

## **PEDRO SUBERCASEAUX and the *MUSEO HISTORICO NACIONAL***

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Pedro Subercaseaux Errazuriz was born in Rome (1880) and died in Chile (1956). His father was a Chilean Diplomat and painter. He received the best European education, and in opposition, to his contemporaneous artists, from the Arts Academies, Subercaseaux had studied art in Europe without Government scholarship.

The art scholarship, to improve the youth talents, inside the Academy of Art was common. So, in those cases the artists were sent abroad. The Europe was the destination, where famous art schools worked to improve their skills and art repertoires. In Subercaseaux's case, his parents supported all of his education in arts; when he was 16 years old, he joined the Berlin Art School. Also, when his dad moved to Rome for professional reasons, the family moved together, and Pedro joined the Lorenzo Valles' art group and the Free School of Art in the Roma city. Afterwards in Paris, he took part at the traditional Julien Academy.

According to *Memoria Chilena* (2016) and Maria Soubllette and Veronica Barros (2000), Pedro was a famous and well established historical painter, and also, a cartoonist in Chile, when he decided to become a Benedictine monk. *Memoria Chilena* (2016)<sup>1</sup> explains that in 1902, after moving to Chile, Subercaseaux became the illustrator and caricaturist of some journals and serials: "Family Magazine", "Pacific Magazine", "El Diario portrayed". In 1906, with the pseudonym of "Lustig", he created the first Chilean comic character: the "Baron Von Pilsener". As an historical painter, he became the artist who

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<sup>1</sup> In the site Memoria Chilena is possible to contact the Subercaseaux biography, and also, his artwork in different supports.

paints the Chile's glories, as the Chilean Historic painter.

The *Memoria Chilena* said that in 1907, Subercaseaux married Elvira Lyon Otaegui. The couple shared the love for the art. They had a mystical inclination and a nice relationship. During their visit to *Assis*, Italy, they decided to dedicate their lives to the catholic religion. In that period, Subercaseaux has worked in theme like San Francis' life, he made a biographic watercolor of the saint. In 1920, they went to the Vatican, and had a meeting with the Pope, on that occasion they requested authorization to have a separated life. The Pope didn't rescind their wedding, however accepted the request to have a separated life dedicated to God.

Elvira went to the *Convent of Las Damas Catequistas de Loyola*, in Spain. And Pedro went to the Monastery of Our Lady of Quarr, in England. In 1938, Pedro Subercaseaux went to Chile and established the Monastery of *La Santissima Trindad de Las Condes*, this Monastery belongs to the Benedictine Congregation of Beuron.

According to the *Memoria Chilena* (2016), he created somes masterpieces: "*La Primera Misa celebrada en Chile*" (1904), "*Procesión de la Virgen de Andacollo*" (1920), "*La Batalla Maipu*", "*El Descubrimiento de Chile*"(1913), "*Mariano Moreno en su Mesa de Trabajo*"(1909), "*El Cabildo Abierto del 22 Mayo 1810*"(1909), "*El Abrazo de Maipú*"(1908), "*La Batalla de Chacabuco*". In 1908, the Argentine Government bought his painting "*El Abrazo de Maipu*", and two years later, Peter won the second place, in the contest "*del Centenario in Buenos Aires*" (MEMORIA CHILENA, 2016).

The *Memoria Chilena* said that, in 1938, Dom Pedro Subercaseaux founded the "Monasterio Benedictino de la Santísima Trinidad de Las Condes", in Chile. This Monastery belongs to the Benedictine Congregation of Beuron, in Germany. The Congregation of Beuron was responsible for the Restoration of the Brazilian Benedictine Congregation during the end of the 19th century and early 20th century. The Restauration

brought to Brazil the Benedictine liturgy by the Gregorian chant and by the Beuronese Art, the beuronese believed in a spiritual ecstatic experience through the art.

