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## Cuban Painter Diego Torres

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### Helson Hernandez

HAVANA TIMES, March 18 — Within contemporary visual arts on the island, Diego Torres is a luminary among the great Cuban landscape artists. However, in his interview he told HT: "I hate for people to pigeonhole me; I don't even like being called a landscape artist because — though that's what I do — I try to go beyond that genre."

**HT: Generally, they say that all painters start out when they're young. Was that the case with you?**

**Diego Torres:** Ever since I was a child I liked to draw — I'd draw anything I saw. But one doesn't make the decision to become an artist until they've acquired a certain degree of maturity. I don't believe those who say "I decided to become a painter when I was a child." I think one should grow up first. This is a very serious profession and I don't think a child has the capacity to make that decision; of course the talent and vocation have to exist at whatever the age.



[1]

Painting by Diego Torres

**HT: Let's review your education.**

**DT:** I studied at the San Alejandro Academy of Fine Arts in Havana between 1992 and 1996, when I finally graduated.

**HT: Since early on in your search for your identity in your work did you have an interest in landscapes?**

**DT:** My first encounter with landscapes was in 1986 when I saw the work "Relacion," by [Tomas Sanchez](#) <sup>[3]</sup> at the Museum of Fine Arts during the 11th Havana Biennial. It had a great impact on me; I was 16 and I wondered to myself, "How did he do that?"

But it was a long time after that I started painting landscapes. I discovered [the work of the American painter Andrew Wyeth](#) <sup>[4]</sup> and decided that this would be my future. Later on I spoke a lot with Tomas, who gave me some good advice that has helped me out.



[2]

Painting by Diego Torres

**HT:**

**This style has a strong tradition in the history of the visual arts here in Cuba. How do you see yourself as a**

**landscape artist?**

**DT:** I hate for people to pigeonhole me, I don't even like being called a landscape artist because — though that's what I do — I try to go beyond that genre. I'm more interested in problems of philosophical and anthropological natures as viewed from a scenic setting, which I sometimes use to define the context, though occasionally I don't.

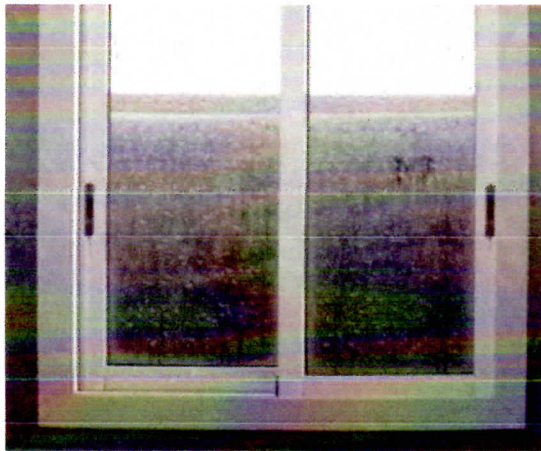
**HT: How is it to be involved in creation here in Cuba in these current times?**

**DT:** Any place is good for creating. It's a very personal relationship between the artist and the work. Though the context may have an influence, it shouldn't be determinant. That's why creating in Cuba can be as legitimate as creating elsewhere else.



[5]

Painting by Diego Torres



[6]

Painting by Diego Torres

**DT:** I've never liked to lean on any types of symbols. As I said, my concerns have always been of an anthropological order. I'm interested in the problems of people of my time, and try to reflect these problems in my work within my context, but without falling into localism.

**HT: Do you think there is growing development in Cuban painting?**

**DT:** Cuban art is always evolving, but I'll be honest, it's not like it was in the 1980s.

**HT: What are you up to in your work this year? Are you involved in another important project?**

**DT:** This year I have several projects; specifically, ones in the United States.

**HT: Tell us about the very personal relationship established between art and Diego Torres.**

**DT:** Art is something for which I feel absolute respect. Every work I do is well thought out in advance. I don't like to improvise.

**HT: Do you have a workshop or studio in Havana where people can find your artistic work?**

**DT:** I've always worked in Guanabacoa; I have my studio there.

**HT: If you were to put down your greatest concerns on canvas right now, what symbolic images would reflect these?**

[7]

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