

WORKING PAPERS.

An Introduction to a Xul Solar Retrospective

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From its very title –*Xul Solar. Visiones y revelaciones*– this exhibition proposes a new reading among the various possible ones that can be chosen on the art of Alejandro Xul Solar (1887-1963). On the one hand, it relates to the artist itself, as a mystic and visionary. On the other, it also refers to the attitude that a model viewer should assume, not only when face to face with the works exhibited, but also when reacting to the way in which they are presented.

To be able to bring these two strands together in the same exhibition is no easy task. Firstly, because Xul Solar still remains unattainable as an artist in many senses. And secondly, because, even if you mean to work from a “pedagogical” perspective, his work evades all attempts at schematization and, while trying to make it more accessible, we risk falling prey to a simplification that has no relation whatsoever with its inherent complexity. It is precisely this complexity which provokes interest in the viewers, both those capable of carrying out elaborate readings and also those that cannot go beyond the surface meaning of his paintings.

Xul Solar’s art, taken in its entirety –which includes, apart from his paintings, his other creations (Panchess, neocriollo [Neo-Creole] and panlingua [Panlanguage], Tarot, *I Ching*, innovations in musical notation and in the piano keyboard, etc.)–, demands a non-traditional approach as well. This is why it is indispensable to start by defining Xul Solar as an esoteric and occultist and, as from 1924, as an “initiate”, without fearing the weight and implications that each of these terms carries¹.

Once you agree to view him from this standpoint, you are ready to recognise an ongoing common theme in his art, and to understand that it is only possible from this vantage point to recover its unity and integrity. From approximately 1910, until his death in 1963, the numerous searches within his work describe a main line that, even if sometimes and outwardly splits into minor or seemingly “mundane” branches, is the one that prevails throughout his whole personal history.

Another point to be clarified is that, even if Xul can be considered as a “theoretical” person, the truth is that he thought out and conveyed his ideas in artistic terms: he is a painter and his paintings are true narrative texts in images. They possess content, without being literary in the sense criticised by the historical avant-garde; content that, in order to be updated, requires from viewers skills far beyond the usual ones. What is more, for Xul the act of writing, as can be appreciated in his working manuscripts, presented a further difficulty, in addition, to his zeal for perfection –one we may today call “superior”– which led him to introduce constant changes to his texts.

Far from stripping it of its value, on the contrary, these statements are meant to redirect our approach. If there is indeed a coherent corpus of ideas, it should be sought in his paintings and in some of his creations,

Notwithstanding what other texts about them may exist because, more often than not, they blur their sense instead of making it clearer. This is due to Xul never telling the whole story, so the reader is always left with the impression that something unattainable lies behind his words.

These are some prior considerations about *Visions and Revelations*. However, there is another one, no less important, that has to do with the commonplace image of the artist who –once in Europe (1912)– made a clear decision to adopt the vanguardist tenets. It is almost a vanguardist prejudice that seeks for legitimation through the construction of an image and that, despite its objective perspective, is far from being exact and complete.

If we dismiss this initial vanguardist alternative, an urge to know what Xul did before his departure arises. However, everything previous to 1912 remains unknown to us; this means that the search for any piece of information outside what his aunt Clorinda Solari meticulously wrote down in a notebook which recounted the family history (primary school studies, violin learning lessons, childhood diseases, arm fracture, first works and architecture studies, etc.) will never be enough. On the contrary, this document is more significant for what it does not mention and for the information gaps from May 1908 to April 5, 1912, the day of his departure².

Only one piece of evidence, a personal diary belonging to Xul, mentions the existence of twelve works of art by the end of 1911, the first the artist produced at the age of 24³. About these, not a single trace remains. This seems strange if we take into account that the artist kept the majority of his works of art, this being at odds with the rumour that he destroyed lots of them. Written between October 1910 and February 1912, the diary is important for other reasons. Apart from mentioning his first works, in it appears a “dramatic and musical poem”, which takes us into another sphere to which Xul devoted himself during this period: music, a topic analyzed by Cintia Cristiá in this catalogue. It was an activity significant enough for him to mention when defining himself –professionally– in his ID: painter and musician.

