

## **CARMELO FONTÁNEZ: BEYOND THE VISIBLE**

Teresa Tió Fernández

Color is the central focus in the paintings of Carmelo Fontáñez, one of our country's most exceptional painters. Color can be the presence and flow of continuous energy, space's unifying force; it can reveal a hidden world, express sensations and moods; or it can have a symbolic value that transcends its literal meaning. Color is an expressive force that does not have to represent a recognizable object to have significance and transcendence.

In the 1960s, Carmelo Fontáñez belonged to a group of artists for whom abstraction was the language of creative expression. They knew they'd be breaking with an important and respected national tradition enshrined by the masters of the fifties. Fontáñez sensed that his path lay in transcending objective experience, and he knew abstraction was his natural mode of expression. Abstract forms acted as valid symbols for his need to create. Freed from the constraints of objective narrative, in his work the image itself becomes the object that affirms its existence and value.

This tendency in Fontáñez' paintings naturally branches out from the place he has called home since birth: Caimito, a neighborhood in San Juan that takes its name from a tree with delicious purple fruit and white pulp. Caimito is the most rural area remaining in San Juan, and Fontáñez' paintings are filled with its forests, with hundreds of plants and trees, an undeniable manifestation of nature's hourly transformations. With the shifting light, transparency also transforms, shaped by multiple shades of green, blue, violet, red, orange, and yellow. All the colors are present in this paradisiacal space that tints the light. And the still distant sea, once encountered, will add its own polychromatic metaphor.

"I paint with natural light," the master shares. Morning light is transformed by afternoon. In winter, when its strongest intensity wanes, when it fades, Fontáñez doesn't paint; he draws. This intimate relationship between the artist and the illuminated forest marks and enriches the images that arise from contemplation, thus achieving the poetic quality that can be found throughout his work.