

Uver Solís and Learning to See for Herself

By Juan Sarracino

Guy Pérez Cisneros's 1945 review offers a way to think about teaching that guides technique without turning a student into an imitation of the teacher

The clearest indication of the teaching Guy Pérez Cisneros attributes to Domingo Ravenet is an unexpected prohibition: "Do not imitate me." The phrase appears in his review of Uver Solís at the Lyceum, dated March 8, 1945. Its interest lies in the relationship it establishes between authority and freedom. The teacher retains an active role, but the desired outcome is that the student should recognize and develop her own way of seeing. [1, p. 1; quotation translated from Spanish]

The text survives here in a recomposed transcription attributed to the newspaper *Información*. The Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Vicente Aguilera Cerni reproduces an entry credited to Cuba's Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes that dates the opening of Solís's gouache and watercolor exhibition to the same day. This agreement supports the exhibition context, although it does not replace checking the article against the original newspaper. [2]

Teaching includes choosing what not to impose

Pérez Cisneros begins by opposing the works to certain models of correctness. Perspective, anatomy, and established poses appear as a body of formulas capable of smothering a developing sensibility. His forceful criticism should not be mistaken for proof that all academic teaching has that effect. He is defending a particular experience through a deliberately broad polemic. [1, p. 1]

Within that polemic, the teacher has very specific tasks. He advises on brushes and color mixtures, warns about the fragility of certain procedures, and encourages observation of the street and the search for subjects. He also recommends media and discusses other artists. The learning described includes material knowledge, selection, and conversation. The freedom celebrated by the critic is sustained by this guidance.

A contemporary record helps place Ravenet without making the review our only witness. The Museum of Modern Art's catalog of its Latin American collection, published in 1943, identifies him as a professor at Havana's Normal School and director of exhibitions at the university. This reference confirms his educational and institutional activity, rather than the exact words Pérez Cisneros assigns to him. [3, p. 94]

The passage placing advice in Ravenet's mouth should therefore be read as the critic's presentation of a teaching relationship. These pages do not tell us whether he transcribes a conversation, condenses several, or constructs an explanatory scene. Its value lies in showing what Pérez Cisneros expects of a good teacher: intervention in the means of working without taking possession of the image's eventual direction.

A difficulty turned into a procedure

The argument reaches its most fruitful point when it leaves slogans behind and describes how the painting is made. Pérez Cisneros connects Solís's caution about watercolors running together to dense surfaces, dark tones, and white separations between areas of color. What might be judged a technical limitation acquires, in his reading, an organizing capacity. The interval that prevents mixing also draws a contour. [1, pp. 1-2]

This explanation allows us to consider style as the outcome of repeated decisions in response to material problems. The painter need not first execute a norm and then depart from it to produce a meaningful image. Her way of resolving a difficulty can generate a recognizable visual structure. This is the critic's interpretation, still requiring comparison with the exhibited watercolors, but it has the virtue of attending to procedure rather than reducing individuality to an inexplicable gift.

Nor should the comparison with etching become an identification of technique. The article discusses watercolors and gouaches; when it evokes a print, it describes an impression of density, darkness, and definition. Confusing visual analogy with material would lose precisely what makes his observation interesting: one medium can produce effects associated with another while remaining itself.

Imagination observes its surroundings

The review's second core examines the autonomy of details. Hands, eyes, and feet seem to act on their own impulses; objects participate in the overall movement. Pérez Cisneros accepts that this world might appear childlike, but finds a unity in the emotional intensity animating it. His vocabulary of adolescence and innocence forms part of the interpretive framework he imposes on the artist and deserves the same attention as his praise. [1, p. 2]

The scenes he describes prevent us from understanding that innocence as a lack of observation. They include places of social encounter, ceremonies, a beauty parlor, and episodes of pain. The critic recognizes humor, irony, and indignation. In his description of a Black mother with a white child and an enslaved person confronting his master, the image acquires a human tension exceeding the picturesque. These subjects are mentioned in the article; without the works, we should not supply additional characters, compositional details, or racial meanings. [1, pp. 2-3]

The text's conclusion praises Solís for remaining close to her surroundings. For Pérez Cisneros, the house and the rural *bohío* stand for lived experience that protects her from

conventional fantasy. There is a revealing tension in this argument: the critic defends imagination while establishing which kind he values. His confidence in the artist's freedom coexists with a moral expectation about her relationship to reality. Recognizing this allows us to read the review as a situated intervention, with fertile insights and its own preferences.

The most productive legacy of these pages is a question for any form of artistic education: how can someone's development be supported without deciding beforehand what their work will look like? The answer Pérez Cisneros attempts in 1945 involves technique, observation, and respect for solutions that do not yet conform to a prestigious model. Uver Solís thus emerges as the author of decisions, even where her defender's vocabulary insists on calling them ignorance. Her work deserves to be sought out and examined through that agency, beyond the praise that helped make it visible.

An education of the eye

Uver Solís, Domingo Ravenet and Guy Pérez Cisneros's interpretation, 1945

01

TECHNICAL GUIDANCE

Brushes, mixtures and media: teaching how to work with materials

02

OBSERVATION

Going out into the street and finding subjects in everyday surroundings

03

AN INDIVIDUAL VOICE

Preserving imagination, sensitivity and expression without imitating the teacher

A diagram of the critic's reading; it is not a verified transcript of Ravenet's words.

Fuente / Source: Guy Pérez Cisneros, Información, 8 marzo / March 1945; C02, pp. PDF 1-3.
Editorial synthesis in paraphrase; no unidentified paintings are reconstructed.

Technical guidance, observation and an individual voice in Pérez Cisneros's reading of Uver Solís. Editorial synthesis of the 1945 article.

Sources and references

[1] Guy Pérez Cisneros. Uver Solís en el Lyceum. Adolescencia y pintura. Información, March 8, 1945, according to the transmitted heading. PDF pp. 1-3; newspaper page not identified. Re-typeset transcription; the original newspaper remains to be checked. Sarracino archive, document C02.

[2] Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Cuba; text republished by MACVAC. Solís, Uver. No complete publication date; accessed October 1, 2026. Online artist record, opening paragraph. Later institutional record; its republication is not counted as a second independent source. Online source

[3] Lincoln Kirstein / Museum of Modern Art. The Latin-American Collection of the Museum of Modern Art [La colección latinoamericana del Museum of Modern Art]. 1943. Printed p. 94; PDF p. 103, Ravenet entry. Contemporary institutional catalogue; the entry was visually verified. Online source

[4] Ethelbert Cooper Gallery of African & African American Art; curatorial team Alejandro de la Fuente, Bárbaro Martínez-Ruiz and Cary A. García Yero. El pasado mío / My Own Past: Afrodescendant Contributions to Cuban Art [Contribuciones afrodescendientes al arte cubano], folleto. Exhibition, September 16-December 21, 2022. PDF p. 2, image and caption of Muchacha con sombrilla. Contextual visual reference; it does not establish that this work appeared at the Lyceum in 1945. Online source