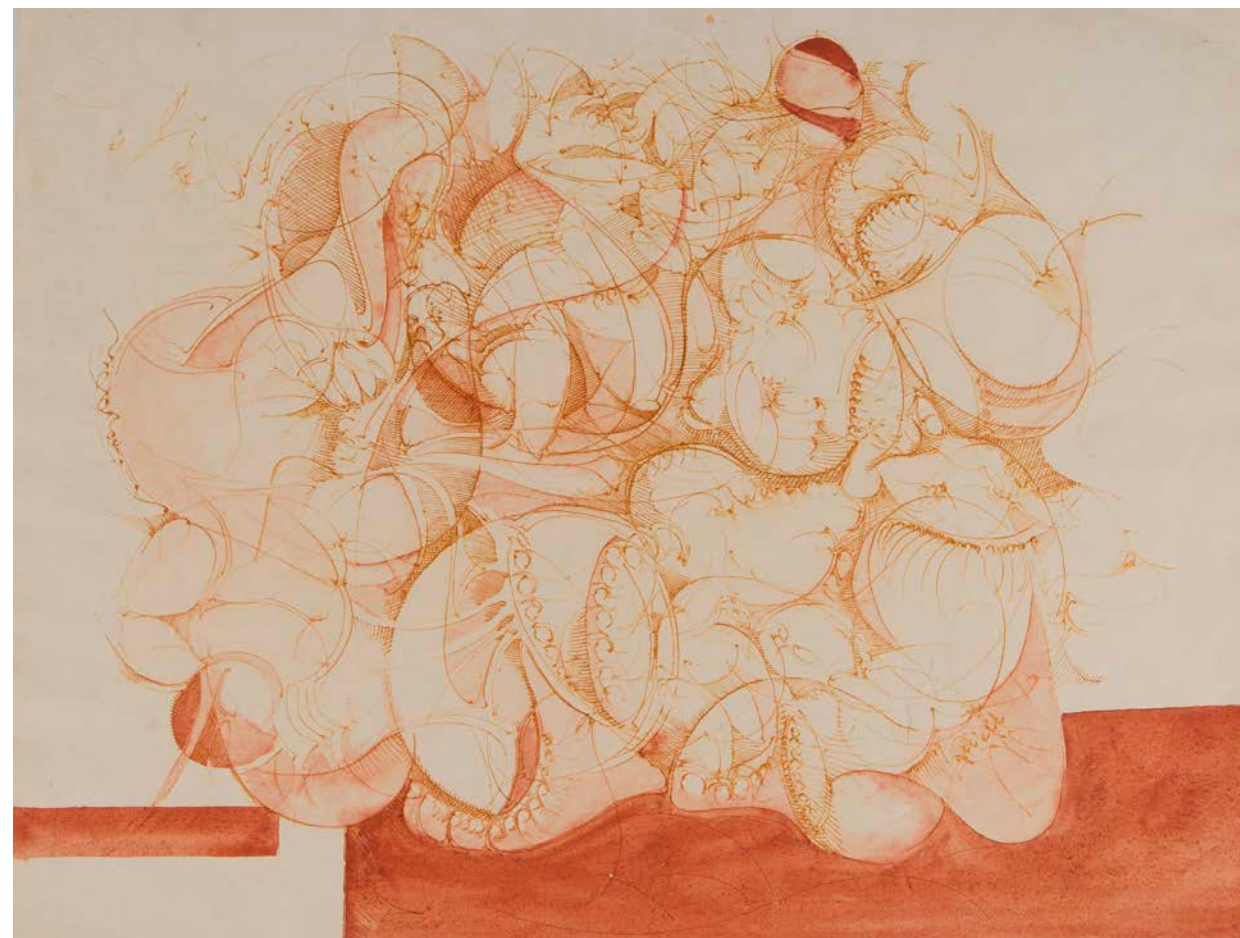


Plate 8
 Melecio Galván
Untitled, circa 1970
 Ink on paper
 19 3/4 × 25 7/8 in. (50.2 × 65.7 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2022.277



Plate 9
Melecio Galván
Myths, circa 1970
Ink on paper
16 1/4 × 22 in. (41.3 × 55.9 cm)
Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2021.77

