Master copy

Américas

VOLUME 27, NUMBER 5 MAY 1975

AMÉRICAS is published monthly in English, Spanish, and Portuguese by the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States, Washington, D.C. 20006.

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Supplements: See complete listing, page 40.

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The Organization of American States (OAS) is the regional organization of the Western Hemisphere created to maintain the peace, ensure freedom and security, and promote the welfare of all Americans. The member states are Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The OAS is an outgrowth of the International Union of American Republics, created in 1890 during the First International Conference of American States, held in Washington, D.C. Today, it operates through a large number of agencies and institutions throughout the Hemisphere, all contributing to the objectives of preserving the peace and security of the member states and promoting, by cooperative action, their economic, social, and cultural development. The central and permanent organ, the General Secretariat of the OAS, has its headquarters in Washington, D.C.

DIALOGUE VERSUS CONFRONTATION

We should continue to be optimistic about the future of the Americas. The ties of geography, history, and culture that unite the Hemisphere are stronger than any divisive elements. Ideological differences, so marked a few years ago, have diminished in the face of the need for harmonious and brotherly coexistence among all the Hemisphere countries. As a consequence, a firm belief in the usefulness of the inter-American system and in a continuing dialogue among all its members is fully justified. . . .

Confrontations lead to frustration, and unrealistic expectations to disappointment. The challenge before the inter-American system is to move toward lasting solutions, by means of dialogue and communication. Unilateral courses of action, with no understanding of one another's problems, are conducive to failure; cooperation will help overcome the complex obstacles to development and well-being, barriers that occur in both large and small countries, in the north as well as in the south.

In the industrialized countries, and especially in the United States, an economic nationalism has emerged during the current recession. And that crisis, which reduces economic output, simultaneously undermines policies that would provide more substantial support for the development efforts of other countries. Under these circumstances, hopefully temporary, confrontations between the United States and the other nations of the Americas lead only to a weakening of inter-American relations and impede the solution of any problems. More than ever before, the present crises require dispassionate understanding and mutual support in seeking solutions, as well as a clear recognition of interdependence in the Hemisphere, in a world that is constantly becoming smaller.

(From a recent address of the Secretary General, Galo Plaza, before the Inter-American Economic and Social Council)

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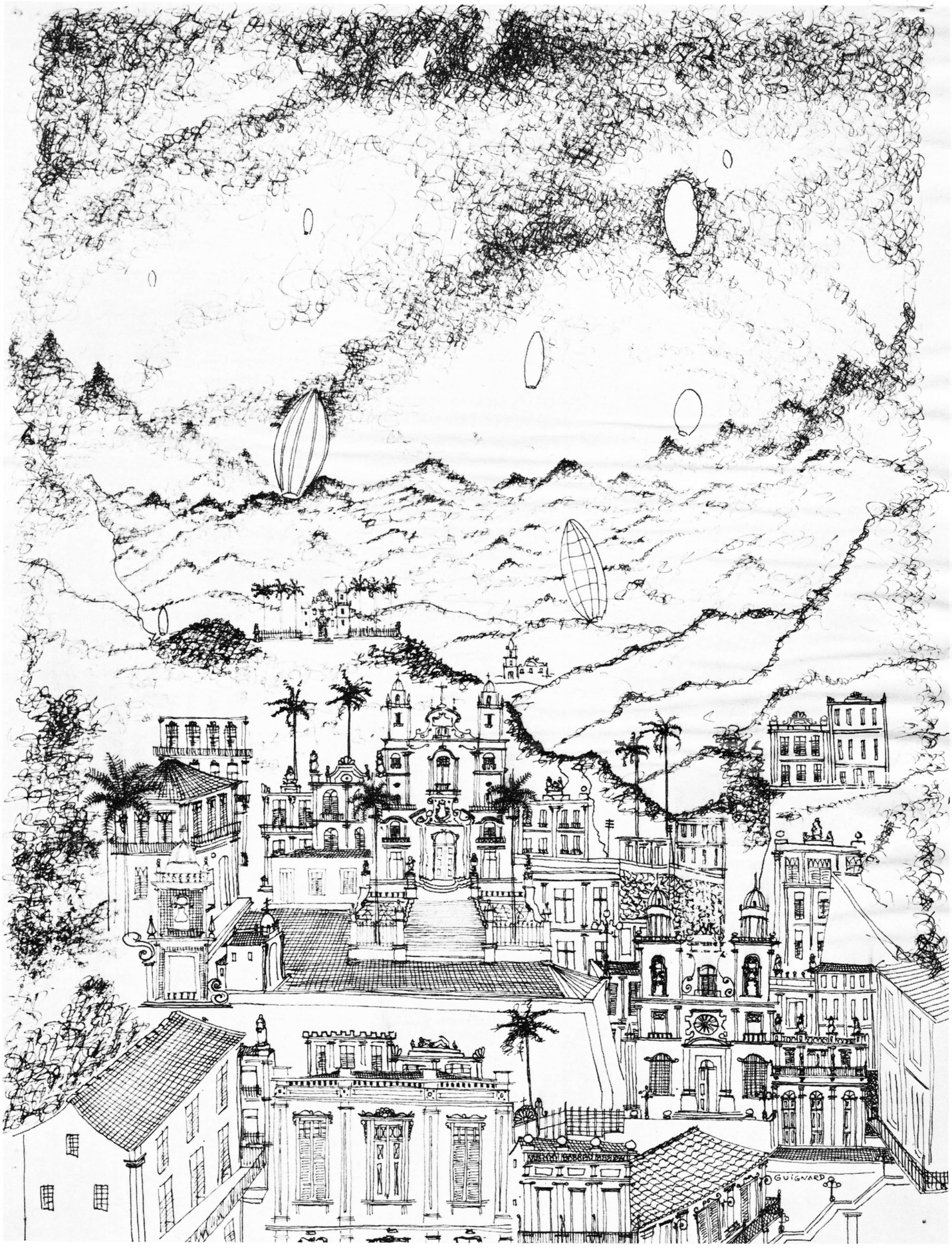


