Amelia: Images of Mystery

The Transformation of Shadow in Women

Joan Golden-Alexis

Then I learned that he who fights against the night must move its deepest darkness so that it gives out its light—Walter Benjamin

Introduction

During my years as a clinician, I have always held shadow—that point of darkness—as the place to begin my inquiry, and the place to begin drawing my patients and myself into a wider consciousness. It is shadow, where I look to have my questions, not answered, but constantly refined. In these queries I have noticed a difference in the way shadow, one's dark shadow as well as one's bright shadow—one's unlived life potential—is expressed in women and in men. There are differences in the kinds of images presented, the arc of the transformation in these images over time, and particularly the narrative, the discourse that each gender conveys. The narratives of women have particularly captured my interest, and are the focus of this exploration.

Amelia's Journey Through Shadow

In this exploration, I will be looking into the work of the Cuban artist, Amelia Peláez (1896-1968). Amelia has produced a series of paintings that give us an intimate view into her journey through shadow towards an authentic expression of Self. Her imagery is interesting in that it displays movement from a powerful psychic ground that is internal, closed off and incubating to one that unfolds with uncommon strength and velocity. Following her imagery, I will

attempt to bring forth the compelling value and meaning of her work in making shadow in women more accessible to our understanding.

Her paintings will be presented in chronological order, enabling them to describe the trajectory of her imagery. The discussion is divided into four parts: The Introduction of the Vessel; the Re-introduction of the Human Element; and the Impact of Volumetric Space on the artist's work. I will conclude with a short discussion of how these images may impact, and inform the theory of women's journey of integration.

Amelia Peláez

The creativity and vibrancy of Amelia's internal and private world is defined by her connection to the Spanish-Cuban upper-class culture into which she was born. This is a culture where women never leave their homes, unaccompanied, and their lives are circumscribed by the decorative iron work that completely covers windows, doors, and balconies, and defines the outer boundaries of their daily existence.

In response, and to keep her inner life alive, Amelia worked every day, creating paintings, and later, painting ceramics. Amelia, a woman of few words, made only one known recorded public statement. With it, she makes an open declaration of her need to employ her art to connect with, and help her to understand her inner life, and through the art, itself, to communicate to others her understanding. She says, "I am not interested in copying the object…What

matters is the relationship of the motif with oneself," with one's personality, and the power the artist has "to organize his emotions." (Blanc, G.V. p.31)

Viewing Amelia's art as a place of entrance into her psychic process grew from this statement. This is her only public statement about her work, and her only public attempt offered to help us understand her passion. Through it, Amelia makes it clear that her persistence and her discipline towards her work, has at its heart, a belief in art's power to provide both an "understanding" and "organization" of her "emotions." It is through her consistent work with images that she hopes to understand her internal life and its emerging processes. It is out of a respect for Amelia's own perspective on her work that I have applied a Jungian lens, and my own imaginative reflections to her work. I offer it in hopes that it might give us, insight into the emergent individuation processes within Amelia, and potentially to those within other women as well.

It is not surprising that Amelia's art begins with a meticulous exploration of the world inside the home, the world where a Cuban woman of that time could live unselfconsciously—and ends with the exploration of the transformational process in women, both inside and in relationship to the collective norms.

From her work, we see how she comes to know herself as deeply embedded, and finally differentiated from the quotidian objects that animate her world. She both loses herself in, and sorts herself out from each of the tiniest authentic fragments of her everyday life—the stained-glass windows, the columns, the lacework of the iron grilles, and tablecloths. They are all made

grand, all placed in contact with the organic luxury of tropical fruits and flowers, and often confabulated with the handmade works of the artisan.

As Amelia attempts to render these objects in paint or ceramic, we see her at first ensnared, and willingly or unwillingly drawn into the web of these objects. She is often only semi-defined, semi-separate. We see her process of differentiation in action, as her developing process of discernment enters her vision, and she slowly defines the internal and outward limits of her being.

Her work demonstrates how the shadowed parts of her nature gradually emerge from within her unconscious psyche, and become embodied in her work, and in her life. Organizing her work chronologically, we have a unique view into this emergent process within one woman, a woman who dwells deeply, luxuriously and sensuously inside the generativity of women, and attempts to explore it.

Amelia Paláez—the Texture of her Life

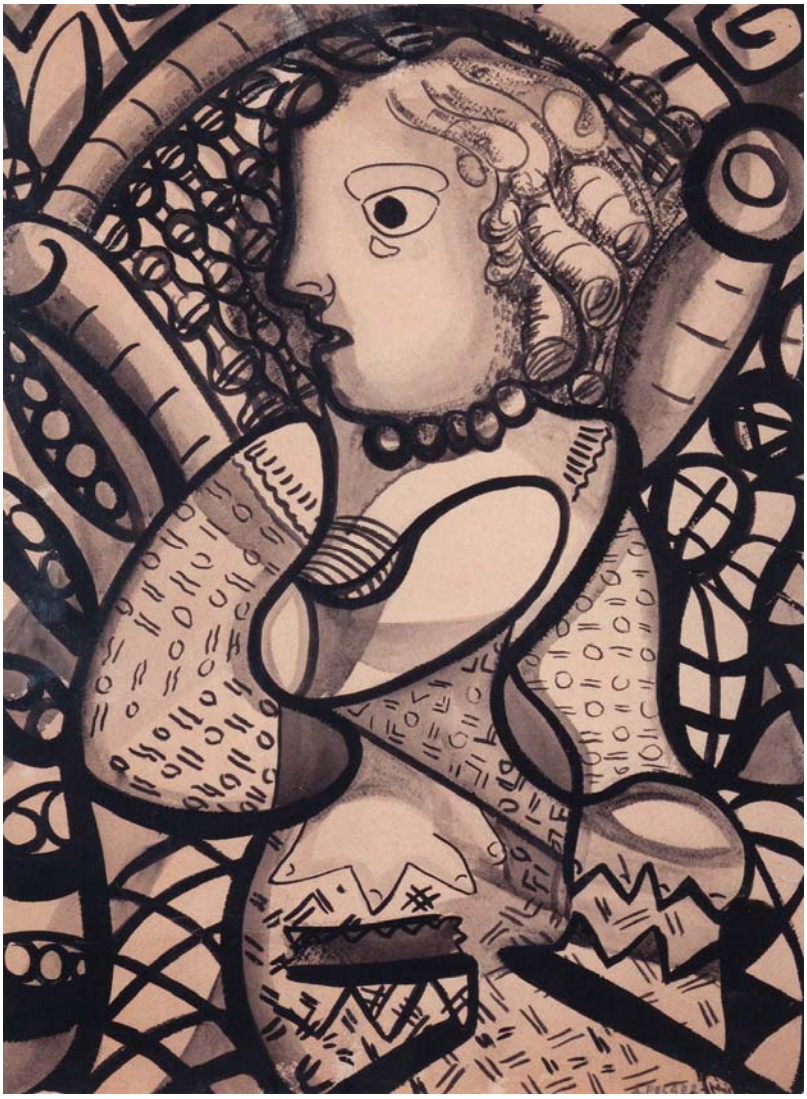


Figure 1 *Self Portrait, 1946 Peláez, Oil on Canvas*

Shown here, is Amelia's only self-portrait. She is ensconced in her favorite wicker chair, the outline of her body is not totally separate from the chair, her hands, primitively drawn, are not well adapted for connecting or grasping. She

has a single tear on her cheek below her eye, and the heart area of her body is transparent and undefined.