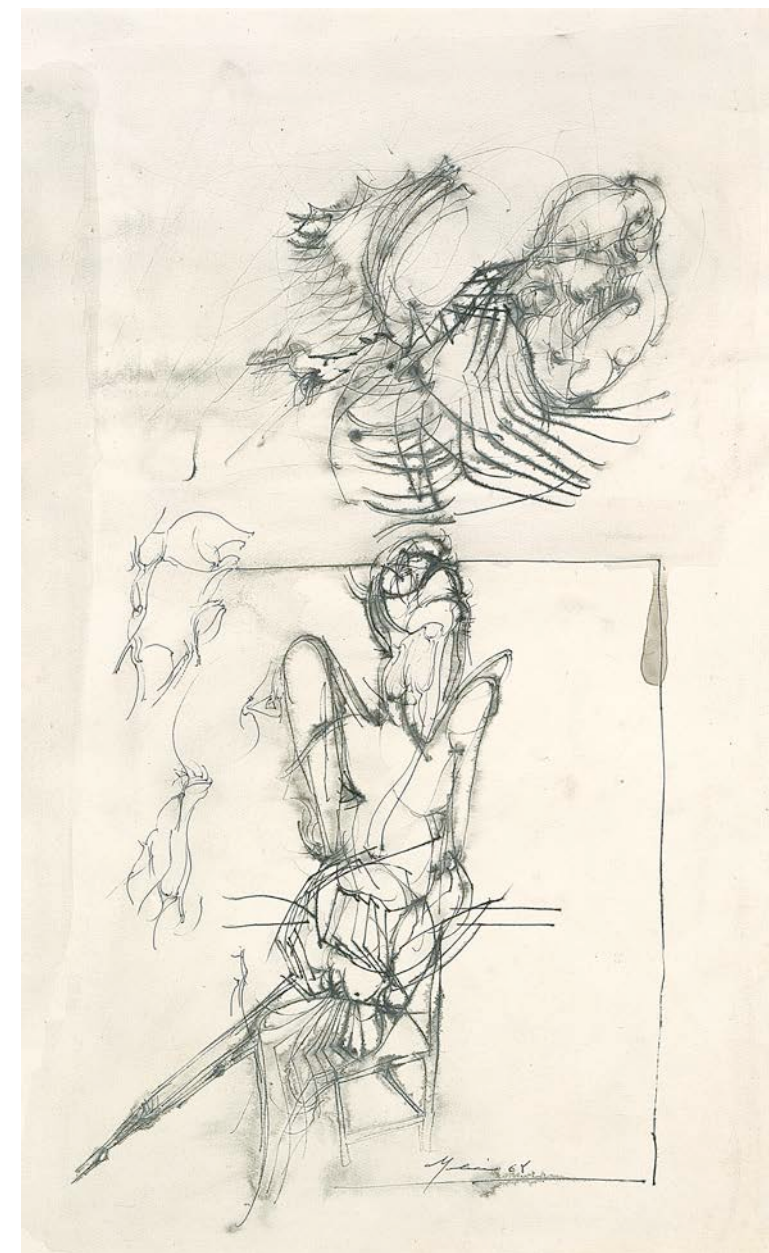


Plate 10
Melecio Galván
Seated Figure, 1968
Pen and ink with wash on paper
24 15/16 × 15 7/16 in. (63.4 × 39.2 cm)
Gift of Thomas Cranfill, 1973; transfer from the
Harry Ransom Center, 1983.42



Plate 11
Melecio Galván
Untitled (Two Horsemen), 1968
Pen and ink on paper
11 13/16 × 21 1/2 in. (30 × 54.6 cm)
Bequest of John Guion, 1982.726



Plate 12
Melecio Galván
F, 1968
Ink on paper
25 7/8 × 19 5/8 in. (65.7 × 49.8 cm)
Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2022.281



Plate 13
Melecio Galván
Daguerreotype Colonel Aureliano Buendía, 1969
Ink on paper
26 × 15 5/8 in. (66 × 39.7 cm)
Gift of Jeffrey B. Gold, 2021.80



Plate 14
Melecio Galván
Illustration for Gabriel García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude, 1969
Ink on paper
6 1/8 × 8 3/4 in. (15.5 × 22.2 cm)
Gift of Thomas Cranfill, 1969; transfer from the Harry Ransom Center, 1982.945

