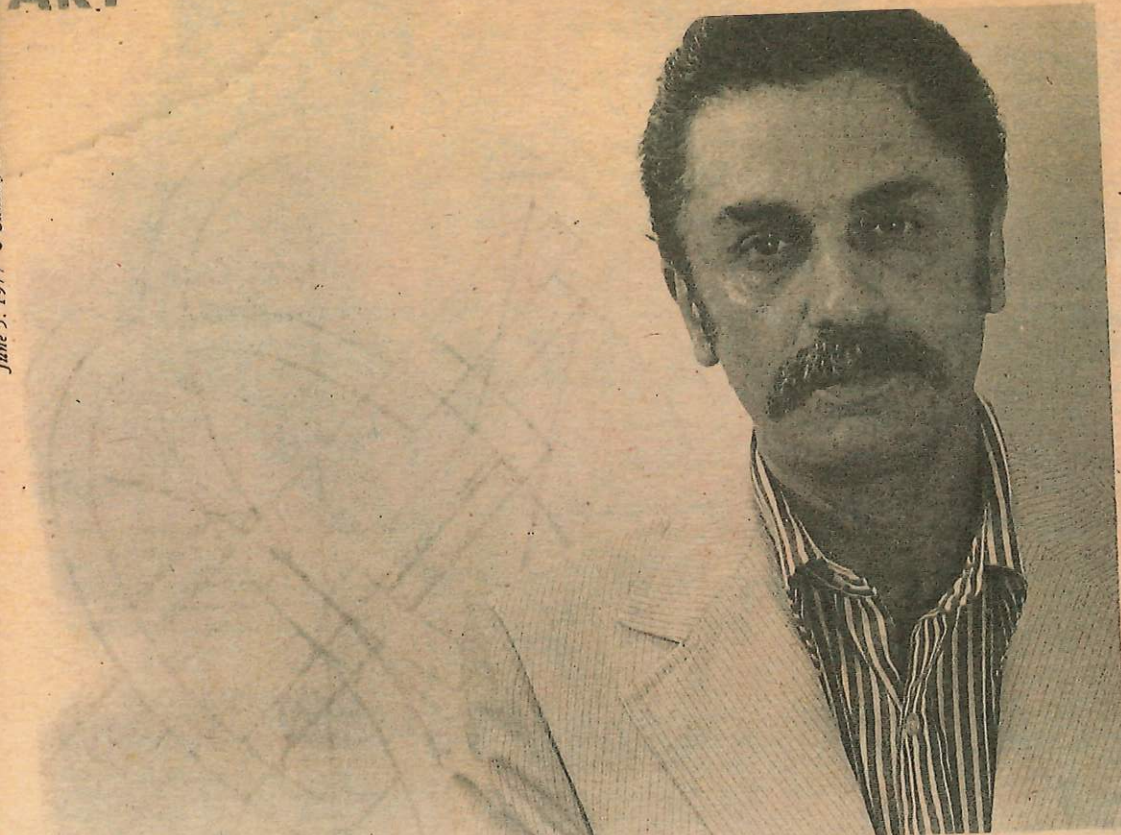


June 5, 1977

ART

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Paul Camacho

Paul CAMA at Ga

By FELIX BONILLA NORAT
Special To The STAR

Paul Camacho's first one man show on his island is now at Galeria Pitirre in the Condado Convention Center. He limits the forms within his paintings to ovals spun off from a cylinder's rolling shapes. That is his willful limitation. Then he finishes the forms rather well with clean contours, flat smooth paint and harmonious color swells, in willful ordination. Drum-tight, his clean painted world is sophisticatedly well secured.

Against what?

Camacho belongs to us once again. He returned about three years ago, when he was 44. He was sure of staying then as so many of our brethren are, when they return from the states. Sure of himself and of his work, he was nevertheless unsure of the particular way he would secure his stay after such a long time. He had left Puerto Rico as a tot.

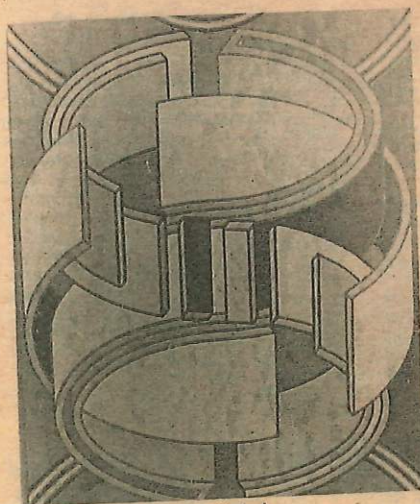
Camacho had tried to settle back here once before, more than 12 years ago. He wanted his first child born here, since it is programmed that a man from a town such as Morovis, would beget his children there. But it could not be. Now his 12-year old American child and his ex-wife are secure in the states, and so he is alone.