Amelia was born in the second year of Cuba's final liberation war against Spain on January 5, 1896. Her family was part of the Cuban-Creole middle class and was well-off both economically and socially. The house she occupied during her childhood became her dwelling during her later years, and provided the inspiration for her art. The house, with its towering white façade, its columns, wrought iron fences, ornate windows and wicker furniture can be seen in the background of numerous of Amelia's paintings. Her favorite item, her wicker chair is pictured above in her self-portrait. In the backyard of her house there was a pavilion surrounded by numerous exotic plants and birds. This became the inspiring natural setting for all her paintings, Amelia's primary workshop, and the outer boundaries of her daily world.

Although Amelia was a liberated woman, far ahead of her time, an inspiration to her contemporaries, and considered one of the most talented and inventive female Cuban artists, Amelia was only liberated, courageous, and outspoken in connection to her art. At heart, and at home, she remained unchanged by her experiences and her travels. Cloistered in her house and garden, she appeared to others as remote, shy, retiring, and extremely soft spoken. Desiring to remain undisturbed in her work, it is said that she exaggerated her hearing loss, forcing her mother and more extraverted sisters to deal with the sale of her paintings, and all dealings with people less personally known to her. (Blanc, G.V. p. 60)

Her friend, and fellow artist, visiting her in Paris during her almost six years of studies at the École des Beaux-Arts, the École du Louvre and Fernand Léger's Académie Moderne, and later in New York during her studies at the Art Students League, described her profound impact on him. Amelia appeared to him "wrapped always in an atmosphere of silence and of perfect solitude." (Blanc, G.V. p. 31). The person most intimately connected with Amelia during her studies, the Russian painter Alexandra Exter, wrote of her that "She is completely in her painting; it is the only expression of her profound inner life." (Blanc, G.V. p. 33). Others have suggested that within the confines of the safety of her home, family and small group of close friends, she was more open, and accessible.

In the realm of art, and its relationship to the outside world, in the realm of fighting for the worth of her art, and her worth in relationship to it, Amelia revealed an entirely different side of her personality. Although she remained always a woman of few words, her persistence in regard to securing a place for the art she believed in (Cuban Modernism); her persistence in obtaining teaching positions customarily not open to women in Cuba; her persistence in her fight not to be overlooked as a woman artist; her persistence in regard to the many years she spent abroad studying; and finally her unrelenting discipline with her work, reveal Amelia as an activist and powerful fighter for the art to which she devoted her life.

She believed each artist had the right to paint in their own way. Most poignantly, she did not believe that art should be controlled by politics or art theory, and her signature was the first in a long list of distinguished Cuban artists who sent a statement to the government and the press protesting the coming to Havana of a Latin American

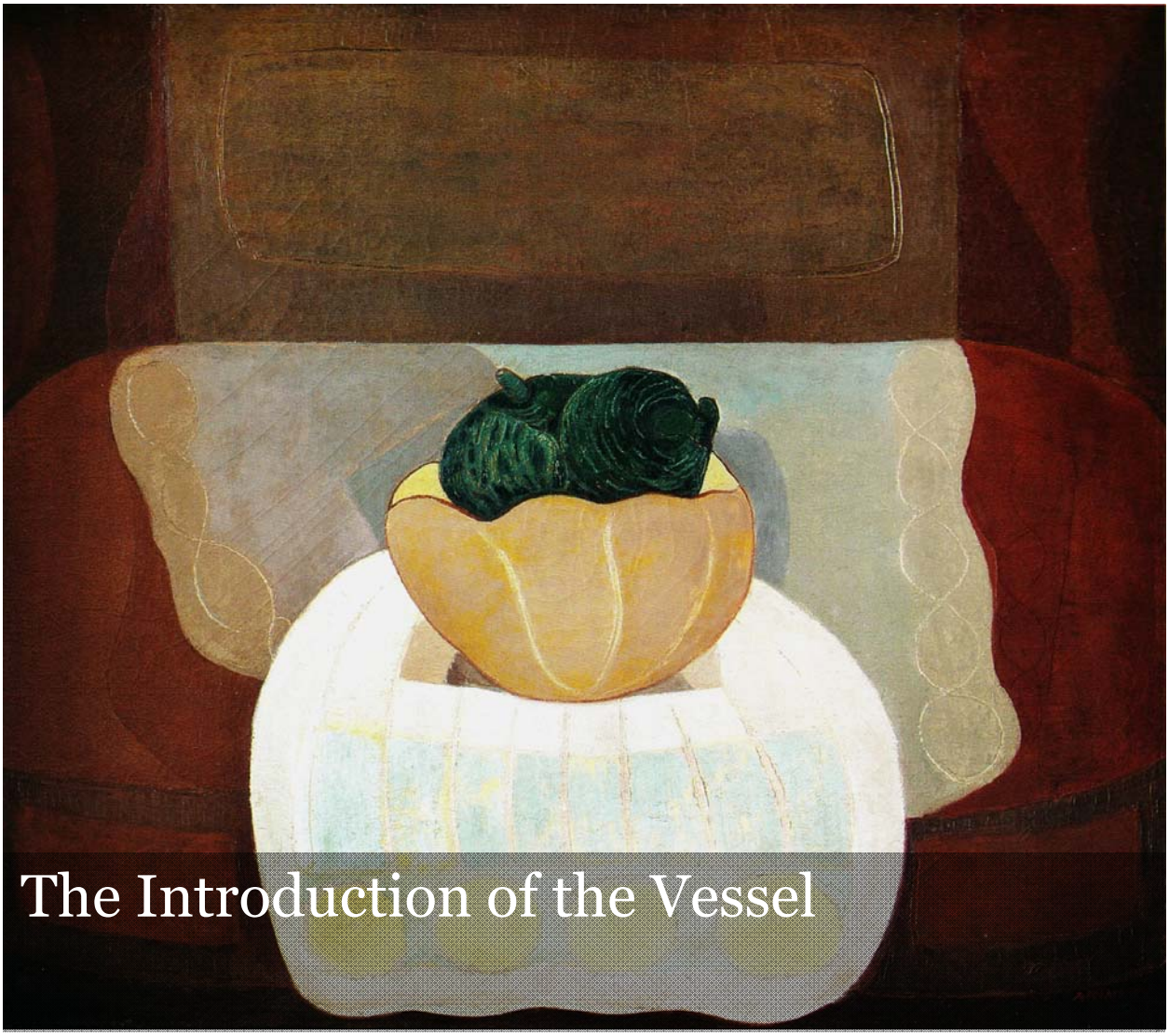
art exhibition sponsored by the Franco regime in Spain. (Blanc, G.V. p.57). As a judge in the 1952 Venice Biennial, despite her "shyness" she was shockingly and aggressively outspoken in addressing the fanaticism of the revolutionary artists in their lack of regard for Cuban non-revolutionary art and the abstractionists' lack of regard for figurative styles. (Blanc, G.V. pp.58-60)

While many of her fellow artists attempted to define the new autonomous Cuban culture as its own entity, and were striving to define a "Cuban art form," Amelia maintained her own personal focus, developing her unique aesthetic of simplified forms and bold colors. She focused on the secret world of women hidden inside the confines of the Cuban house, out of sight of the powerful Cuban Machismo. Through her painting we are offered a view into the inside world of the Cuban woman. We view languid female forms, sensuous and mystical at the same time, flowers, birds, all the domestic items inside the house, all heavy with dreams, a feminine world finally brought out into the light.