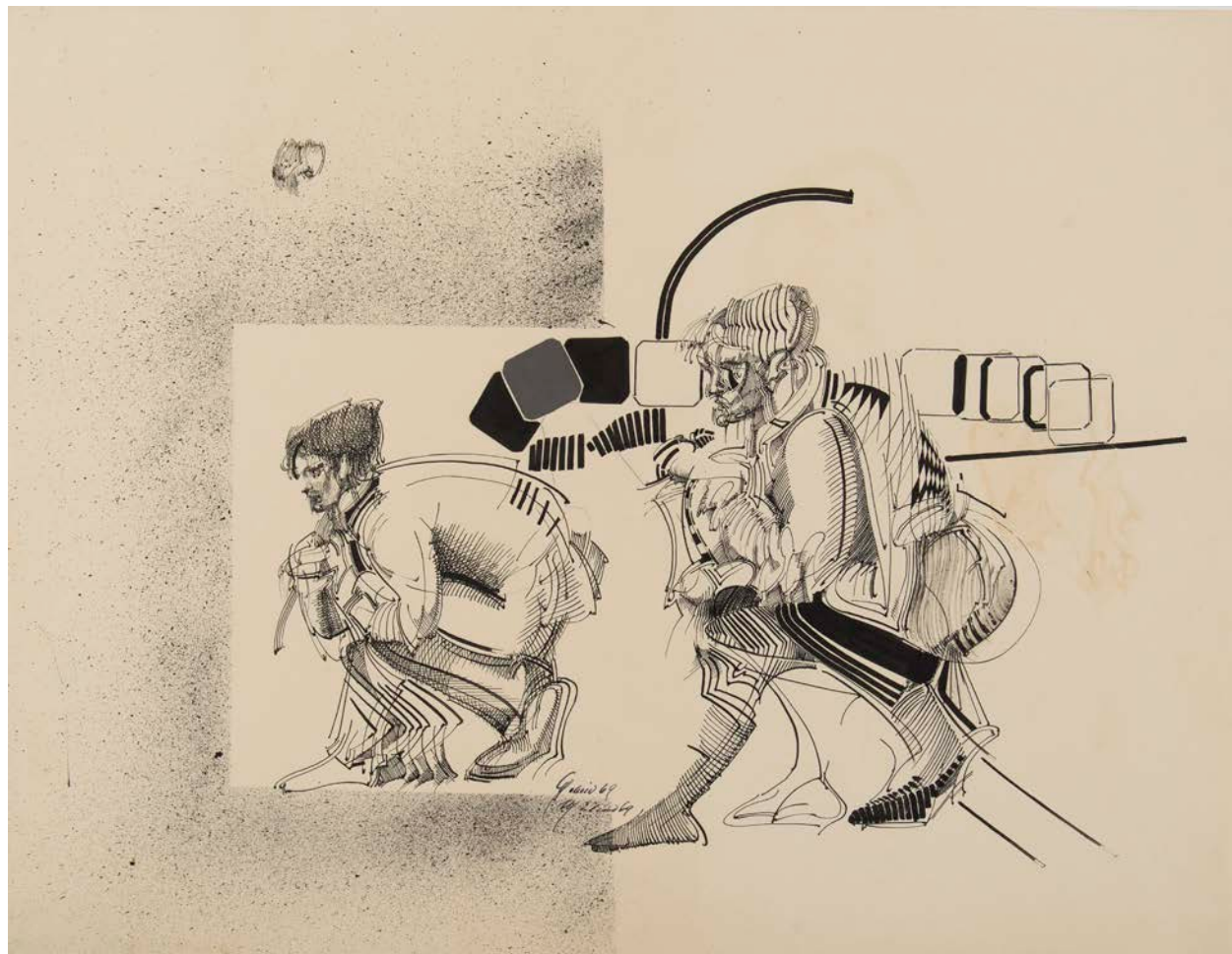


Plate 15
Melecio Galván
Figures, 1969
Ink on paper
19 3/4 × 25 5/8 in. (50.2 × 65.1 cm)
Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2022.275



Plate 16
Melecio Galván
Untitled, circa 1970
Ink on paper
15 1/2 × 15 1/2 in. (39.4 × 39.4 cm)
Gift of Jeffrey B. Gold, 2020.87



Plate 17
 Melecio Galván
Tapestry Flower, San Luis, 1969
 Ink on paper
 7 7/8 × 6 1/2 in. (20 × 16.5 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2020.89

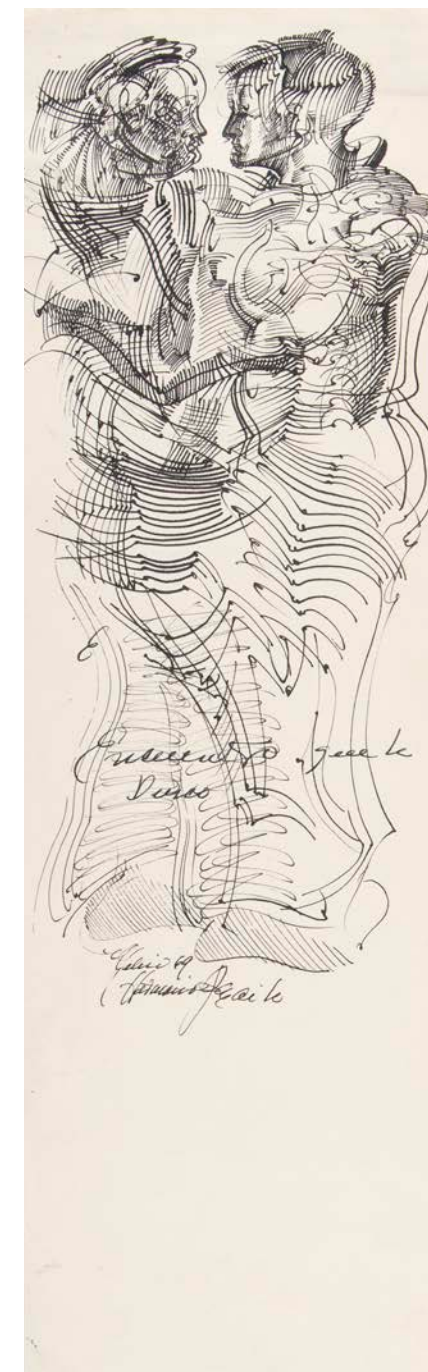


Plate 18
 Melecio Galván
Brothers, 1969
 Ink on paper
 18 5/8 × 5 3/4 in. (47.3 × 14.6 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2020.90



Plate 19
Melecio Galván
Y, 1969
Ink on paper
19 3/4 × 26 in. (50.2 × 66 cm)
Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2022.276



Plate 20
Melecio Galván
***The Vision of Christ*, 1969**
Ink on paper
26 × 40 in. (66 × 101.6 cm)
Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2023.55



Plate 21
Melecio Galván
My Family, 1969
Sanguine on paper
25 9/16 × 38 1/16 in. (65 × 96.7 cm)
Gift of Thomas Cranfill, 1981.74



The Galván Sánchez Family, 1948. Unknown photographer. From left to right: Nicéforo, age 8; Beto, age 13; Juan, age 6; Felipa; and Pancho with Melecio on his lap, age 3. Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, Mexico. [The photograph serves as a reference point for the artwork]



Plate 22
Melecio Galván
Eight Figures, January 11, 1970
 Ink on paper
 40 × 26 in. (101.6 × 66 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2023.54



Plate 23
Melecio Galván
Similar Portrait, January 13, 1970
 Sepia ink on paper
 32 5/8 × 18 in. (82.8 × 45.7 cm)
 Gift of Thomas Cranfill, 1980.99



Plate 24
Melecio Galván
Doubtful Face, circa 1970
 Ink on paper
 22 5/8 × 28 1/2 in. (57.5 × 72.4 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2023.47



Plate 25
Melecio Galván
The Helena by Toulouse Lautrec, circa 1970
 Lithograph
 26 × 20 in. (66 × 50.8 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2023.48



Plate 26
Melecio Galván
Untitled, January 13, 1970
 Ink on paper
 24 3/4 × 35 3/8 in. (62.9 × 89.9 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2023.51