The building where is the *Museo Historico Nacional* is located at the Lezama Park. Here is closed to the place, which Dom Pedro de Mendoza had funded Buenos Aires, near the *Riachuelo* river, where was possible to fish and to hunt at early times.

Second to the *Museo Historico Nacional*, in the 18th century, the Lezama Park was surrounded by many urban version of the cottage houses; Dom Ventura Miguel Marco del Pont owned this place and after him, the edification had many different owners. In 1857, Dom José Gregório Lezama bought the place and built his house with special care to integrate the edification with the landscape. The Lezama's house was considered a model of the Italian architecture in Argentina, the Italian model had got the highest period from 1830 to 1880, and it was the construction that expressed the transition from the colonial style, under the influence of Spain and Portugal, and the academicism style, under French influence. In 1887, Dom Antonio Crespo has dedicated this area to the city and it became a public park. The *Museo Historico Nacional* was transferred to this area in 1897, and it was the third and the last location of the Museum (MUSEO, 2016).

The *Museo Historico Nacional* has its foundation due to efforts of Dom Adolfo P. Carranza, his first Director. The *Museo Historico Nacional* opened his doors in August 30th, 1890. In the same month of the Revolution, the Museum was inaugurated over a strong politic and economic crisis. One year later, The President Carlos Pellegrini gave to the *Museo Historico*, a national status (MUSEO, 2016).

In the October 1st, in 1897, the *Museo Historico Nacional* opened doors in the current place: the big house in the Lezama Park. This place didn't delighted the Director Carranza. The museum opened against his efforts to have a place with a construction dedicated to receive his Museum. According to Picco (2016, p.2) the development of the

Argentinian visual history repertory in the *Museo Historico Nacional* under the direction of Adolfo Carranza was favored under Buenos Aires ruling class in the 19th century. The emphasis on the white elite domination in the Argentinian history, appeared in the historical paintings "*pacífica y europeizada*" (PICCO, 2016, p. 2), highlighting the presence of the church, with the women in sumptuous gowns, lined knights and virile militaries. Replicating the existing iconographic construction that happens in other Latin Americans countries, such as Brazil. The *Museo Historico Nacional* had the effort to collect art, documents and objects dedicated to the construction of the local history, heroes and important characters and facts.

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The Pedro Subercaseaux paints are located at the room named Revolution de Mayo Y Guerra de la Independencia.

In Latin America, after the colonies' Independency, the Historic Painter has an important place in the construction of the visual values, models and discourse for these new nations. The artist had European art formation and the mission to select the discourse, the characters, the facts that celebrates the arise of these new nations. These artists worked with the visual construction of the local values, heroes and national unit discourse.

On this purpose, according to Borges and Mínguez (2010, p.51) the election of the characters and relevant historical moments of their history had happened, some subject includes:

- (1) the "Discovery" of the new land, that features the meeting of Europeans with the locals; the scope is the European people in the new land, the hero who brought the progress and civilization to the local people.
- (2) the "First Mass" in the new land, with the establishment of religious power in the new territory; and the effort to save the local souls.
- (3) the "Independence" of each ex-colony, celebrating the brave local heroes. So, they

fought against the metropolis, and the ideal that they brought freedom to the colony. And the establishment of a new nation.

About the theme "Independence" in Latin America, Borges and Minguez (2010, p.55) remember some paintings, like the Brazilian painter Pedro Américo, who painted "Independência ou Morte" (1888)<sup>2</sup>; the Uruguayan painter Juan Manuel Blanes, who painted "El juramento de los treinta y três orientales" (1877)<sup>3</sup>, and the Chilean painter Pedro Subercaseaux, who painted "Abrazo de Maipu" (1907)<sup>4</sup>.