Amelia, always tenaciousness with regard to gaining respect for her work as a Cuban female artist, both at home and abroad, she participated in numerous group exhibitions, and important one-woman exhibitions. She was, by the end of the 1950's, probably the most respected artist living in Cuba, and together with Wilfredo Lam, the most respected Cuban artist internationally.

Besides the painting and pottery discussed below, Amelia dedicated much time to murals created for public buildings in Cuba, her most famous one is the façade of the Habana Hilton Hotel. She also participated in the renowned 1943 exhibition at the

Museum of Modern Art in New York, and her work was later featured in The Cuban Museum of Art and Culture in Miami in 1988, and the Perez Art Museum in Miami in 2013. Since her death respect for her work continues to mount and there have been many exhibitions in Miami and Havana as new aspects of her work are understood. Presently there are important examples of her work in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Art Museum of the Americas in Washington D.C.



First Series: The Introduction of the Vessel

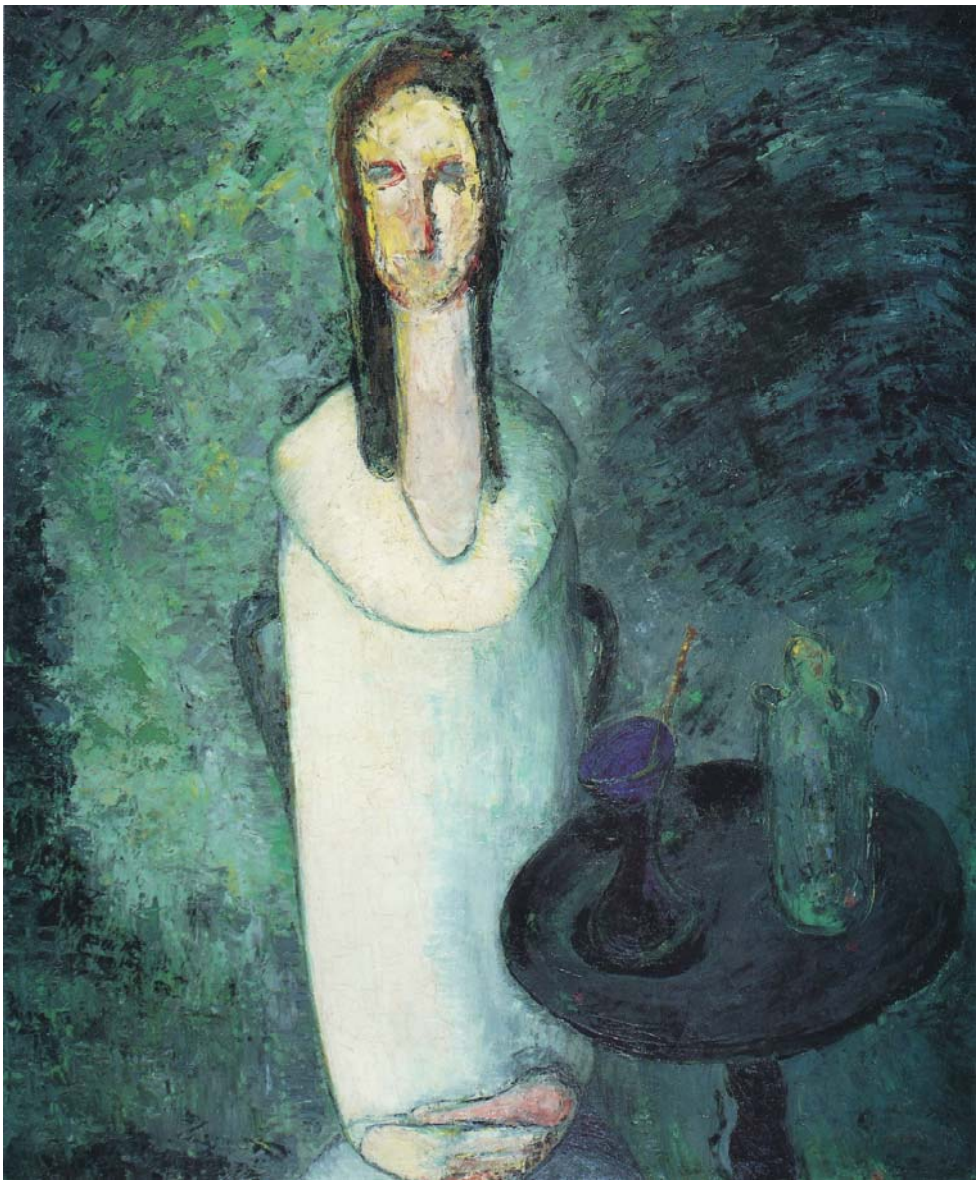


Figure 2 Seated Woman, 1929, Peláez, Oil on Canvas

In 1929 Amelia paints *Seated Woman*, a painting in which the woman herself has become the vessel of her own transformation; her body assumes a powerful enclosed column resting on her feet rotated inward forming the vessel's stabilizing base.

Haunting, in its enigmatic silence, and in its depth of concentration and calm containment, *Seated Woman* possesses the enormous force and power of an incubation, which precludes connection to the environment, or movement in the world. She has no arms to hold, no hands to form things, no limbs to travel.

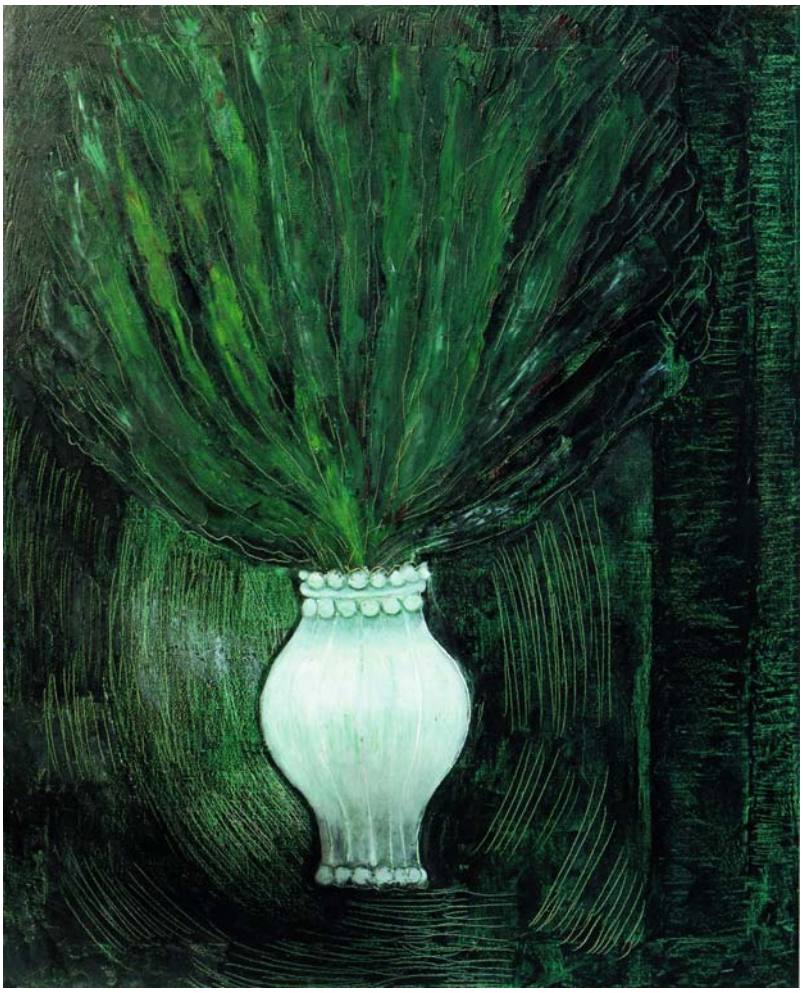


Figure 3 Ferns, 1933, Peláez, Oil on Canvas

With *Ferns,* (1933), painted three years later, it appears that moving from the realm of the human subject, where the figure was constricted and isolated, to the world of objects found in the interior of the home, the world of vessels, allows

Amelia, a place of more comfort, safety and freedom of expression, and she displays it here with unbounded intensity. Expressing both integration with internal processes and with the environment, the vessel reverberates, and the environment resonates with the enormous swish upward, and outward of green, moist and verdant energy. The incised mandalic structure around the vibrating vessel suggests both the power of its energetic emanations, and sense of a holding surround.