Plate 27
Melecio Galván
Portrait of Mick Jagger, January 18, 1970
 Ink on paper
 40 × 26 in. (101.6 × 66 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2023.56

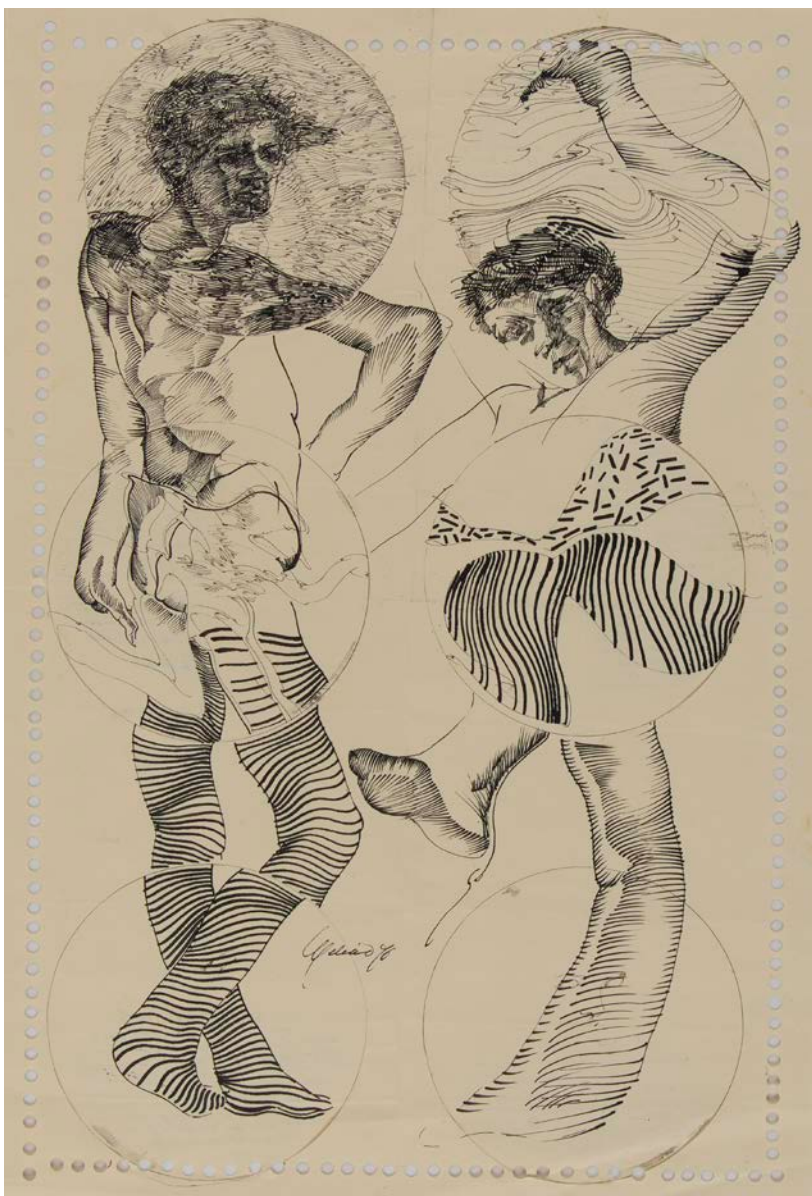


Plate 28
Melecio Galván
Untitled with Letter, recto, April 26, 1970
Ink on paper
23 × 15 3/4 in. (58.4 × 40 cm)
Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2021.79.a

