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DE CHILE

The time that splits away

*The contemporary
in the work of
Ana Cortés Jullian
(1895-1998)*

“I have lived in a hurry always taking notes, experimenting with techniques, sketching, capturing the immaterial in art. Now that I have gained a great deal of experience, time slips away. I’m short of daylight hours!”

Ana Emma del Rosario Cortés Jullian was a Chilean artist who developed her visual work throughout much of the 20th century. In a time of dizzying changes and turbulent political and social events, her artistic production developed in a constant tension between the influence of tradition and the search for the new.

Through her prolific career as an artist and educator, it is possible to notice the range and diversity of formats, styles and media that reflect her exploration of avant-garde languages and the search for the contemporary, articulating an image of the present.

Winning the National Art Prize in 1974 positioned her as one of the most relevant visual artists of the 20th century in Chile.



Costumbrismo in her artistic development and early work

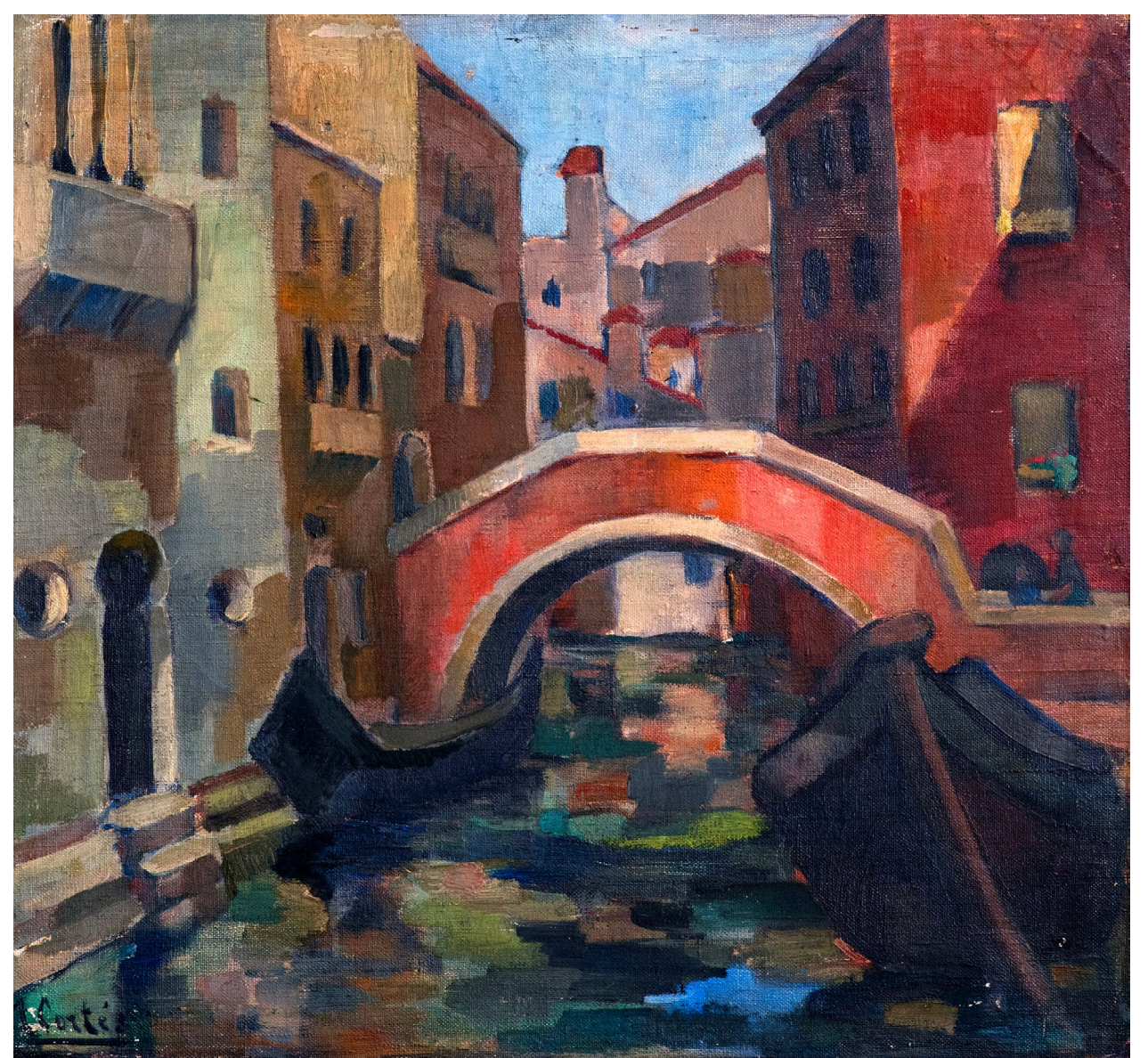
In the fall of 1919, Juan Francisco González encouraged his students at the School of Fine Arts to explore painting outdoors without reservation. Ana Cortés, recently enrolled as a student and speaking fluent French – due to her primary studies in Paris – immediately caught her teacher’s attention, becoming one of his outstanding students. Ana received from him that passionate and enthusiastic way of painting, of capturing the Chilean countryside, its coves, flowers and fruits, its chromatic accents. Adhering to that perspective, she produced a series of works of lyrical and sensitive visions of the human figure, portraits and still lifes rendered in large spontaneous and decisive strokes.