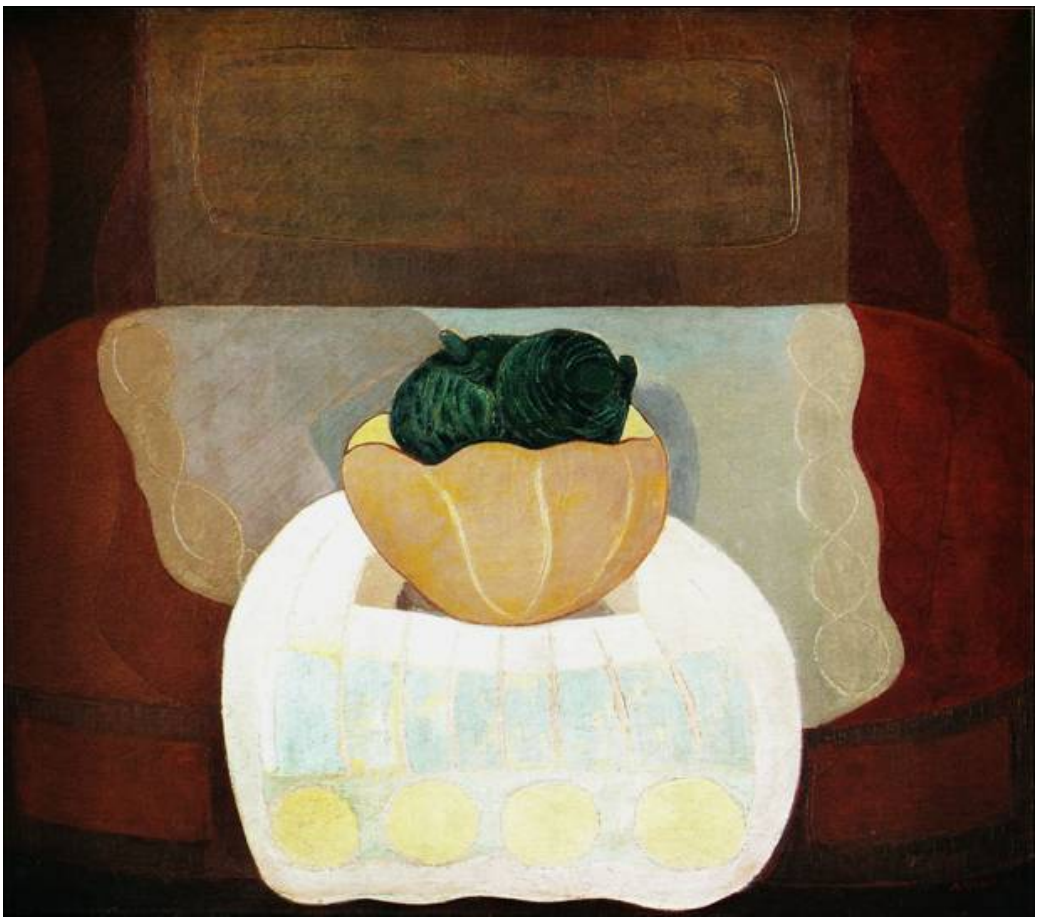


Figure 4 Still Life with Fruit, 1935, Peláez, Oil on Canvas

In *Still Life with Fruit*, (1935) Amelia continues working in the non-human world of objects and of vessels, and she continues the compositional theme she began in *Ferns,* which features a vessel as its central element. The

vessel appears to symbolize a safe and private space; a font, where emerging aspects of the creative unconscious can be accessed. The fruits of the womb are green and lush and take center stage again, yet they are not organic but rather give the appearance of richly textured fabric, part and parcel of the decorative aspect of the home environment. The fabric fruits rest in a vessel on a tablecloth, which takes on the look of another vessel. This gives the impression of a vessel within a vessel, similar to the apparatus pictured by the alchemists in their attempt to distill generative aspects of the personality.

Figure 5 Hibiscus, 1936, Peláez, Oil on Canvas

In *Hibiscus* (1936) the central vessel produces an organic form, the fragile Hibiscus. The Hibiscus is a flower that needs perfect conditions to bloom. Its successful birth in this context suggests the framing question, "What are the

perfect conditions that allow for this distinctly feminine, flower to survive?" The font here is composed of an organic environment, which contains large voluptuous leaves, encircled by a surrounding form that gives the appearance of enclosing arms, which is another kind of holding vessel.

The red color here calls up intensity of feeling, both vitalizing, and indirectly intensely sexual. Amelia's imagery has moved us a step closer to human life.

Figure 6 Still Life in Red, 1938. Peláez, Oil on Canvas

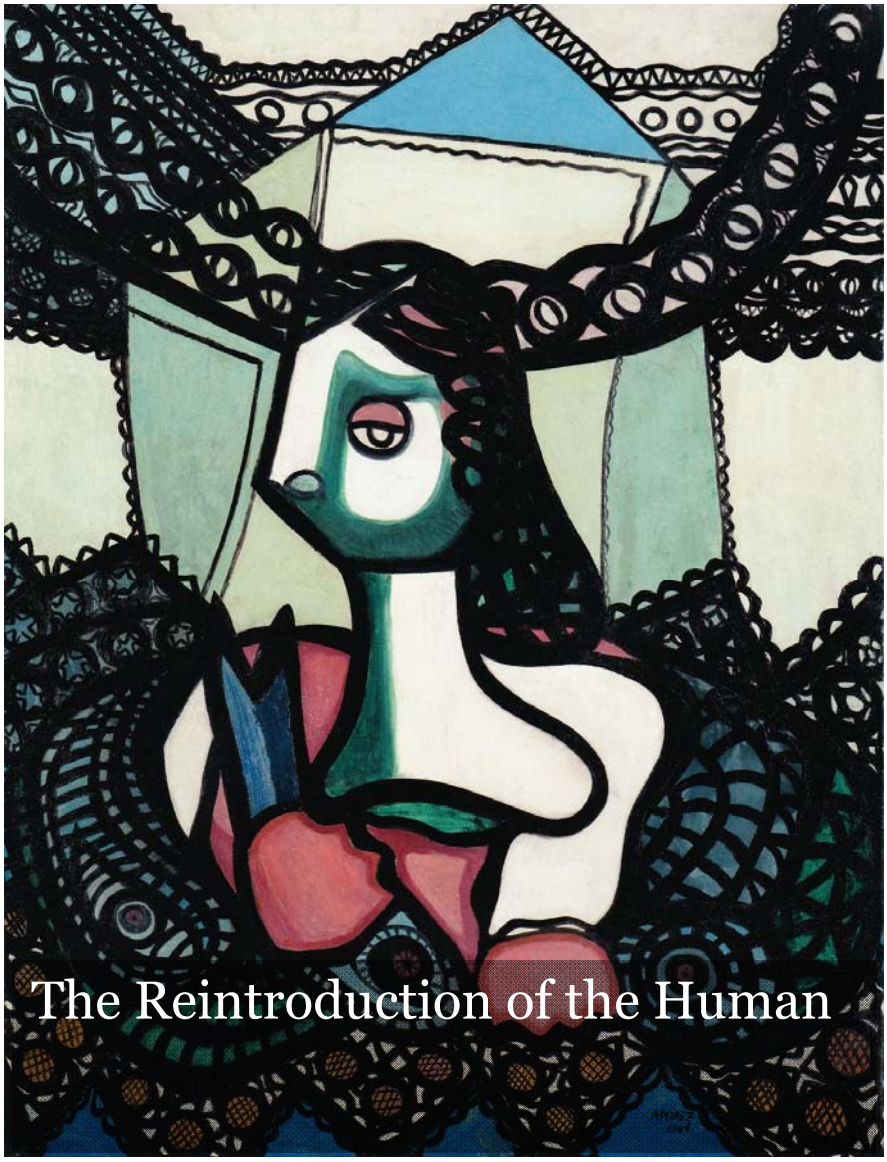
Again, in *Still Life in Red*, *(*1938) the new birth contains even more red, layers and manifolds of red. In this case the enfolding environment is not an actual womb but is instead a lush red tablecloth that mimics the wombs gaping