Yet his journal is also a record of a profound spiritual crisis. On November 1st 1911, he wrote: “How about my weaknesses, always on the increase. That make me wish for deep sleep, total oblivion, definitive death!? Under a gleaming light, in colours never seen, through ecstatic and hellish chords, outrageous tones, under a novel beauty of my own, in my countless children, I will forget all the problems that weigh me down: Yes, my ruinous grievances are labour-related. I’m pregnant with a huge, new world!”. Two months later, he insisted: “Drunk with music and proud passion, last night I planned to pursue my own music; this morning I wanted to found a new religion on my art and create a world for my followers”.

By this time, Xul was wholly conscious of having assumed a religious mission, but who were his followers? Certainly not his friends, those who shared with him concerts and plays. It is precisely in their voices that he puts those objections with which he had to deal daily. They reproached him for his difficulties in facing his everyday life:

that I have little sense of reality, that I'm eternally doubtful, that I wait for the creative flame that may extinguish before arriving (all false), that I should have a profession, that perhaps I won't get anywhere, that I shouldn't split myself in so many directions, that I have to live this life, that I don't know what life is, that I never experienced true pain, that I should earn my bread, that the way I want to live is theoretical, that I should build a solid base, that all my distress and grief exist are due to my idiosyncrasies, with no true cause for them, that I have some talent, that two arts are one too many, that one should redirect oneself, that I do nothing, that I should practise one art and earn my money with it, and a thousand other things: In a word, that if I don't change at heart I'll be a complete failure. I should remember all this and strengthen myself through work (the day before yesterday I met Scaramuzza, who introduced me to a friend of his as a complete failure, a person who knows a bit of about everything⁴.

Among those friends that belonged, like him, to the Buenos Aires bourgeoisie he found no understanding and, in addition, there are no other documents recording his contact with those groups of scholars that, since 1890, had introduced Theosophy in our country, nor with other characters such as H. Girgois, one of the first active Martinists at the beginning of the XXth century. This state of uneasiness, plus the spiritual crisis that placed him constantly before a reality where he felt like an outsider, really moved him to travel to London⁵. To him it was the rejection of this materialistic and scientific society that, far from making him feel isolated as he did among his family and friends, placed him in a larger context which was the basis of the renaissance of the occult and its related arts at the end of the XIXth century. This approach was openly rejecting the society that had crystallised during the previous century: an individualist, industrialist, materialist and rationalist society. An escape from reason, just like James Webb defines it in his seminal work on the subject, *The Occult Establishment*⁶.

During this first phase, Europe acts as a longed-for space, a space to be explored, and the artist's continuous comings and goings through the period 1912-1914 (London, Turin, Paris) are connected to his double-aimed searches. It has often been mentioned that, at the end of 1912, Xul acquired the *Der Blaue Reiter* Almanac and that the fact of being able to recognize that he was part of a community of kindred artists caused a strong impact on him. Despite this, the first landscapes documented with certainty towards 1913 show him at work with an impressionist-like technique and water colour skills: loose brush-strokes and transparencies that allow him to activate the pictorial surface and to animate nature. Other works such as *Al Lussemburgo* [To the Luxemburgo] (dated 1913 and 1914) show the changes produced by choosing a different material –tempera– and a more colourful palette with strong contrasts as well; a heightened depiction of nature that anticipates other interests. And it is in *Nido de fénices* [Nest of Phoenixes], *Paisaje con monumento* [Landscape with Monument] or *Maestro* [Teacher] where colour conquers the foreground and where what is formal submits to the exteriorization of its inner life and of this new world whose exploration has begun: angels are there (not necessarily those marked by the Judeo-Christian tradition), as are the religious subjects (e.g. *San Francisco*), in addition to direct contact with divinity, or life after death, as in *Entierro* [Burial].

This itinerary between symbolism and expressionism may be the one he chose for his first years in Europe, but there is still another jour-

ney to be followed. It is known that the places he lived in were London, Turin and Paris. In the French city, for example, he spent a lot of time with a group of Argentineans who lived there, one of whom was the sculptor Luis Falcini who offers us a peculiar account:

An incurable bohemian. One night in Paris he didn't have a place to sleep and he met the musician Vicente Forte who, ever friendly, invited him to stay the night at his home on Boulevard Montparnasse. At dawn, Forte heard a strange music, a sort of dirge, a lament. He woke up and went over to where Xul Solar was. He saw him lying completely naked on the couch, doing push-ups. Forte asked him what was going on. Xul answered as a man possessed: "I'm getting ready for the next life"⁷.

