

# SEE AND TRAVEL: HUIDOBRO ON ROUTE



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## TEXT 1

The Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro traveled to Paris in 1916 with his family seeking to become part of the heart of the European artistic and literary avant-garde. His objective was to develop and disseminate his aesthetic proposal of creationism, a movement which he promoted, and which proposed that the poet should not imitate nature but create new realities with his word.

He settled in a convulsive Paris in the middle of the war and inserted himself into the cultural field of the time, where the artistic proposals of the avant-garde such as Cubism, Dadaism and Futurism emerged and coexisted. He interacted with key figures of the avant-garde such as Guillaume Apollinaire, Pablo Picasso, Joan Miró, Fernand Léger, Jacques Lipchitz, Juan Gris, the Robert and Sonia Delaunay marriage, and Pierre Reverdy.

This experience reinforced his innovative spirit and consolidated his role as one of the great poetic innovators in the Spanish language. In addition, he was able to publish his works in French, establish links with

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avant-garde magazines, and position himself as a bridge between Latin America and Europe in the artistic sphere.

In 1918 he visited Madrid and published *Eiffel Tower* and *Arctic Poems*. The impact of his visit is made explicit by Rafael Cansino Assens, who pointed out: "It is the only literary event of the year, because with it the latest aesthetic trends from abroad passed through our meridian" (1).

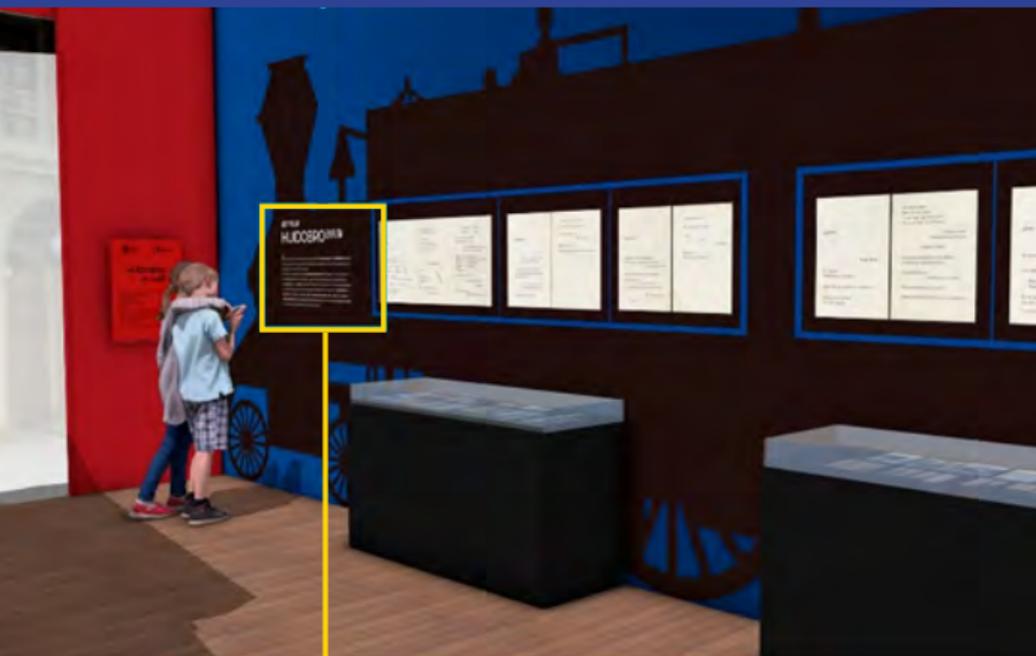
Huidobro writes in a climate of creative freedoms, in an "era of free words, calligrams and Cubist poetry, of visual and textual collage... when we had come to visuality as a utopia of the word" (2). With *Poemas Árticos*, avant-garde poetry in Spanish is inaugurated. Its texts are fragmentary, they suppress punctuation marks and linear order, they are articulated in an arrangement that uses the whites and spaces of the page, they incorporate various typographic games, and the words are uprooted from their usual connections and meanings.

- (1) Juan Manuel Bonet. *El ultraísmo y las artes plásticas*. Valencia: Ivam, 1996: 11
- (2) Waldo Rojas. *Vicente Huidobro. Obras poéticas en francés*. Santiago: Universitaria, 1999: 16

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## TEXT 2

“I embark every day for a dangerous journey.  
When dangerous journeys no longer exist,  
life will have lost all interest.”