openness at the moment of birth. The red color, here, calls up intensity of feeling, both frightening and vitalizing. Amelia's imagery has moved us another step closer to human life, the human body, and human sensuality. The fruit appear organic, although not completely differentiated from the non-organic birthing vessel.

Figure 7 Cashews, 1939-40, Peláez, Oil on Canvas

In *Cashews (*1939-40) the birthing vessel doubles as a protective receptacle for the newly born, organic little manikins, "little people" that are displayed in various stages of ripeness in their ongoing process of development. Cashews are originally a seed that requires a long and complicated harvest

containing many successive operations to obtain the cashew from its originating seed. The “little cashews people” appear to symbolize the successive stages that have to be undergone to become what they have it in them to become. In this case, it seems they have it in them to become human.



Second Series: The Reintroduction of the Human

Figure 8 The Balcony, 1942, Peláez, Oil on Canvas

The Balcony, (1942) depicts two women standing at a balcony. In this painting, the women seem less defined, and less intimately known than the environment. The vibrancy of the grill work, the gorgeous blue stained glass window, the organic life of the foliage, the still life and the bird, all explode into the limelight and seem to be deeply a part of the artist's known and lived experience.

The women, however, appear to be less known. They appear characterized as "one more element in a composition in which the different parallel planes of balcony, women, still life and fanlight are flattened into one." (Blanc, p. 43) This depiction of the human element in relation to the environment brings forth the

important question of what is more and what is less known by the artist. It appears as if her internal experience as human, and as woman, is less clearly, less sensuously and emotionally known by her, than her environment.

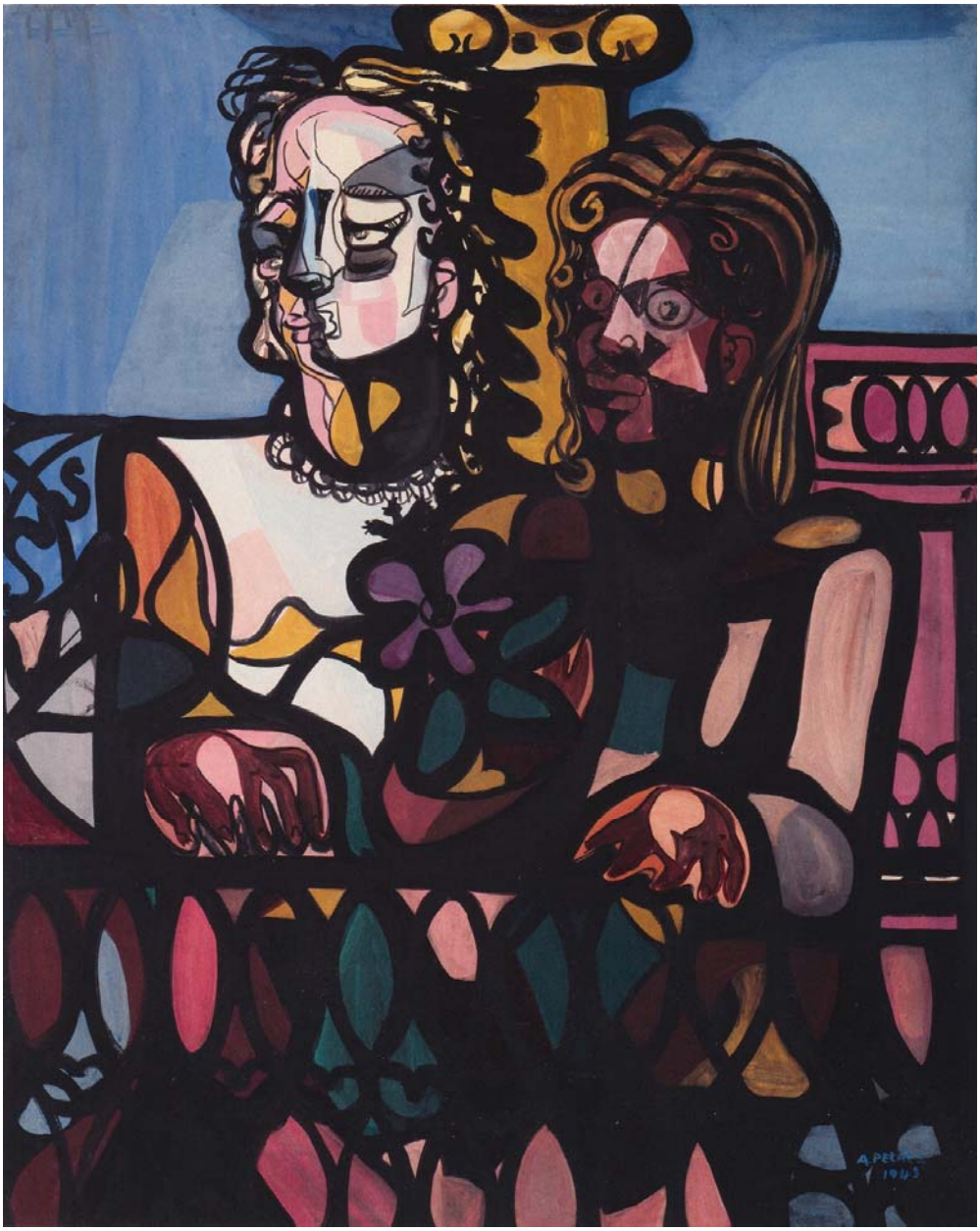


Figure 9 The Sisters, 1943, Peláez, Oil on Canvas

In, *The Sisters*, (1943), the grill work has taken the form of a heavy black almost organic line, outlining the two women, and fusing them to each other, and

to the balcony. However, the women, depicted here, although stilled, perhaps frozen in place by the power of the environment, are shown as more defined, more individual. They show more feeling in relationship to their predicament, than the women portrayed in *The Balcony*.

