



CLARA HETENY - August 17, 1919 / September 13, 1974

CLARA HETENY was born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1919, where she attended the School of Applied Arts, Tibor Gallé's School of Drawing, and the Strasser Atelier. Her teachers included French surrealist Marcel Jean and painters Sandor Bortnyik and Aurel Bernath, former members of the Bauhaus.

A member of the Hungarian Young Artists' Movement of the "Café Revue" since 1944, she was one of the "5 young people" who, in March 1945, gave rise to the first art exhibition in the ruined city.

After leaving Hungary in 1948, following a brief period in Rome, she traveled to Uruguay and then Brazil, settling in São Paulo where she met and married Mauro Francini, also a painter. She took an active part in Brazilian artistic life with solo and group exhibitions, participation in the São Paulo Biennials and Rio de Janeiro Modern Art Salons, and theatrical activities as a costume and set designer, mainly at the "Teatro Brasileiro de Comedia". She received widespread critical acclaim, awards, and recognitions.

She returned to Europe in 1959 and lived in Paris until 1962, then moved to Milan, where she lived, worked, and exhibited until 1974.

Works by Clara Heteny can be found in the Pinacoteca do Estado and the Museum of Modern Art in São Paulo, the Museum of Fine Arts in Montevideo, and in numerous private collections in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Peru, Chile, the US, Canada, France, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Italy.

CLARA HETENY IN HER OWN WORDS:

"To abstract is also to reduce to a single concept, to an ideal expression, a whole sum of natural sensations present in us and in things. It is in the visual world that my painting seeks forms in order to organize and balance them on the surface of the canvas. At the same time, it appears abstract to me in that it is linked to a personal and ideal perception of my surroundings. The geometric composition, made up of horizontals and verticals, allows me to express the internal force, the order that I perceive in the material world, with color, dictated by temperament, being the most intimate means of feeling present in the painting.

...the modern painter is not content with merely portraying the appearance of things, but wants to reach their essence through different angles. Modern painting is fundamentally different from ancient painting, not on an external level, not so much in the way of painting, but in the way of thinking, that is, of seeing things simultaneously from various points of view. Finally, he analyzes and synthesizes the facts."

AND IN THOSE OF SOME CRITICS AND ARTISTS:

Her paintings are calm, seeming to have been painted at midday, following a silent and tenacious path until reaching a refined pictorial expression of color and matter, and an understanding of herself. The noble lines of her constructions reveal the starting point for the sensitive and the imaginary. Her houses are a fleeting motif for the ethereal, the untouchable, the sacred. Always managing to express herself in her varied work on the same theme, Clara Heteny reminds me of Goethe's words: "Draw a circle around yourself and dig deep."

ALBERTO GRECO, Argentine painter - San Paolo – 1958

...she stands out for her grace, for the clarity of her compositions, for this naive allusion to the reality in which she lives. Diluted tempera helps her to accentuate the delicacy of her themes with its transparencies.

ELENA POGGI - "El Nacional" - Buenos Aires - 1958

... the beauty of the gentle colors, the delicate geometric composition and landscapes of her paintings remind me of Morandi, a painter who is very dear to me.

PROF. KURT PINTHUS – Columbia University – 1961

...these paintings impress with their unity of conception, reminiscent of the lessons of Carrà and Morandi. The simple, simplest of Italian architectural motifs, geometrically inserted into the surface of the painting, is delicately transformed, poeticized with restrained, luminous colors: a whisper of colors.

K.D. – “Stuttgarter Nachrichten” – 1967

Relationships between clearly geometric surfaces dominate the landscapes of painter Clara Heteny, exhibited at the Institute of Foreign Relations. Southern themes—villages, chapels, mills, boats—are represented in delicate colors, in objectively simplified compositions, suggesting an atmosphere of calm and balance. These compositions, which demonstrate remarkable pictorial qualities, never resort to figurative motifs: the penetratingly concentrated pictorial effect arises solely from the thing represented, especially house facades, seen from different perspectives.

G.W. – “Stuttgarter Zeitung” – 1967

At the Galleria Moroni, an exhibition of rare spiritual splendor. Clara Heteny is exhibiting, and we must admit that we have rarely been so completely captivated by a grace so detached from the burdens of reality, which is evoked only through transparencies and allusions, according to a barely hinted keyboard of themes that we find recomposed in music full of our soul.

It is the most solar and refined, most fantastic and yet most understandable, most ingenuous and most knowledgeable painting we have seen in recent years. Above all, there is a constructive essentiality that coincides with poetry, a gentleness that translates into a silent song, a reflection of distant lands that is never folkloric. It is a unity of conception, an organicity of dictation that makes each theme echo the other, just as the taste for geometry leads the images to mirror an abstraction that does not exclude narrative but has no need for words. It already has everything within itself in the delicate exaltation of transparencies, in the thread that unravels a purity of design, reduced to those eternal laws that are the soul of the harmony of things.

ALFIO COCCIA, art critic - Milano - 1968

EXHIBITIONS:

- São Paulo Biennial (1953 to 1961)
- Modern Art Salon, São Paulo (1952 to 1959)
- Modern Art Salon, Rio de Janeiro (1957 to 1959)
- Abstract Painting at the Museum of Modern Art, São Paulo (1957)
- Leirner Prize, São Paulo (1958-1959)
- Das Folhas Gallery, São Paulo (1958-1959)
- 9 Artists from São Paulo at the Antígona Gallery, Buenos Aires (1958)
- Ambiente Gallery, São Paulo (1959)
- Exhibition of Brazilian Artists at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro (from 1959 to 1961) Haus der Kunst in Munich, Museum of Art in Hamburg, Museum of Modern Art in Paris, Atheneum in Madrid, Museum of Art in Lisbon, Museum in Utrecht
- Salon de la Femme Peintre at the Museum of Modern Art, Paris (1961)
- Galleria Sistina, São Paulo (1961)
- International Exhibition of Small Paintings, Palermo (1963) and Tunis (1964)
- Province of Palermo Award (1966)
- Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart (1967)
- Moroni Gallery, Milan (1968)
- Estate Valsesiana, Serravalle Sesia (1968)
- Gavirate Biennial (1970)
- Italo-Brazilian Art Gallery, Milan (1972)
- Solo exhibition organized by the Italian Federation of Women in Arts, Professions, and Business at Palazzo Corvaia, Taormina (1993)
- Artistic Paths. Heteny and Francini between Europe and Brazil at Palazzo Canonici, Barbarano Mossano, Vicenza (2025)

