

# GALERÍA ELVIRA GONZÁLEZ

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## Esteban Vicente. *The Red Form*

November 6th 2013 – January 31st 2014

*The technique is in the language. The language is the technique*



Esteban Vicente. *Untitled*, 1996 | 81,2 x 114,3 cm | Oil on canvas

**Galería Elvira González** is pleased to announce a new exhibition of work by Esteban Vicente entitled *La Forma Roja* (The Red Form), which will open on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

With more than 20 works spanning the period from 1955 to 1995, *The Red Form* focuses on a particular compositional device frequently employed by Vicente: the placement of a red point or form that provides balance and order to the painting as a whole.

Esteban Vicente (Turégano, Segovia, 1903 - New York, 20012) began as an academic realist whose work was influenced by Cubism before finally evolving into Abstract Expressionism. Throughout his career, from *Abstract Female* (1955 - 58) to the final works from 1997, Vicente always sought formal balance and perfection in his compositions, in contrast to the free, gestural brushwork of the style known as action painting that ran parallel with Vicente's own work from the 50's, 60's and 70's. From the 80's onward, Vicente's work became more nostalgic, although he never lost interest in compositions based on large forms and blocks of color.

As Vicente himself often remarked, important influences on his early painting included 17<sup>th</sup> century Spanish still-lives and "bodegones", the Cubist paintings of Juan Gris, and the collages of Kurt Schwitters: these were the sources Vicente drew on when composing his own work. In *La Forma Roja*, we see how Vicente utilizes the presence of powerful masses of color in order

to balance and calibrate the painting as a whole. By tracing his use of these red forms in all the works in the exhibit, *The Red Form* focuses on a specific facet of Vicente's work.

When the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936, Esteban Vicente moved to New York and came into contact with the circle of artists out of which Abstract Expressionism would later develop. Vicente's own career would take place entirely in New York and within the framework of Abstract Expressionism, which allowed him to develop his own, fully authentic artistic style. During the 1950's and 60's, figuration disappears from Vicente's compositions, and is replaced by large blocks of color and heavily applied paint, along the lines of the work of Vicente's friend Willem de Kooning. Vicente arrived at his own unique style through his vibrant yet harmonic use of color within vaguely geometric structures -- which were in turn reminiscent of the more realistic landscapes he painted at the earliest stages of his career.

"His aim was to paint what was directly in front of him, without exterior symbolism, without parallel theories, without recourse to any elements foreign to the painting itself, with a few but intense colors, unadorned by anything that might presuppose a prior agenda," according to the critic Miguel Fernandez Cid. Later Vicente painted large canvases composed of fields of color, yet he never abandoned techniques such as pastels and collage, while also working in other formats such as the small wood sculptures known as his 'toys'. In his paintings as well as his collages, the background and foreground merge to the point where the difference is indistinct, so that the paintings are dominated by volatile forms and lines dispersed throughout the canvas, as well as blocks of vivid colors that give rise a perfectly balanced composition.

Esteban Vicente's work was included in the most important group shows of the period in the US, such as the "New Talents" show of 1950, and the 9th Street show. In 1991 he received the Gold Medal for the Fine Arts and in 1998 he was awarded the Castilla-Leon Arts Prize. 1998 also saw the opening of the Esteban Vicente Contemporary Art Museum in Segovia. In 1999 Vicente received the Gran Cruz de la Orden de Alfonso X el Sabio, while the same year the Reina Sofia Museum and National Art Center (which had previously staged a major retrospective of his work) added a gallery of his work to the permanent collection. In 2011 the Grey Art Gallery at New York University organized an exhibition of his collages and works on paper.

Galería Elvira González has held eight solo exhibition since 1994 of Esteban Vicente's work, including shows such as "Collages, pasteles y toys" in 1996, "Blanco y negro" in 2000, "Esteban Vicente 1950 - 60" in 2005, "Collages y obras sobre papel" in 2008, as well as the most recent exhibition in 2011.