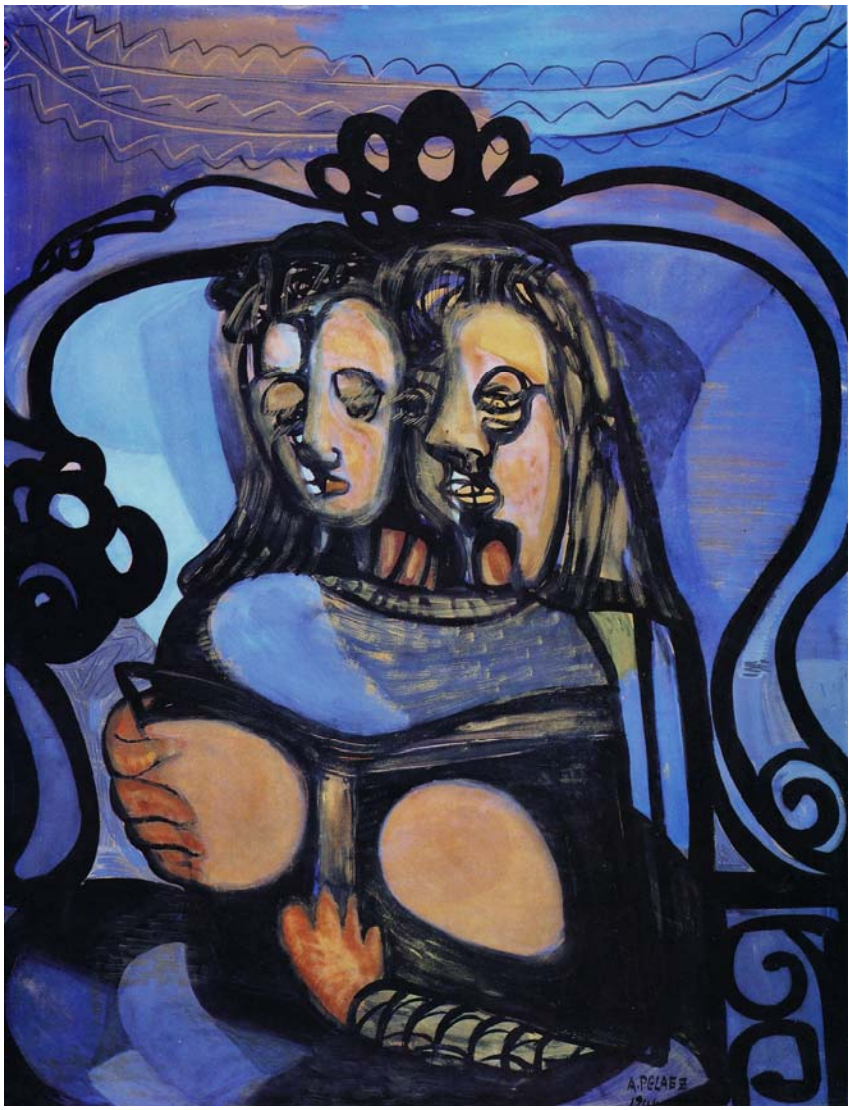


Figure 10 Two Sisters Reading, 1944, Peláez, Oil on Canvas

In the *Two Sisters Reading,* (1944), the internal process of differentiation is made explicit. The two women are shown at the very beginning of the process

of becoming. As the process of differentiation unfolds, we see that the two sisters are actually one sister becoming two, a Siamese, one woman with two heads, each with a face, mask-like and similar. They are seated in a chair with no depth, and reading from the same book.

The internal and external dimensions of these women are not completely differentiated from the environment. The two sisters are shown here at the beginning of the sensory experience of owning their bodies. Their breasts are not yet experienced as part of them, but rather seem to be part of the cover of the book they are reading, and the book itself seems to become part of their body. In the midst of this process, a developing hand emerges and seems to be holding, perhaps "claiming" a form, very much resembling a breast, marking the emerging feminine spirit taking bodily form.

Figure 11 Two Sisters, 1946, Peláez, Oil on Canvas

In *the Two Sisters*, (1946) the same process continues. The two sisters are again painted as an aspect of the decorative environment, and again they are actually one woman with two heads, the one has become two again. In this iteration, however, each figure has its own individual face and set of different intense feelings.

The separate parts of this emerging woman appear to be more clearly defined and have been taken further, than in the previous painting. The figures have gained in both differentiation and connection; they are posed as more alive, close, and with the ability to relate to and influence each other in an intimate and feeling way. Each, appear to have their own set of feelings about their immobilization. They are in fact, portrayed as attempting to make music together, the "music" is somewhat impeded by mechanical hands, that are not yet in total possession of human feeling.

Figure 12 Woman with Fish, 1948, Peláez, Oil on Canvas

In *Woman with Fish,* (1948) the final painting of this series, the struggle towards emergence continues. Here, the emergence is viewed not from the

perspective of emergent and differentiating internal parts, but from the parallel context of emergence and differentiation from the environmental context.

Amelia portrays this process in her work as an on-going shifting between figure and ground. What unfolds is a gradual and continual emergence of the figures from the ground of their comforting, containing and enveloping environmental context. The woman pictured has a powerful face, but she has no mouth—no words, to communicate, no means of taking in nurturance. She has made it part of the way out of her fabric womb. She has hands that are doing something; she has hands that are holding onto a fish that is not very fish-like, a fish that is losing its form in the lace tablecloth.

Despite the power of the woman's emerging force, she remains chained to the environment by the same decorative lace from which she is emerging. This is amplified by the outline of the woman's nose actually becoming one with the seam of the cloth on the wall behind her. We can see that in this painting, the same struggle for emergence is repeated that was depicted in the emergence of organic forms from the inorganic in the previous series.

In the ongoing trajectory of Amelia's work described thus far**,** it is clear that she shows herself powerfully expressive in relationship to the richness of the objects that are part of the home environment, and to nature, particularly plants and flowers. In this series, she expresses clearly that in relation to the human element, her connectedness appears to lose tone. This entire series seem to portray the struggle to maintain a relationship directly with the human world and

with herself as distinct in relationship to the extraordinary power of her environment. The environment here includes the powerful pull of the cultural context.

In this series, Amelia gives us entrance to the intense and difficult process involved in woman's struggle to differentiate internally and simultaneously from the environmental context. With this work, she opens the framing question, "Is this a gender related issue?" Can this be an issue of the downside of Eros, the downside of the capacity for connection, unity and linking? Can the innate and natural capacity for connection enable a vulnerability to becoming subsumed by what one embraces, and utilizes as a source of safety?

Third series: The Impact of Volumetric Space on the Artist's Work

Figure 13 Vase, 1950

As Amelia begins her painting of ceramic forms, the vessel which has always been the heart of her work, and the vital fixed point in the center of her paintings now takes a new form. It is now an actual volumetric object in physical

space. Placing her hands daily on ceramic forms, and creating imaginative paintings that are informed by the circle, and literally transformed by the heat of the ceramic oven—often in unpredictable ways—brings a new potential to her work. The vessels continue to depict an ongoing internal process of transformation and metabolism of shadow, however when Amelia works in volumetric space, not on the flat canvas, the intensity and velocity is heightened in magical and powerful ways.

Here, two women are shown in a musical dance-like interaction; they appear deeply connected, enchanted, engaged, and embracing each other. The vase appears to vibrate, involving the whole environment, similar to the vase (with the powerful ferns) described in the first series. Is one woman sitting on the other's lap? Here, internal differentiation seems to mirror the relational potential for engagement.

Figure 14 Bowl with Dancing Women, 1951

In *Bowl with Dancing Women* (1951), two women are located in an intriguing otherworldly moonscape. The central focus is the women's primitively conceived hands shown as almost touching. Directly above the point where these hands would touch, is a shining light, a light, which reverberates to and announces that these two parts coming together are in the process of the creation of a third. The sameness and yet slight difference between the two figures underscore the potential to come together, fructify and create a new form within, and with implication for a different mode of relational interaction in the world.