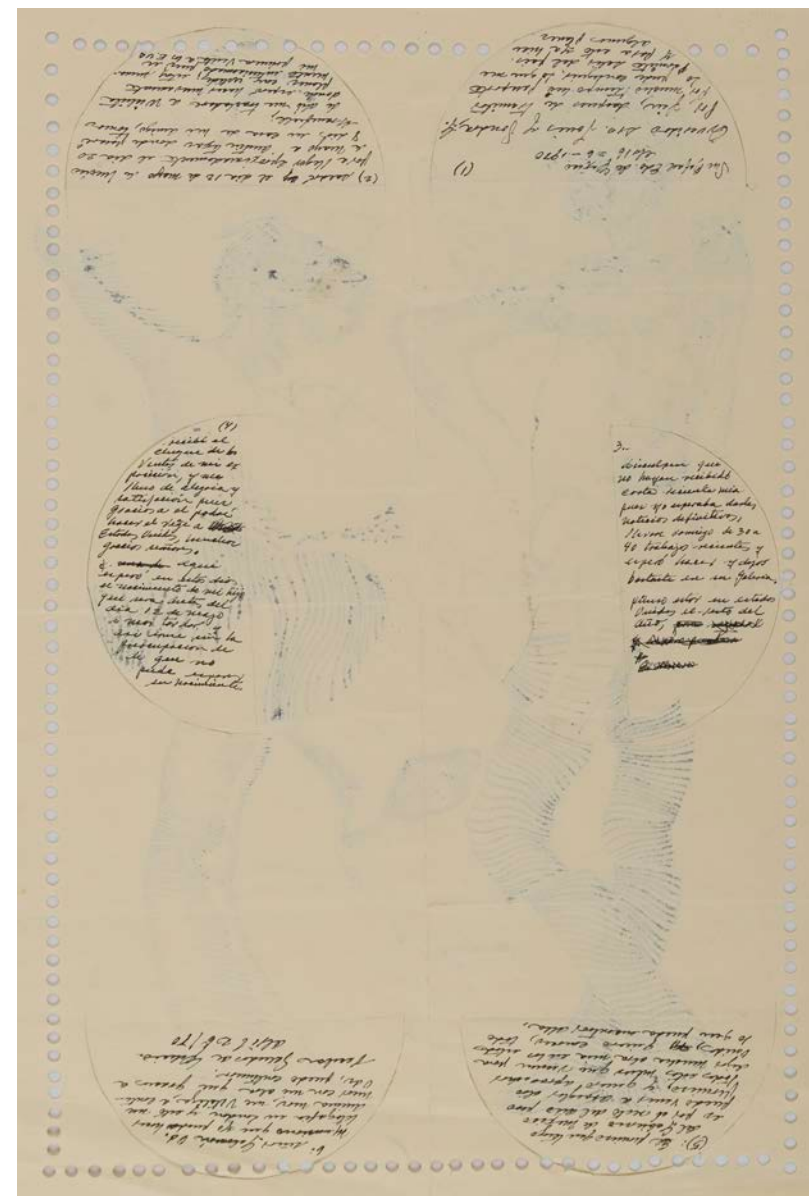


Plate 29
Melecio Galván
Untitled with Letter, verso, April 26, 1970
Ink on paper
23 × 15 3/4 in. (58.4 × 40 cm)
Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2021.79.b



Plate 30
Melecio Galván
Man, circa 1970
 Ink on paper
 10 1/4 × 14 1/2 in. (26 × 36.8 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2020.88



Plate 31
Melecio Galván
Hurtful Conversation, May 5, 1970
 Ink on paper
 18 × 24 in. (45.7 × 61 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2022.283



Plate 32
Melecio Galván
Midnight Cowboy, June 2, 1970
 Ink on paper
 24 3/8 × 18 1/2 in. (61.9 × 47 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2021.85



Plate 33
Melecio Galván
2 Figures Under the Effects of Hashish, June 5, 1970
 Ink on paper
 18 7/8 × 13 1/4 in. (48 × 33.7 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2020.85



Plate 34
 Melecio Galván
2 Figures in a Wheat Field, Wichita, June 5, 1970
 Ink on paper
 16 3/4 × 10 3/4 in. (42.5 × 27.3 cm)
 Gift of Jeffrey B. Gold, 2020.83



Plate 35
 Melecio Galván
Doctors During Delivery, June 7, 1970
 Ink on paper
 17 1/8 × 20 3/4 in. (43.5 × 52.7 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2020.81



Plate 36
Melecio Galván
The Draftsman Drowned in Mud, June 11, 1970
Ink on paper
21 1/8 × 13 1/8 in. (53.7 × 33.3 cm)
Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2020.82.a-b



Plate 37
Melecio Galván
Pagan Memory, June 15, 1970
Ink on paper
18 1/2 × 24 1/4 in. (47 × 61.6 cm)
Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2021.84



Plate 38
Melecio Galván
Figures, June 2, 1970
 Ink on paper
 24 1/4 × 18 1/2 in. (61.6 × 47 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2021.82



Plate 39
Melecio Galván
Conflict, June 25, 1970
 Ink on paper
 18 1/2 × 24 1/4 in. (47 × 61.6 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2021.83