(Huidobro, *Vientos Contrarios*, 1926)

“See and travel: Huidobro on the road” displays poems and everyday objects linked to the routes of the creationist poet between 1916 and 1945. Passages, letters, postcards, photographs and books, means of transportation, vestiges of modern life in the first half of the twentieth century provide a glimpse of the importance of travel in the work of this tireless explorer and creator of new worlds. The exhibition is based on three of his books that demonstrate this impact: *Poemas Árticos* (1918), *Tour Eiffel* (1918), and *Altazor* (1931).

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In addition, a brief dictionary of terms related to travel and means of transportation is presented, many of these currently in disuse, which are illustrated with documents and pieces from the UC Chilean Toy Museum, to bring us closer to the lexicon of Huidobro and that of 20th-century travelers.

## DISPLAY CASE 1

Objects, documents and photographs from some of Huidobro's trips to and within Europe. (Poems "Exprés", "Paquebot" and "Wagon Lit")

## DISPLAY CASE 2

Ration cards, documents and photographs that testify to the two world wars that the poet lived through. (Poems "Alerta" and "Gare")

## DISPLAY CASE 3

Documents, photographs and map of Paris with the spaces traveled by Huidobro (Poems "Adiós" and "Emigrante América").

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## TEXT 3

Postcards and photographs that evoke the Europe in which the poet lived provide a visual context of the cultural environment that surrounded him. Highlights include images linked to the artists with whom he corresponded, including fundamental figures of the European avant-garde as well as prominent representatives of Chilean art such as Camilo Mori and Luis Vargas Rosas, among others. These relationships show the active participation of Huidobro in the international circuits of his time.

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## TEXT 4

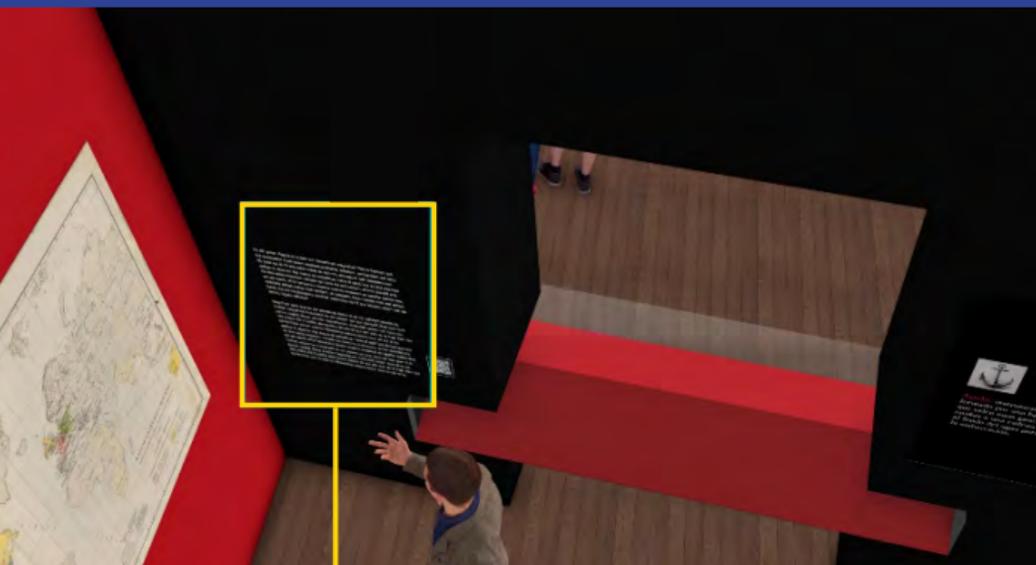
The poem *Tour Eiffel* contains a single poem written in French and is displayed on four colored sheets. It is a groundbreaking work, where language becomes architecture, and the power of poetry to reinvent the world is celebrated. In these pages, the speaker travels to the heights of the tower. There he reaches a superior vision that transcends the limits of time and space: "What do you see up there?... I see the earth spinning."

The cover of the book has a color image of the Parisian tower, icon of modernity, elaborated by Robert Delaunay, a French painter who pioneered abstract art and was known for his vibrant use of color and light, and who also was influenced by Cubism and urban modernity.

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## TEXT 5

*Altazor* belongs to the genre of the extensive modern poem, which Huidobro began writing at the end of the First World War. It includes multiple references to “traveling” —planes, cars, airships, parachutes— and “seeing” —eyes, looks, pupil. The poem is a metaphysical journey of the aviator-poet who goes to the heights and cannot help falling and disappearing into space and the universe. This fall is threefold: that of the individual Vicente Huidobro and his double, *Altazor*; that of men in a historical epoch, and that of the human race. (\*)

(\*) Miguel Gomes, “Altazor y los protocolos de la experiencia lectora”, in *Altazor*, Santiago: Ediciones UC, 2023: 8-35.