Figure 15 Crowned Siamese, 1951

In *Crowned Siamese* (1951) an amazing form is pictured on a plate with a heavy border around its edge, protecting the transformation pictured within; it is a rebis caught in the midst of becoming. Within the heavy border there is a crowned creature composed of breasts with eyes, an ambiguous and dominant head conflated with a body, a little squat body with hands clasped at the bottom, hands doubling as a vagina with a bow.

This miraculous form seems to be a celebration of a newly crowned principle in the on-going emergence of psyche, where on the one hand the dominance of the sexual imagery is concomitant with something about having a face within the world, having fingers that can clasp themselves, and most importantly making two parts of something into a whole. The image appears to represent a conjunction, a conjunction that is a "face" posed in tight conjunction with a "breast," a "vagina," and being "female." The conjunction—the ability to hold these parts together—is both crowned and celebrated. Here, the clear statement emerges that possession of one's body and particularly one's sexuality is a necessary part of the emergence of a sense of self.

Figure 16 Sketch for a Mural, 1951

In *Sketch for a Mural, (*1951) the image depicts the woman's potential of holding the opposites of identifying as both subject and object at the same time. This initiates the beginning of her differentiation from the world of objects, and her transition into the human world.

Pictured is a woman that is part table with her arms defining the outer limits of the round table top; the vase of flowers is held between her two hands, where it would be placed on the table, and her skirt doubles as the tablecloth hanging over the edge of the table. She is also part woman and part Siamese, a woman in the process of becoming two which is expressed in the emergence of four legs, two arms and two heads placed back to back.

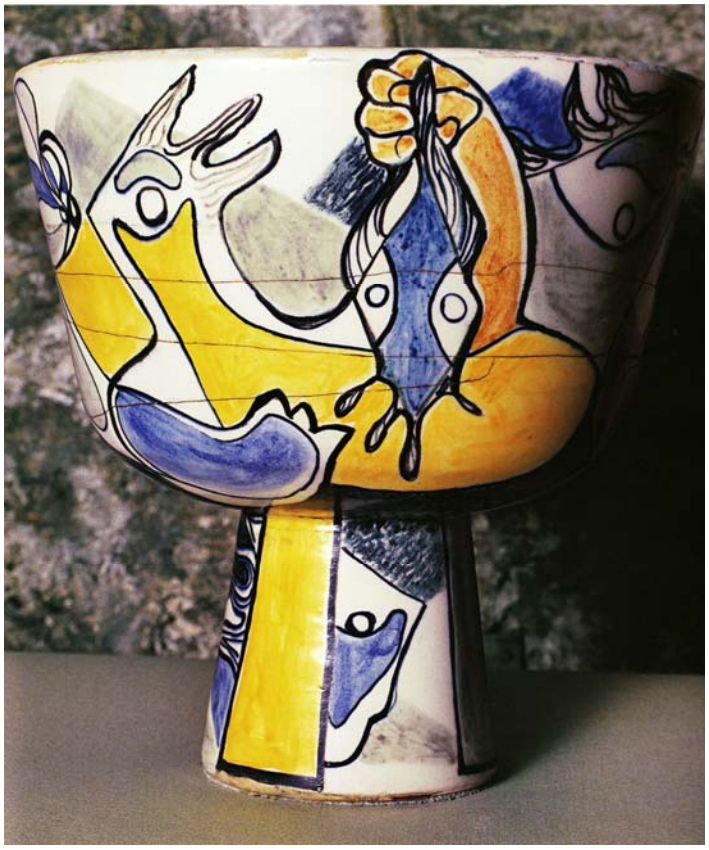


Figure 17 Fish Women's Fruit Bowl, 1952

In *Fish Women's Fruit Bowl* (1952) three large women with fish heads and circular eyes sport large laughing mouths, and at the same time a functioning and useful arm and hand emerges grasping a fish that actually appears to be a fish. At this point the women are shown as having developed the capacity to interact, use their hands to grasp things in the environment, and most importantly their mouths can be employed to take in nurturance, and as means of expression of joyful interaction. For the first time, it seems, a smile makes its appearance.

Figure 18 Fruit Bowl with Women and Fish, 1953

Fruit Bowl with Women and Fish, (1953) seems to have its own internal wind, which causes the bowl to appear as if it is turning. A center of consciousness appears here, and a central cross is formed, which defines four separate quadrants. This appears to represent the beginning of the emergent "Self," a center that can pose a magnetic pull, the beginning of an opposition to the power of the environment's pull towards submergence. The vertical pull—the internal dimension—is the strongest, although the horizontal—the movement out

into the world—is also a very defined force defying submergence with the environment.

The emergence of a center and the wind, the powerful movement of psyche, follows closely upon the women's development of "mouths" and hands shown in the previous ceramic bowl; the mouth is designed for both taking in (nurturance) and expression, (speech), and the hand is designed for connection with the world in various ways.

The fish women possess a much more in-the-world arm and hand holding the fish, and appear through their accentuated color and dominance to provide the energy for the wind, the circular motion and the psychic movement forward.

Figure 19 Dish with Birds, 1953

Dish with Birds, (1953) painted the same year also takes a mandalic form in which the aerial element of the bird is introduced to the movement around a center. Here, there are four winds (indicated by the four birds) each moving in a different direction. These winds make a correction in emphasis to the powerful vertical movement in the last plate. The winds make the shift towards the horizontal and towards movement out into the world. The lack of a boundary

around the outside of the plate may suggest there is a renewed security around the outer, the relational. The addition of the three inner rings around the white center appears to provide an inner sanctum of sufficient safety and strength around a strong inner core.