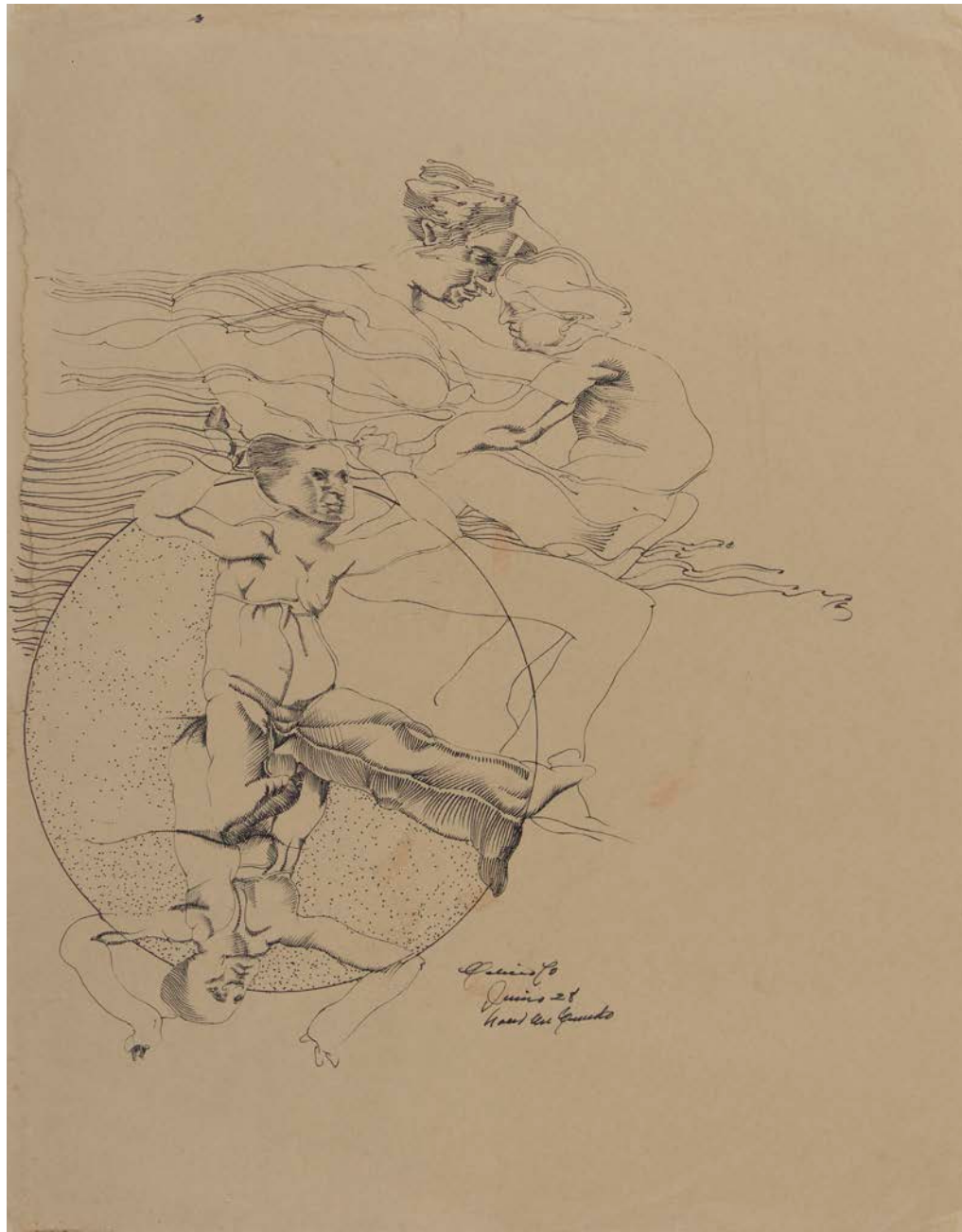


Plate 40
Melecio Galván
Untitled, June 28, 1970
 Ink on paper
 25 1/2 × 20 in. (64.8 × 50.8 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2022.279.a-b



Plate 41
Melecio Galván
Hail, June, 1970
 Ink on paper
 22 1/2 × 28 1/2 in. (57.2 × 72.4 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2023.49



Plate 42
Melecio Galván
Untitled, 1970
 Ink on paper
 26 1/4 × 40 in. (66.7 × 101.6 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2023.50

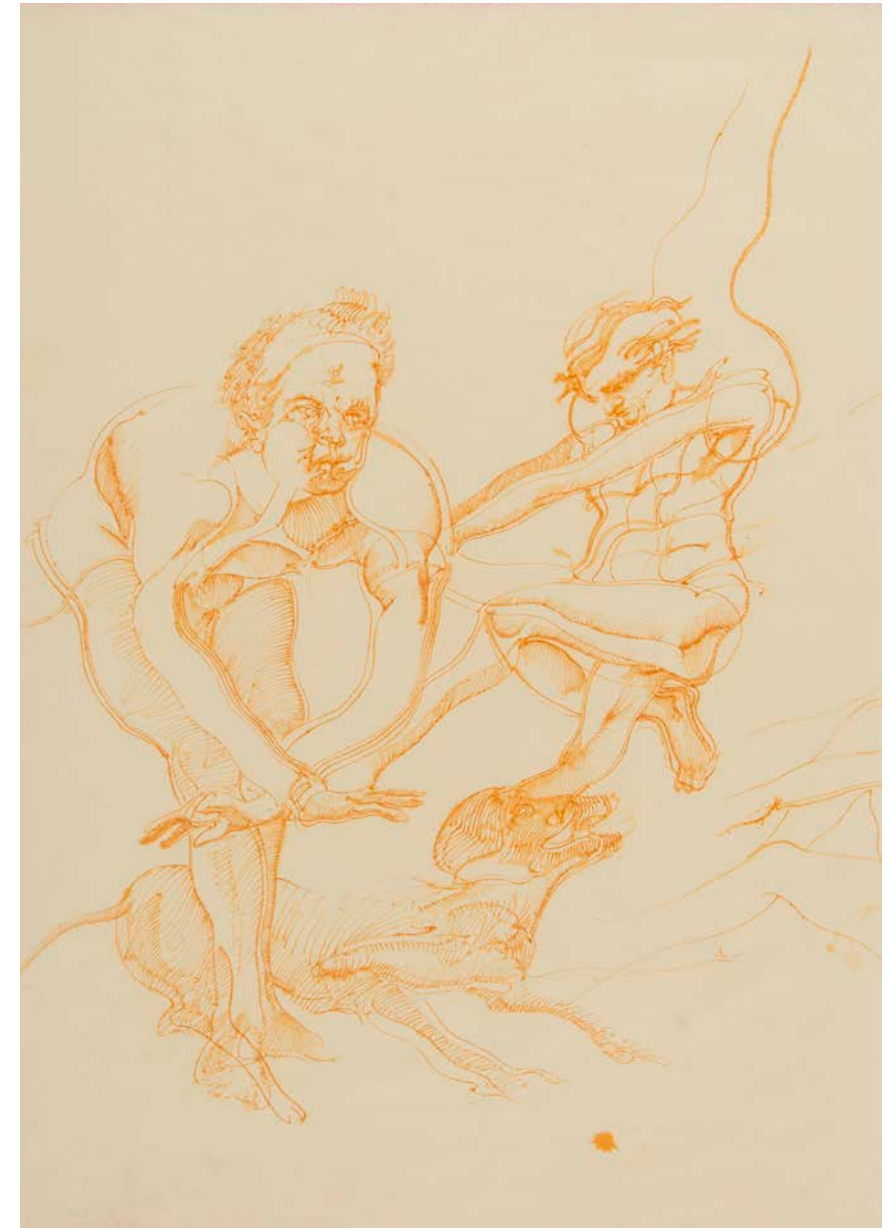


Plate 43
Melecio Galván
Untitled, circa 1967–72
 Ink on paper
 26 3/8 × 18 7/8 in. (67 × 47.9 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2022.278