By now Camacho is settled down. All his works are new. He had to start afresh at 45, as many do in that mid-forties climacteric rite-of-passage when all debts seem to come due and the way out is not clear.

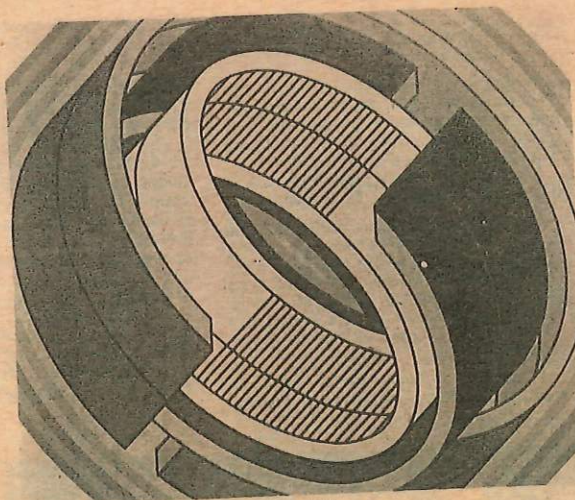
Camacho now works for Channel 4, to keep the pot boiling. He is also banded together with a group of well-known artists such as Mauras, Hernandez Cruz, and Lope Max who are his peers in the so-called hard-edge or semi-geometrical art style, not necessarily minimalist. They construct firmly secured forms in their paintings, forms which they hope are free from pedestrian woes in their abstract geometry.

But, are those painted forms really free from human woe? Really free as the above named artists would like us to believe?

It is a conceit of abstract artists that their "pure art" work is free from harassed humanity—the equivalent of saying that there is such a thing as style without substance, that their style's beauty is their substance, when in reality even the style is a psycho-



'Polaridades'



'Crisalida'

GALLERIES

CARNEGIE EXHIBITION HALL
Carnegie Library Ponce de Leon Ave.
Stop 1. Puerta de Tierra. 724-1046 Open
Mon. to Fr. 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sat. 9 a.m.
to 5:30 p.m. Current Show: First UNESCO
photo show

CASA DEL LIBRO
255 Calle del Cristo 723-0354
Open Mon. to Fri. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sat. 2 to 5 p.m.
"Current Show: The Art of the Watermark"

EL TRAPICHE GALLERY
200 Cristo St. San Juan. Open Mon. to Fri. 10
to 12 and 1 to 4. Sat. 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Cur-
rent exhibit: "La postal Artistica en
Puerto Rico."

ESTUDIO 1818
1818 Fndz Juncos. 727-7860. Mon to Sat 9-5.
Oils, Woodcuts, Graphics by local artists. Cur-
rent show: Woodcuts by Enrique Elustondo

GALERIA BOTELLO
208 Cristo St. 723-9987
Prints, painting and sculpture, mostly by Puerto
Rican artists.

GALERIA COABEY
Calle San Sebastian 101
Current Show: Ceramics by Agustin de
Andino.

GALERIA DE LA CASA CAMPECHE
200 Calle San Sebastian Open Tues to Sat 12
p.m. to 6 p.m. 723-5251

GALERIA FOTOGRAFIA PL 900
Ponce de Leon 900, Santurce. 725-2617 open
9-5 daily except Tuesday and Wednesday.
Current show: Photos by the
Puerto Rican photographers Ass'n.

GALERIA GUARAGUAO
National Art Center. Callejon de la
Capilla. Old San Juan. Current Exhibition
by Rafael Tufino, Carlos Raquel Rivera,
Manuel Hernandez, Isabel Bernal and An-
tonio Maldonado.

GALERIA GUATIBIRI
1003 Gonzalez Ave., Santa Rita
Open Monday through Saturday. 9 a.m. to 6
p.m.

GALERIA ISABEL II
City Hall, San Juan Mon to Fri.
Current Show: "Discovering the World." Photos
by the Natural Resources Department

CACHO

aleria Pitirre

portrait of the artist and the artist is all the substance needed.