Study for Ouro Preto: St. John's Eve, *1942, pen and ink*

The Ever-Brazilian GUIGNARD

SYLVIO DE VASCONCELLOS

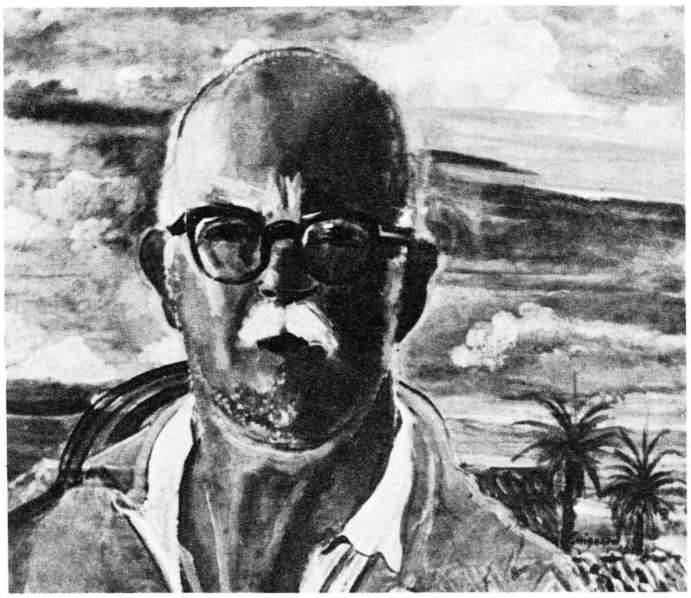
IN THE LAST TWO CENTURIES there has probably been no artist more Brazilian in the form and content of his work than Alberto da Veiga Guignard.

After the colonial period Brazilian art became totally dependent on French models, introduced in the first place by Neoclassical European artists brought over by the National Academy of Fine Arts and later imported by native artists who, traveling in Europe after World War I, carried back with them the innovations of Impressionism and the stylistic variations that followed in its wake.

The first attempts at nationalization of Brazilian art came in 1922, in São Paulo, inspired by the commemoration of a century of national independence. They did not begin to produce results, however, until after World War II, during the 1940's. It was then that such talents were revealed as Lúcio Costa in architecture; Cândido Portinari, Alberto di Cavalcanti, and José Gianini Pancetti in painting; Heitor Villa-Lobos in music; and Carlos Drummond de Andrade in literature. But in the end their efforts were much more intent on the modernization of Brazilian art than on its nationalization.

With Guignard, however, things were different. Unlike his contemporaries, he never cared about following the stylistic trends in vogue, he never gave a thought to pleasing the critics, and he never worried about commercial success.

Born in 1896 with a cleft palate that made verbal communication extremely difficult, if not impossible, Guignard was only ten when he lost his father in an accident—thought indeed by some to be suicide.