Plate 44
 Melecio Galván
Conversation, 1970
 Ink on paper
 26 × 19 in. (66 × 48.3 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2023.53

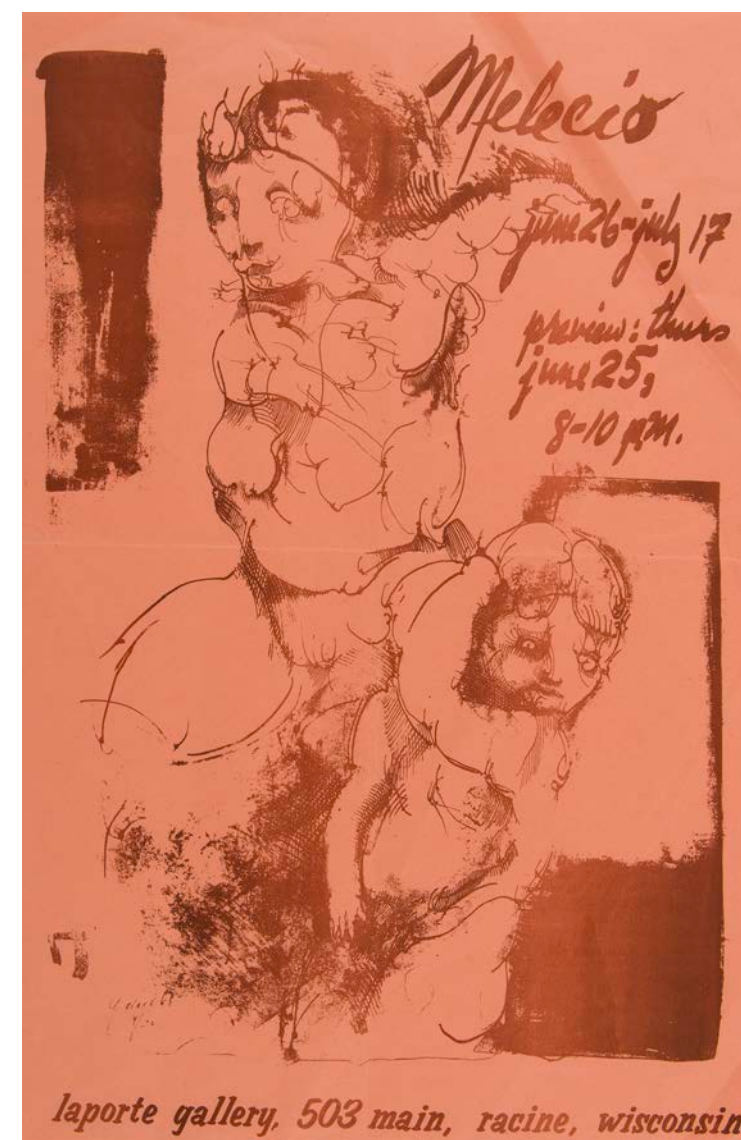


Plate 45
 Melecio Galván
*Flyer for Melecio Galván Exhibition, Laporte
 Gallery, Racine, Wisconsin, June 26–July 17, 1971,*
 June 25, 1971
 Printed poster
 Sheet: 16 3/4 × 10 7/8 in. (42.5 × 27.6 cm)
 Gift of Jeffrey B. Gold, 2021.86



Plate 46
Melecio Galván
Untitled, circa 1970
 Ink on paper
 9 5/8 × 16 in. (24.4 × 40.6 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2020.84



Plate 47
Melecio Galván
Untitled, circa 1970
 Ink on paper
 15 1/4 × 17 7/8 in. (38.7 × 45.4 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2020.86



Plate 48
 Melecio Galván
Untitled, circa 1970
 Ink on paper
 12 1/2 × 14 in. (31.8 × 35.6 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2021.78



Plate 49
 Melecio Galván
Untitled, circa 1967–72
 Ink on paper
 25 5/8 × 14 in. (65.1 × 35.6 cm)
 Gift of June and Jeffrey B. Gold, 2021.81



Author Biographies

Amaranta Galván Jiménez

Since 1997, Amaranta Galván Jiménez has been a promoter of Melecio Galván’s work and steward of the Melecio Galván Collection and Archive. For several years, she has also been a researcher at the following institutions: Center for Research, Documentation and Information on Plastic Arts at the National Institute of Fine Arts (INBA); the General Direction of Popular, Indigenous and Urban Cultures of the Ministry of Culture; and the National Museum of Popular Cultures.

Vanessa K. Davidson, Ph.D.

Vanessa K. Davidson has held the post of Curator of Latin American Art at the Blanton Museum of Art, of The University of Texas at Austin, since 2019. She earned an undergraduate degree in Hispano-American Literature from Harvard University and a PhD in Modern and Contemporary Latin American Art History from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. Davidson has held curatorial assistantships at The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art. During her eight-year tenure as the Shawn and Joe Lampe Curator of Latin American Art at Phoenix Art Museum, she organized thirteen exhibitions, including the retrospective *Valeska Soares: Any Moment Now* in collaboration with Julie Joyce (Santa Barbara Museum of Art), as part of the Getty Foundation’s *Pacific Standard Time*. In Phoenix, she also collaboratively organized two traveling exhibitions with institutions in Latin America: *Past/Future/Present: Contemporary Brazilian Art from the Museum of Modern Art, São Paulo* (2017–2019, with Dr. Cauê Alves, MAM-SP), and *Horacio Zabala: Mapping the Monochrome/La pureza está en la mezcla* (2016–17, the Amalia Lacroze de Fortabat Art Collection, Buenos Aires). Davidson’s 2021–22 exhibition *Oscar Muñoz: Invisibilia* was this renowned Colombian artist’s first US retrospective. Most recently, she served as the sole foreigner on the curatorial team for the São Paulo Museum of Modern Art’s 2022–2023 Biennial, entitled *Under the Ashes, Embers*.