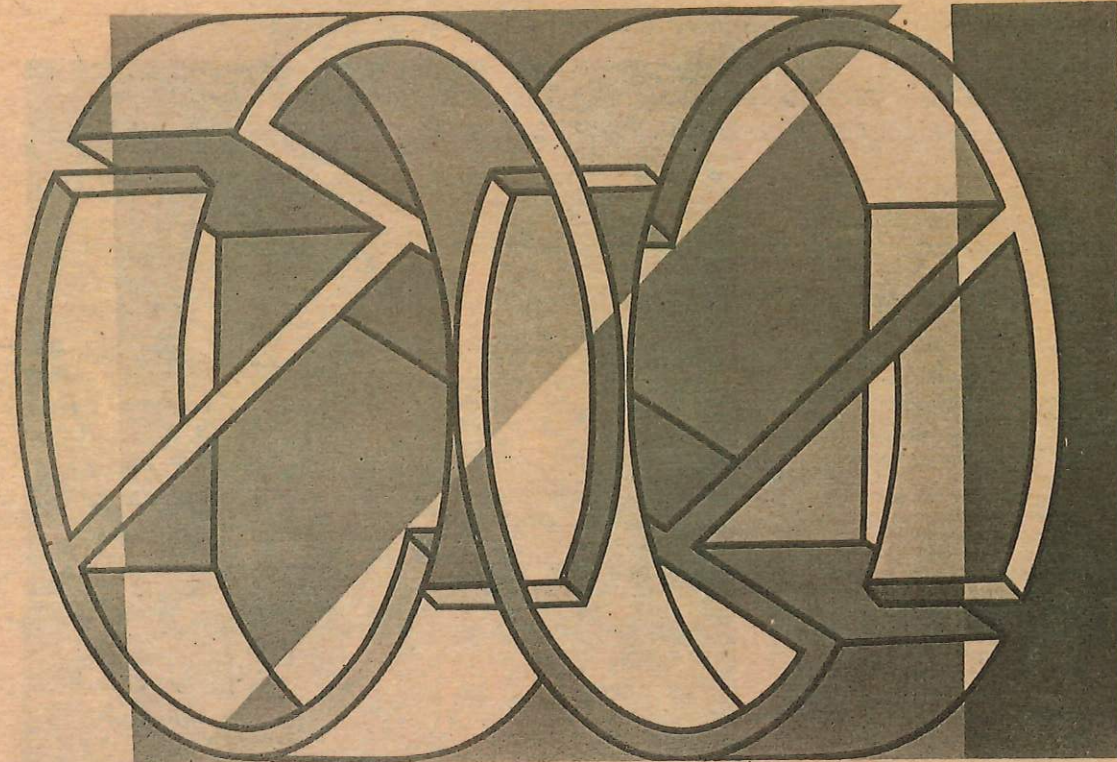
"The titles of my works," says Camacho, "are simply pretty words like *Crisalida*, *Zaguan* and *Vicoca*. The titles have nothing to do with the paintings, since it is not possible to describe something which is not. What you see in my paintings is exactly what is there; no other tale or idea, no dirty residues are allowed. As legislated by me, my works are clean-cut and direct, self-permitted journeys in and out of the picture plane." (This sounds like Stella's sound, quite minimalistic). "By no means do any of my works inform us of politics or social structures, but rather they speak of our visual environment, of our need to re-direct our plastic concepts within our living spaces, of the peace which a harmonious design brings to the harassed self."

It is the harassed self which speaks behind the geometry in the art works of many of our artists, including the above named. Geometry is a facade, a shield against harassment. Geometry brings peace, harmony and a clean feeling of strength and contentment to Camacho.

Mondrian wanted to establish a more perfect world, as his writings proclaim, allowing only pure vertical and horizontal shapes, Calvinistically correct, much too severe for my taste in a society but admirable in art. "There is a wholeness in the Universe," Camacho tells me: "I try for a kind of intuitive logic. I make choices, then ask other people to partake of my choices, to communicate with them but on my terms, since I did the work." It does sound like Mondrian's theological objectives.

The Vietnam war and the student riots in the 60's brought semi-geometric minimalism black-humored Pop, Kineticism and aloofly-hitting Op art to the states. Political and social divisionism, student riots and other uncertain times in the mid-60s brought on minimalism, Kineticism and Op art in Puerto Rico, not necessarily because we were copying or following styles from New York, as Marta Traba thought, (and which could be true of individual artists) but because a pregnant hunger or need finds its needed symbol or figure of speech in any people's art, including ours.

As a people we are old enough to



'Zaguan'

produce our perfectly legal and unimprisonable figures of art-speech regardless of what sells or is "in" in the market. Let Marta Traba doubt that. We do not. Besides, it is written that in all crossroads islands like Puerto Rico, it is the wisdom of the people to seek geometry's defense against the fickle winds of the hurricane, to seek the triangular "tormentera" (storm shelter). There were social storms here in the late 60's. There are social storms here now.

"Geometry came slowly into my work while I lived in the states and it continues here now," Camacho tells me. "They say we Virgos love order. Precision is very satisfactory to us; we resent chaos. I began to resent my abstract-expressionistic works which I did from '57 to '67. I resented them because they were not clean of shape and precise enough—they never looked settled enough."