Self-portrait, *1961, oil on canvas*

His mother took her young son and moved to Europe, where in time she married an aging German baron.

Guignard's education, in different schools as the family moved from one country to another, was fraught with difficulties, and he was already twenty years old when he enrolled in the Munich Academy of Fine Arts, where he studied for only nine semesters. In 1923, leaving school behind, he married a young student of music, with whom he went to Florence to live. But the young woman walked out on him while they were still on their honeymoon.

The artist's loneliness and suffering in a strange land, with wistful memories of his early childhood in Brazil and an intense dislike for Europe, is not hard

to understand. And so it was that in 1929 he returned to Brazil, where he undertook, without much success at the beginning, to make a living from his profession.

In 1940, by then forty-four unhappy years old, he won a prize in the National Fine Arts Exhibit that enabled him to travel throughout Brazil. The award transformed his life—not for the prestige of having won it, but rather because it gave him the opportunity to know his country better and to live in relative comfort without serious financial worries.

This is when he began to paint the exuberant Brazilian vegetation, the urban landscape, the people of his country, and the flowers that emblazon the gardens of his native land. It was during this period that he rediscovered the scenes of his childhood, the memory of his mother and father, the popular festivals, the luminosity of the tropical sun, and the ingenuous tenderness of the plain folk from the countryside. He painted the balloon-filled nights of St. John; the mountain chains stretching out to the horizon became the constant background of his portraits; he depicted whole families in the formal poses that please the simple people; and almost as if it were an obsession, he scattered flowers throughout his compositions. His colors became vibrant, the greens, blues, and yellows highlighted with generous quantities of white.

In 1942 Guignard won the gold medal in the National Fine Arts Exhibit, the highest national award, and soon after was invited to set up a school of art in Belo Horizonte, capital of the State of Minas Gerais.

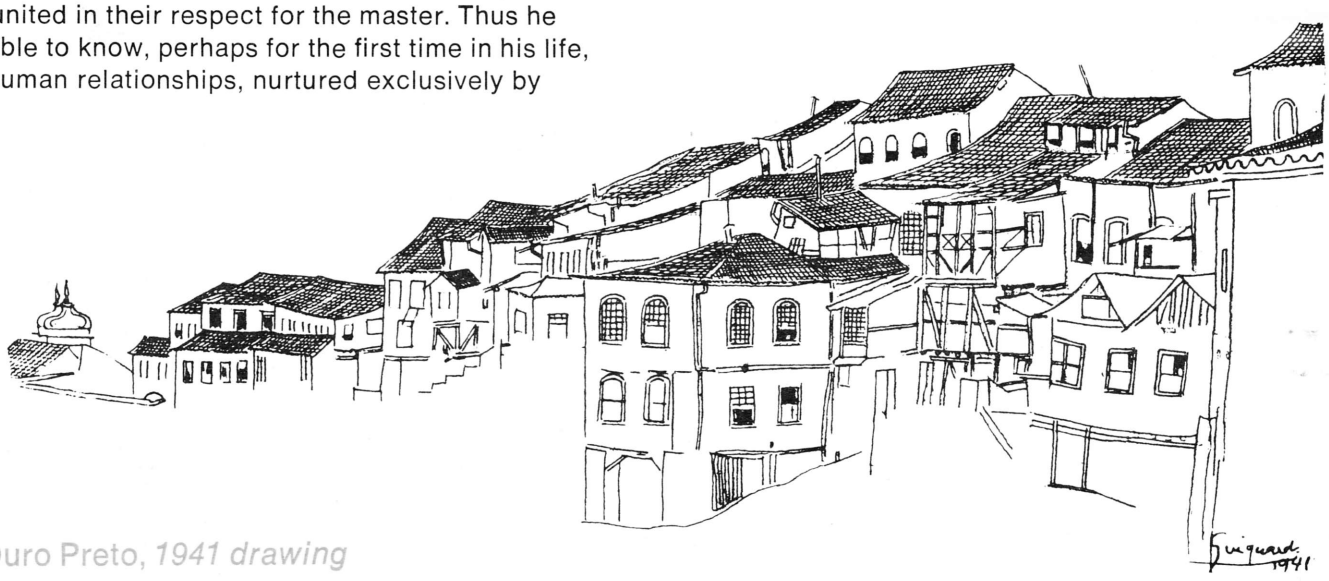
Completely free of academic bureaucracy, the institution was Guignard himself—no more, no less. Incapable of theoretical discourse, he systematically avoided the formal classroom approach and turned the school into a workshop where each student was free to do what he wanted, learning from the example of the master. By doing, he showed how things should be done. No rules, no criticism, no correction. Only encouragement.