Maricela del Rosario González Cruz Manjarrez, Ph.D.

Maricela del Rosario González Cruz Manjarrez received her PhD in art history from the Department of Philosophy and Letters of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), with specializations in aesthetics, Mexican art, and twentieth-century photography. Before retiring, she was an academic at the Institute of Aesthetic Research at UNAM for thirty years. Her long list of distinguished publications includes the following books: *The Debate Siqueiros-Rivera, 1934-1935, Aesthetic-political Arguments* (1996), *Juan Guzmán, A Vision of Modernity* (2005), *Aestheticization, Experimentation, and Vanguard: Photography in Germany during the First Decades of the 20th Century* (2009); and *Melecio Galván and His Signifying Space. The Lines of Memory, 1968-1982* (2014). She has also published numerous essays in journals such as *Decires* (UNAM), *Discurso visual* (National Institute of Fine Arts, INBA), *A Contracorriente* (University of North Carolina), and *Third Text* (London).

Rachel Mochon

Rachel Mochon is a Paper Conservator at the Harry Ransom Center at The University of Texas at Austin and formerly served as the Paper Conservator for the Campus Conservation Initiative (CCI). Mochon has a M.S. in Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works; a M.A. in History of Art & Archaeology from the Conservation Center of the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University; as well as a B.A. in Chemistry and Chemical Biology from Cornell University. Prior to joining the Ransom Center, she was the Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in Paper Conservation at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Mochon has also gained conservation experience through work in private practice, art museums, and artistic foundations, including the following: the Museum of Modern Art; the Whitney Museum of American Art; the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum; the Joan Mitchell Foundation; the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation; and the Hedda Sterne Foundation. Her research interests include modern and contemporary artists’ materials. Most recently, she has published on the use of nanocellulose in paper conservation.

Acknowledgements
Vanessa K. Davidson

The editor would like to recognize the contributions of the Blanton Museum of Art’s stellar team of collaborating colleagues who made this project a reality. Thanks are first due to Director Simone J. Wicha for believing in this endeavor from the start, and to Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs Carter Foster for his enthusiastic support of the monumental acquisition of artworks by Melecio Galván underlying this project. Many thanks also to Cassandra Smith, Meredith Sutton, Allie Heath, Shelby Lakins, Taryn Mills-Drummond, Michael Carnes, Matthew Langland, Eric Mathis, Andrew Anderson, and especially Annalise Gratovich, whose expert framing made the show sing. Credit is due to Manny Alcala, Anna Berns, Holly Borham, Katie Bruton, Meg Burns, Stacey Cilek, Claire Howard, Hannah Klemm, Jennifer Lioy, Carlotta Stankiewicz, and Rachel Urbano for their great assistance in many diverse areas. And special thanks go to the Blanton’s Latin American art curators, Florencia Bazzano, Rosario Granados, Holly McDonald, and Claudia Zapata, for their tremendously astute translations, editing insights, heroic logistical support, and helpful, healthy debates. I would especially like to recognize Dr. Florencia Bazzano, the Blanton’s Assistant Curator of Latin American Art, for her efficient work as Publication Manager, keeping this book project organized and on time.

Across The University of Texas at Austin Campus, we would also like to thank the LLILAS Benson Latin American Studies and Collections team for their invaluable collaboration. We would also like to thank Annette Granat and Sara Holmes for their perceptive translations; Terry A. Neff for insightful editing; Sandra Spicher for clever wordsmithing; Adam Michaels & Shannon Harvey of IN-FO CO for their innovative book design; and the Estates of Rafael Coronel, Juan Manuel de la Rosa, Silvia Pardo, Arturo Pastrana Vásquez, and Héctor Xavier for supporting this publication by lending image permissions.

Without the collaboration of Amaranta Galván Jiménez, steward of the Melecio Galván Collection and Archive, this project could never have come to fruition. We thank her for her generous participation in this undertaking. Thanks are also due to CENIDIAP (the National Center for Research, Documentation, and Information on the Visual Arts) and the DGCPIU

(the General Directorate of Popular, Indigenous, and Urban Cultures of the Ministry of Culture of Mexico), both in Mexico City, for their great research assistance.

I would like to give special thanks to Ellen and David Berman for believing in this fledgling project and enabling our extraordinary team to bring it to fruition. Finally, we give thanks to the prescient collectors whose donations have made the Blanton the largest institutional repository of works by Maestro Galván anywhere: Professor Thomas Cranfill, Mrs. and Mr. June and Jeffrey B. Gold, and Mr. John Guion. It is a privilege to safeguard these extraordinary artworks in our permanent collection for posterity, so that generations of visitors in decades and decades to come can also *Meet Melecio Galván*.

Experimentation

The artist's figure is depicted in the drawing, often in a state of movement, as if caught in a moment of transition. The figure is rendered with a sense of fluidity, suggesting a process of becoming rather than a fixed state. The drawing is a study in the human form, exploring the possibilities of movement and expression.

Experimentation

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Small text label on the right wall, likely providing information about the artwork.

Published in conjunction with the exhibition *Meet Melecio Galván: The Secret Artist & His Mexican Contemporaries*, on view at the Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, March 23, 2024–August 5, 2024.

Support for this exhibition at the Blanton was provided in part by Ellen and David Berman.

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