Pedro Subercaseaux chose the final moment of the Battle of Maipu, which became the "imagem emblemática de la independencia de Chile" (BORGES; MINGUEZ, 2010, p.55). This battle was led by General Jose de San Martin, of the army formed by Chilean and Argentinian soldiers. Bernardo O'Higgins was the commander of Chile independent army, he was unable to be present at the battlefield front due to the heavy wounds of the previous battle, in the Cancha Rayada. Subercaseaux picked the moment that O'Higgins, aware of the victory of General San Martin, he moved to the battlefield to greet the General for his victory. In this period, some themes are interesting to the local elite society. They are interested to set a place in the local history and to set a self-establishment in the local society (BORGES; MINGUEZ, 2010, p.55).

"El Cabildo Abierto del 22 de Mayo de 1810"<sup>5</sup>, after the fall of the King Fernando VII, due to the Napoleon invasion, the Cabildo represented the group of locals' citizens, including intellectuals and militaries criollos, with the support of the Vice Rey Cisneiros.

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<sup>2</sup> "Independência ou Morte", painted by Pedro Américo, oil on canvas, 1888, 415 x 760cm. Museu Paulista da USP – Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo.

<sup>3</sup> "El juramento de los treinta y três orientales", painted by Juan Manuel Blanes, oil on canvas, 1877. Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales, Uruguai.

<sup>4</sup> "Abrazo de Maipu", painted by Pedro Subercaseaux, oil on canvas, 1907. Museo Historico Nacional – Argentina.

<sup>5</sup> "El Cabildo Abierto del 22 de Mayo de 1810", painted by Pedro Subercaseaux, oil on canvas, 1910. Museo Historico Nacional - Argentina

The Independency only happened in July, 4th, 1816, six years later, at Tucuman Congress. These long process means years of war to the Vice Reino do Rio da Prata.

To represent Argentina' Independence, at the Centenary Commemoration Contest, Pedro Subercaseaux chose the moment when the Independency was defended by the citizens as an ideal of liberty. Very similar is the paint of Mr. Blanes', he also drew about the El Cabildo. Blanes is the painter of "*An episode of the Yellow Fever in Buenos Aires*" that belongs to the Museu Nacional de Artes Visuales in Montevideo. The two painters are quite similar, a group of man representing the different social parts of the society and the local society fact's narration. Pedro wan the Centenary Commemoration Contest with the work: "El Cabildo Abierto del 22 de Mayo de 1810".

For the Chile's Government, Pedro painted the same theme of the "Batalla of Maipu"<sup>6</sup>, but to represent the Independency of the Chile, he chooses the battlefield. This represents the Chilean heroes, the unknown soldier who died for the liberty of his country. The image shows the effort in the battlefield.

In Brazil, Pedro Américo painted the Brazilian Independence. To represent the scene, he picked up the exact moment that the Emperor "Dom Pedro I" has proclaimed Brazil's Independence from Portugal. Here, we also have the construction of a nation leader. In the image, the Emperor was supported by nobles, the military guard, and there are some local habitants watching the scene.

The Brazil's independence painting is a large picture of 2 meters and 70 centimeters to 3 meters and 57 centimeters. In fact, Dom Pedro wasn't wearing his formal uniform, and there weren't roads in the country side of São Paulo. He wasn't wearing a fancy uniform; neither was riding a horse. In the 19th century, what can you expect of a nation leader

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<sup>6</sup> "Batalla de Maipu", paint by Pedro Subercaseaux, oil on canvas, 1904, 150X 249 cm. Museo Historico Nacional, Santiago, Chile.

that wasn't well dressed and without horses? Pedro Américo gave to the Brazilians an historical image to be proud of. Also that image became part of the national education construction for the local history themes. Our school books show that image as a representation of our Independence and the beginning of our Country.

The *Museo Historico Nacional* took care of the pedagogical historic education for the locals. The Museum gave to the Argentine citizens, the imagens about their history and their heroes. The historical construction was done by a local elite, they were descendant of white European, this people had determined what must be part of the country values and history. Subercaseaux gave the historical imagens to support these discourses for some Latin America countries, like Argentina e Chile.

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