Soon he was wreathed in the admiration and affection of his students, who formed a virtual family around him, united in their respect for the master. Thus he was able to know, perhaps for the first time in his life, real human relationships, nurtured exclusively by the only kind of communication that was within his power: his work. He began to be loved as he had always wanted to be. He was moved by the regard in which he was held, and at long last he poured out his feelings in his loving response to the environment that had welcomed him.

He never created his art to show or to sell, to gain recognition, or to make money; his paintings and drawings were simply messages of appreciation or friendship to the people around him. He gave them away like presents to anyone who was interested in having them, as if they were no more than words or a friendly communication. He had no other motive but to make friends; his works represented his side of the human dialogue in which he was engaged.

Done in this spirit, then, his art became Brazilian, its form, intention, subject matter, and content focused on the setting in which he lived. While other Brazilian contemporary artists looked for public acclaim and official recognition by identifying themselves with the European "modernism" of the time—almost all of them consciously seeking the influence of Pablo Picasso, José Orozco, David Siqueiros, Henri Mattisse, and other universal giants—Guignard totally disdained all that was foreign and concentrated on the little world in which he lived. He looked inside, rather than outside, his country. He didn't go to Europe to study or to tone down the supposed "defects" of his native art. On the contrary: even though he had learned his first lessons there, the Continent had brought him only suffering and did not evoke in him the least admiration. Naturally, his eyes thrilled at the sight of the great art works of history, and indeed he owed much to his schooling at the academy in Munich. But he made use of his past experience only in terms of technique, nothing more.

Signs of German expressionism, of French impressionism, and perhaps of primitivism, as advanced by Rousseau, can be seen in his work, but still it would be difficult to pinpoint the direct and immediate lines



Ouro Preto, *1941 drawing*

Inspired by the exuberant vegetation of his native land, Guignard frequently painted flowers, like this oil, in vibrant colors

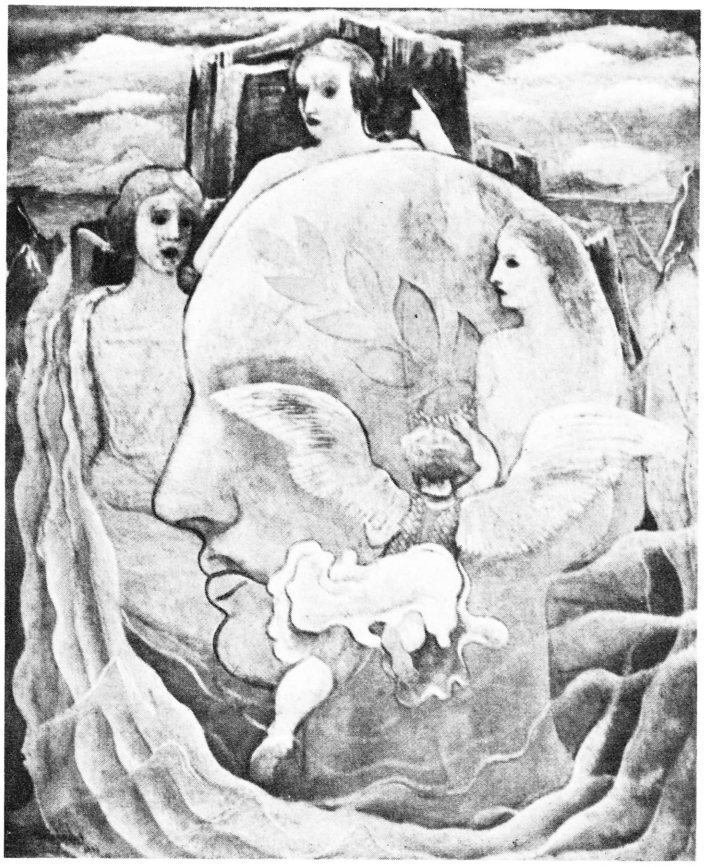
of influence. His expressionism and his primitivist approach, seen especially in his painting style, could be attributed to the lack of a more polished technique in the handling of oils, to the impatience that he never succeeded in overcoming while he worked, or simply, to his somewhat childlike and ingenuous personality.