The influence of cubism and the avant-garde

Invited by her brother Carlos, Ana Cortés set off in the autumn of 1925 to study at the so-called School of Paris. Eager to experience the changes and to witness the expressions of the avant-garde movements first-hand, this journey represented a search for independence in the artistic field, the attainment of a language of her own. She enrolled at the Grand Chaumière Academy and the Colarossi Academy and sat in on Bourdelle's classes. In 1926 she was selected to exhibit at the Salon des Artistes Françaises and that same year she joined the studio of the master André Lhote, delving deeper into the ideas of Cézanne's constructivism, the formal theories of cubism, the role of geometry in painting, the elements of expression of the language of forms and the abstract conceptions of composition.



Return to genre painting

“At night we had, as students, workers and professionals who were going to do something with their hands. That’s where I came to know the Chilean! Chileans have an innate dignity (never did I hear an impolite word from them). Chileans are very sensitive This is an extraordinary country!”

Once back in Chile, Cortés became fully involved in teaching as a decoration teacher at the Escuela Superior Técnica Femenina, also participating in the controversial Salón Oficial in October 1928. That same year she was appointed librarian at the School of Fine Arts and in May 1931 she was confirmed in her position as professor of Poster and Propaganda at the School of Applied Arts. Genre painting addressing everyday themes and the representation of popular classes was considered a minor artistic activity in relation to themes of historical, religious or mythological past; however, Cortés, emphasizing a modernist approach, developed a chromatic search for singular characteristics that afforded dynamism and strength to the representation.

