



André Lhote and the painting "Interior com figuras femininas" (1936) of the MASP collection

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Abstract

André Lhote (France, 1885 - 1962) was a sculptor, painter, critic and educator. He wrote critical texts, books and articles on aspects of vanguard production and treatises on landscape and figure. Two of his paintings are present in the collection of the "Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand" (MASP). Both entered the museum collection in the second half of the 1940s, a period that coincided with the beginnings of its foundation and the elaboration of its pedagogical objective. This work proposes the study of one of these paintings, "Interior com figuras femininas", of 1936, concerning its thematic, pictorial, contextual and market aspects. In this way, it was possible to unveil characteristics and tendencies of his painting, in the dialogues he establishes with artistic movements and in the originality of his works.

Key words:

Modern Art, France, André Lhote, MASP.

Introduction

Lhote worked in French art circles from the mid-1910s until the 1950s. Having an independent reputation (GOLDING, 1988), the artist-writer was able to move through different artistic movements and debates, with emphasis on Cubism and its multiple references (COTTINGTON, 2000). He had written extensively about art and therefore has become a paradigmatic case for the study of the transformations that were delineated in the field during the first decades of the 20th century. His writing, pictorial and pedagogical productions are seen here as intrinsically related (BOUILLER, 2007).

The justification of this research is based on the curious absence of works in Portuguese on the artist and on this painting, given Lhote's relations with Brazil. Our goals concern the understanding of André Lhote's painting "Interior com figuras femininas" in regard to its interplay with European art in the first half of the 20th century and with the paths of the artist's own pictorial and critical production. In addition, we were able to access the trajectory followed by the painting until it reached the MASP collection in the second half of the 1940s.

The period of time covered by the analysis was from 1919, when Lhote began to participate in artistic debates and to publish critical and theoretical texts in periodicals, until 1947, when the painting arrived in São Paulo.

Results and Discussion

The analysis covered most of the questions raised by the painting: the cultural environment in which it was produced, the pictorial elements present in it, the dialogues it established with Lhote's own artistic theory and its journey as an object inserted in the marketing field of the 1940s.

Lhote's career proved to be a paradigmatic case for analyzing the concepts in dispute in the period and for understanding the selectivity of the complex circumstances in which artistic canons are formulated. This being a historiographical work, painter and painting were understood as objects of analysis within the complex social, economic and academic system in which they are inserted.

The documentary research allowed us to access the conditions through which the painting arrived in São

Paulo. These conditions were intrinsically related to the post-World War II European context, to the new museological conceptions under debate in the Western world, to the São Paulo cultural policy formulated during the Estado Novo period and to the internationalization generated by the scope of a communications network such as the "Diários Associados".

The principle that the pictorial work has its own language, to be understood and related to the bibliography and to other written and visual sources of the painter himself and his contemporaries, methodologically guided this research.

Conclusions

The analytical effort in respect of the painting would not have been possible outside the course prescribed by the study of Lhote's career. At the same time, we could select these aspects only from the characteristics elucidated by the painting itself.

Among them, the representation of women emerges as fundamental to the concepts of the work, carrying varied references and (re) interpretations of the History of Art. Such concepts, being read together with his written theories (LHOTE, 1967), have allowed a broader understanding of the painting in its own time than the canonical narratives are capable of encompassing. Without this procedure it would be dangerous to incur the error of categorizing the painting, restricting it to some specific artistic movement that would not be able to summarize it.

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