His drawing is perfect, of an admirable purity, the lines revealing a high degree of discipline. Perhaps something of a German school-like rigidity comes through in them. But his painting shows no such clear academic training. As far as technique is concerned, he was much more in command of his drawing than of his painting. As a result, with the exception only of his floral compositions, he almost always had a tendency to draw, as did Paul Cézanne, even when he was working in oils.

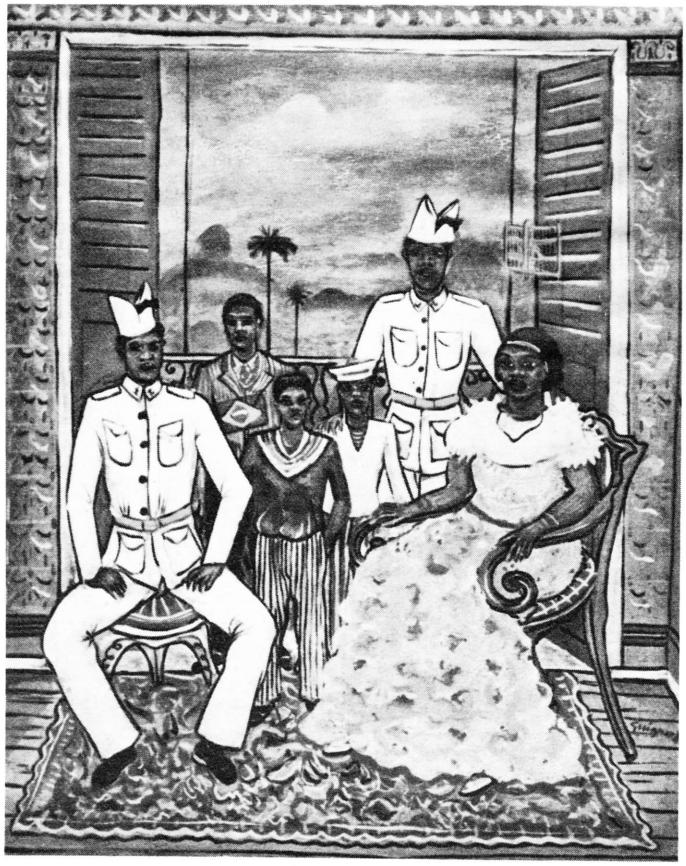
Before Guignard, drawing was not considered an art in its own right in Brazil. It had importance only in caricature and illustration. Guignard, however, raised it to the level of an art—to the point that all his compatriots who later devoted themselves to this medium have been accused of copying, even when they have nothing more in common with the master than the fact that they have chosen to use the same

Drawing by the artist depicts himself as a saint (with halo) capturing the perfect beauty of nature vis-à-vis the Devil (the critical public), who enjoys roasting him

The Poet's Dream, *1933, oil, 63 x 51 cm.*



Brazilian Marines' Family, *oil, 57 x 47 cm.*



vehicle of expression. There is no doubt, however, that he is the father of this art form in Brazil and its greatest exponent up to the present time.

During the last twenty years of his life the artist did mostly portraits of students and friends and scenes of the region that had welcomed him. It was his richest and most prolific period. He concentrated especially on the colonial cities, whose spirit he captured with unsurpassed mastery and expressiveness.

It was in Ouro Preto that he spent his last years, still ingenuous and childlike as he had always been, happy, and delighted by the admiration and affection that surrounded him. He continued to give away his work to those who were close to him, unconcerned about any other reward than to have inspired love: the love of his students; the love for Brazilian traditions caught forever in the colonial architecture, in the native vegetation, in the arid mountains once upon a time laden with gold; the love, finally, of men of good will, united in their contemplation of the beauty that makes life worth living.

Yes. Alberto da Veiga Guignard was the most Brazilian of all the artists his country has produced. Because he taught his compatriots the importance of communication and human solidarity; because he showed them how to love the land where they were born.

Guignard died on June 26, 1962, and was buried, as he had asked to be, in the colonial cemetery of the Church of São Francisco in the city of Ouro Preto, which he loved so much. ■

Sylvio de Vasconcellos, Brazilian architectural historian and former Chief, National Historical and Artistic Heritage for the State of Minas Gerais, has written a number of books on the baroque period in Brazil. Now a resident of Washington, D.C., he was a friend of the artist's during the latter's eighteen years of residence in Minas Gerais.

The Execution of Tiradentes, *1960, oil on wood, 60 x 70 cm.*