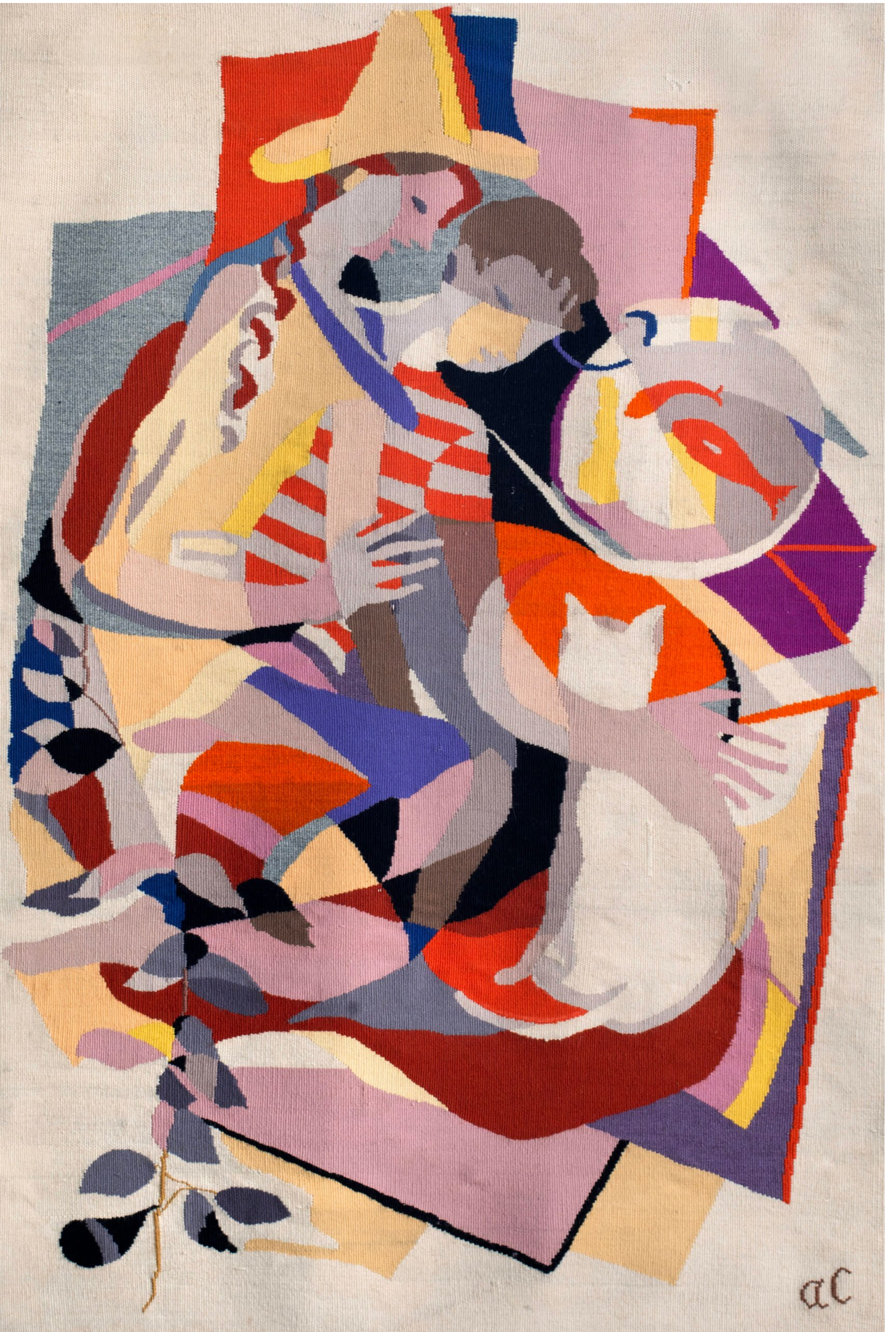




New forms and experimentation

Between 1937 and 1938, Ana Cortés again traveled to Europe with a group of artists from the School of Applied Arts to perfect their skills in design and composition. During the 1940s, the artist exhibited collectively and individually in Argentina, the United States, Brazil, the United Kingdom, Colombia and France. Between 1950 and 1953, she made a new trip to Europe commissioned by the government to deepen her knowledge of design. While in Paris, she was impressed by some plays such as “Cuento mediterráneo” or “Le rêve d’Effrom”, which inspired her to create a series employing figures of harlequins, jesters, minstrels and musicians. Upon returning, she began to experiment with works in different media such as wood, ceramics, metal, paper and textiles.





Incursion into neo-figuration languages

In 1959, after retiring as a professor at the School of Applied Arts, Ana Cortés devoted herself to traveling and developing her career as a full-time painter. While in Europe, the artist returned to the compositional exploration of the line as an articulation of the elements on the plane. The critical discussions on artistic development on the international scene showed a renewed interest in abstract expressionism, where harrowing artistic works proliferated, as well as the influence of formalism. Her landscapes, portraits and still lifes from this period are arranged in expressive fullness and matteric painting, where figuration is only hinted at, leaving the viewer to imagine the scene as a whole.





The urban experience and abstraction

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