"By 1965 I noticed that my free abstract organic forms began to take on a hard-edged quality," Camacho continued, "I tried to soften the edges but something prevented me. It was a period of transition. So by 1967 I started to use the ruler. Why not? Since I couldn't go back to my 1952 to '57 semi-cubistic style, I began to simplify the ruled shapes in my canvasses. Today, 10 years later, I use

strings to draw the curved lines in my canvasses."

Notice that geometry and surveying were straight rod and curving-string mathematics initially, invented to secure ownership of the Egyptian lands just as Camacho may be trying to secure his world now.

We use geometry to contain the storm and the tides. Notice the geometry used in prize-winning "La Guaracha del Macho Camacho," by Luis Rafael Sanchez wherein the all-encompassing traffic snarl is designed to contain in one shell all the pullulant pests of our social botany and zoology in one single moment of time. Thus did Dante design the geometry of his Divine Comedy with the same swinging arcs Camacho uses.

But Dante and our Sanchez flesh their skeletal geometry with the tremendous humanities of their crumbling societies. Camacho prefers to hold steadfast. That's the strength of his willful limitation. Time may be on his side.

So do go visit his show before it closes in mid-June. Enjoy the arbitrary order of his forms, spontaneous yet calculated, with an intuitive logic. Your exploration will be compounded by the paradoxical isometric perspectives he uses to develop his ovals. He

claims he was influenced by the strange world of Escher's drawings, wherein you climb up a stairway only to find yourself at its beginning. Camacho likes to draw or paint something realistically every day, including plants, landscapes and heads of Christ but only for his amusement or his friends, not for show. He sculpts too, again, not for show. His "reality" is thus not for show. Why contain it?

His ovals could be coliseums or space crafts with huge solar collection plates or river-boat wheels with propellers. In some tense arcs you can almost hear the noises made behind the "drums" by the contained insects or pests of botany and zoology. In his "Quartet of Four Graphics," he even tried to represent the evolution of cellular reproduction, but with his limited oval shapes. That's quite a "substantial" approach.

"But I insist that I paint only because I want to justify my existence," Camacho ends. "My intellectual scheme or structure of forms is allowed an emotional factor—color itself—but in its cleanliness not in its pigmentarian tactile density or sensuality. Color is the leavening of my forms, their emotion, spontaneous yet calculated."

Yes, his world is drum-tight and secure. May it never burst and liberate the pests.

GALERIA MARIA RECHANY

Magdalena 1363 Open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mon. to Sat. 725-4828. Paintings, and prints by Puerto Rican artists. Also, in the Jury Room: Paintings by Raul Fernandez Vega.

GALERIA OLLER

Calle Escorial 366, Caparra Hts. 782-3171 Open Tues to Thurs. 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Fri 2-9; Sat. 9-20 Paintings and Graphics by Puerto Rican artists.

GALERIA PITIRRE

Condado Convention Center. 723-6090 Ext. 1632. Open Tues to Thurs. 11:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Fri to Sun. 12 to 8 p.m. Current Show: Paul Camacho, paintings and graphics

MANOS

Convention Center, Condado. Contemporary ceramics by the Caparra Studio. Current exhibition: "Platos"

MUSEO DE BELLAS ARTES

Instituto de Cultura 253 Cristo St. 723-2320. Open every day 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Oils, prints and graphics. Current show: Drawings and boxes by Julio Michel and Andres Rodriguez Sanyos

MUSEO DE LA FUNDACIÓN

Behind Tapia Theater, Plaza Colon 725-5962. Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed Mon. Indian Artifacts and sculpture. Current show: "In honor of the Tainos of the Dominican Republic."

MUSEO DEL GRABADO LATINOAMERICANO

Casa de los Contrafuertes. 101 San Sebastian St., Plaza San Jose second floor. Open every day from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Current show, works by Antonio Diaz

MUSEO DE LOS SANTOS

Instituto de Cultura, Casa de los contrafuertes, Plaza San Jose. Open every day 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

MUSEO DEL CONVENTO DE SANTO DOMINGO

Instituto de Cultura. Open every day 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Corner Cristo and Norzagaray. Plaza San Jose, 724-0700, 724-0702.

Current show: Sculpture by Tomas Batista

MUSEO HISTORICO

1396 Giorgetti St. Sahlurce 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mon to Fri. Collection of art, history culture, industry, costumes, stamps, coins. Guides available.

PONCE MUSEUM OF ART

Las Americas Ave. 842-6215. Open Wed. to Sat. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sun. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mon. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Current Exhibition: Works by Angel Botello, Roberto Moya and Rolando Lopez Dirube.

UPR MUSEUM

764-0000 Ext. 2452 or 2456. Open daily from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. weekdays; 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. 10 to 5. Current Show: 9th annual exhibition of Fine Arts students work.