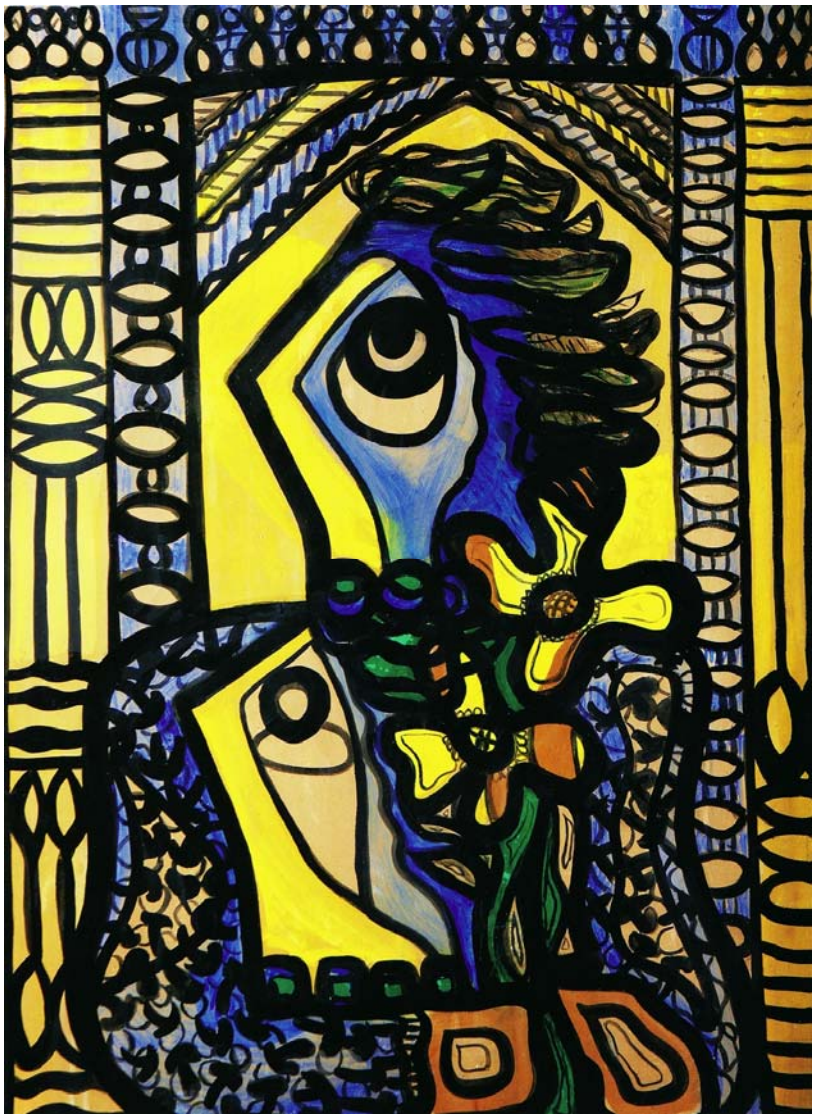


Figure 20 In Women in Profile, 1953

In *Women in Profile,* (1953) Amelia again returns to the human element**,** painting two women, one of whom appears to be a little manikin—a homunculus

containing all the seeds of the future complete woman—something that is held safely in the casing or vessel of the body. Although, there is a strong element of these figures sinking into non-differentiation of the ground, there is also the beginning of a new form, a beginning differentiation of figure and ground. These figures are framed with space behind them, and yellow light, which dramatically separates figure and ground and orchestrates the beginnings of something new, a more individuated relationship with the environment.

Figure 21 Women, 1958

The next and last painting, *Women* (1958), is both alive and powerfully infused with movement and an otherworldly light. It pictures a moment of both

alarm and revelation. This heightened moment depicted as revelatory, appears to signify a moment of penetration from another more sacred realm of knowing that has transformed the internal experience of the women. The women appear transfixed.

The women are depicted finally liberated from their environment, moving toward twinship, celebrating their own dual nature and acceptance of their uniqueness. Both figures are oriented in the same way, two internal aspects depicting their resonance with one another. Logos comes in here for the first time, coming from the collective unconscious and imaged in the Doric columns and the solid and squared off quality of the frame. Here Logos seems to outline and solidify the generative transformation that has occurred.

Conclusion

The journey through Amelia's work takes one into the territory of the unconscious, a place of secret gestations and transformations of which initially there is no awareness, no inkling until they suddenly pass into the light. Her work adds credence to an alchemical paradigm of transformation, and brings forth important questions about shadow transformations and their contribution to the movement towards wholeness in women.

Amelia's images reveal an important aspect of the archetypal processes involved in depicting the transformation of women towards a depth of connection

with themselves and its concomitant separation from the environment. The images reveal a slow movement toward identity, individuation, agency, a process that appears to take place against the grain of something innate, against the gravitational pull of all that offers comfort and safety and which supports a kind of undifferentiated diffuseness of Self and other.

It is very interesting that the appearance of a sense of a center emerges after the development of a psychological sense of "hands" that can interact with the environment and "mouths" that open to nourishment from the environment, and can express a point of view. It appears that this notion holds important implications for clinical work with women. It is also important that Logos appears to significantly inform the whole process in its continual opposition to diffuseness and in its support of boundaries between organic and inorganic, self and other, self and object.

In women, the capacity of the environment to offer such a powerful level of comfort, safety and meaning appears to split the libido, pulling it away from the woman, leaving her less intimately known to herself, and an unequal match to the power that the environment and collective forms, seems to have over her. This process may explain women's reported porousness in relationship to the environment, an environment, which possesses a felt safety, but also maintains a powerful pull against the emergence of a sense of a center of self—and against a strong sense of "I", that is an "I" that can stand for itself, combating diffuseness and maintaining a clear stance of reflection on herself and the ethos of which she is a part.

Amelia shows the painstaking differentiating process involved in reclaiming the libido back into investment in the woman herself, and her ability to utilize it to further identify a center of consciousness other than that defined by the collective. This arduous and difficult process involving regressions to earlier states may explain the vulnerability women have to losing a sense of who they are, and their difficulty in attributing meaning, and value to themselves, and to their own creative efforts.

Joan Golden-Alexis, PhD is a Jungian Analyst in private practice in New York City. She is a training analyst, faculty member and supervisor at the Jungian Psychoanalytic Association in New York and at the Philadelphia Association of Jungian Analysts. She is a clinical supervisor at the Graduate School of Psychology of Yeshiva University. She is former coordinator and supervisor of family and couple training at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine and former coordinator of curriculum at the JPA. She writes and lectures on dreams, and the development of symbolic consciousness, in psychoanalysis. Her most recent published article is “Written in the Flesh—the transformational Magic of the Tattoo"

drjoangolden@gmail.com

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Image credits:

Figure 1: *Self-Portrait,* 1946, Peláez, Gouache and watercolor on paper (Morales and Elliot, 85)

Figure 2: *Seated Woman*, 1929, Peláez, Oil on Canvas (Blanc, 74)

Figure 3: *Ferns*, 1933, Peláez, Oil on Canvas (Blanc, 76)

Figure 4: *Still Life with Fruit*, 1935. Peláez, Oil on Canvas (Morales and Elliot, 45)

Figure 5: *Hibiscus,* 1936, Peláez, Oil on Canvas (Morales and Elliot, 53)

Figure 6: *Still Life in Red*, 1938, Peláez, Oil on Canvas (Blanc, 79)

Figure 7: *Cashews*, 1939-1940, Peláez, Oil on Canvas (Blanc, 80)

Figure 8: *Balcony*, 1942, Peláez, Gouache on paper (Blanc, 81)

Figure 9: *The Sisters*, 1943, Peláez, Gouache on paper (Morales and Elliot, 69)

Figure 10: *Two Sisters Reading*, 1944, Peláez, Gouache on paper (Blanc, 82)

Figure 11: *The Two Sisters,* 1946, Peláez, Gouache on paper (Morales and Elliot, 87)

Figure 12: *Woman with Fish*, 1948, Peláez, Oil on Canvas (Morales and Elliot, 93)

Figure 13: *Vase*, 1950, Peláez, Red clay body, height 9 7/8 in. (Jubrias, 33)

Figure 14: *Bowl with Dancing Women*, 1951, Peláez, Red clay body, diameter 9 in. (Jubrias, 43, 106

Figure 15: *Crowned Siamese* (1951), Peláez, Refractory Paste, diameter 8 5/8 in. (Jubrias, 30)

Figure 16: *Sketch for a Mural, (*1951), Peláez, Gouache on paper, (Jubrias, 113)

Figure 17: *Fish Women's Fruit Bowl* (1952), Peláez, Red Clay body, diameter 9 in. (Jubrias, 53)

Figure 18: *Fruit Bowl with Women and Fish*, (1953), Peláez, Red clay body, diameter 13 ¾ in. (Jubrias, 64)

Figure 19: *Dish with Birds*, (1953), Peláez, Red clay body, diameter 13 5/8, (Jubrias, 65)

Figure 20: *Women in Profile,* (1953), Peláez, Oil on paper, (Jubrias, 100)

Figure 21: *Two Women* (1959), Peláez, Gouache on paper laid down on canvas (Jubrias, 105)