Perhaps what this image portrays is a yoga exercise while a mantra is being recited. And this "getting prepared for the next life" proves his belief in life after death—the subject of *Nido de fénices*— as much as the need to work towards it. Music also takes a focal point, as it was literally for him a means of spiritual elevation. Although in this context Xul predictably interacted with other fellow countrymen as would have any young Argentineans on a study trip in Europe, he kept his distance from them because his interests were different. This was also the case with his occasional friends, to whom his behavior seemed a little unconventional, with the exception of Emilio Pettoruti, with whom he did maintain a true friendship.

However, Xul managed to meet other kindred spirits. During his two trips to London (1912 and 1913), apart from visiting the city, taking a walking tour through the rooms of the British Museum, and purchasing there and then two guides that speak of his early interest for the Pre-Columbian world, he also established other contacts. Among them, Austin Osman Spare, painter and draughtsman but also a leading figure in English occultism and who, according to Xul, introduced him in 1913 to the Astrum Argentinum doctrine, the order founded by Aleister Crowley in 1909. During his third trip to London (1919-1920) it is possible to follow his path through the different lodges of the Theosophical Society. This time he also made other friends, young people interested in Theosophy as he was. He may have met Allan Bennett (ordained a Buddhist monk under the name of nanda Maitriya)⁸, approached the Buddhist Society and acquired Krishnamurti's publication *The Messenger of the Star*.

What's more, his trip to Germany between 1921 and 1923 with Munich as the first stop, coincided with the establishment of Schwabing – known as the suburb of the new world– almost as a place of pilgrimage. As James Webb reports, this place was not only the point of encounter for theosophers, mystics, gnostics, taoists, buddhists, neo-buddhists but also for nihilists, unionists, bolsheviks and pacifists⁹. Moreover, Xul's move to Stuttgart sealed the decision to get nearer the founder of anthroposophy, Rudolf Steiner.

Thinking about these cities from another point of view leads us along a seldom-explored path, namely, to other sorts of relationships that, even if they happen in the sphere of the artistic society, often go beyond them. In many cases, Xul's explicit interest for Kandisky and Klee cloud the existence of "minor" figures in the history of art. Gabrielle Söene is one of them and also somebody we know very little about, except for her friendship with Modigliani and Jacob Epstein and her small abstract watercolours, of which Xul kept two. And coming back to our previous line of analysis, in his constant trips to Turin –the "città magica", whose legendary origin dates from the XVth century BC and whose foundation is attributed to an Egyptian prince called Eridano– he managed to visit the Museo Egizio, created in 1824 and whose initial collection, which was made up of 30,000 pieces collected by Bernardino Drovetti, related to both the material and artistic life of Egypt during the Pharaoh's time.

Italy was also the place where Xul started work on more ambitious projects, defining new spaces of religious importance. By these we mean his architectural projects, some of them entitled *Catedral* [Cathedral], which he developed as from 1918 and which feature a clear reference to cathedrals. Xul deploys the facade of the building in the central space of the pictorial surface and surrounds it, like an ornamental fringe, with each of the architectural interior elements, sometimes transversal cuts, columns –with a wide variety of capitals and freizes–, doors and also windows with coloured glass, cloth and hanging carpets. Mostly, these elements move away from the rigidity of geometry, even if this is located at the origin of some of them; at other times, columns and capitals denote an anthropomorphism that brings architecture to life.

However, projects that do not reach the execution phase give away his own idea of art, a total work of art in which architecture, painting and sculpture are mingled. Xul also recaptures the idea of the artist as a craftsman and his projects are directly related to his conception of a space designed for religious practice and that is also, as in its origins, a communal space, this being an idea that would come back to take its definitive form twenty years later with the foundation of the Pan Klub and in his architectural projects at the beginning of the 1950s.

This group of works is complemented with his designs for decorative objects, “decoras”, which suggest ceramic modelling, work on glass and such like. There exists a wide repertory of forms and colours as well as styles that follow one another without a break and that appear under different guises: pots, flowerpots, dishes, jars, lamps and chandeliers and ritual objects such as cups, reliquaries and chalices, broaches and pins. At this point it is possible to establish a connection with the Omega Workshop, headed by Roger Fry, which was active in London between 1913 and 1919. The link is not accidental; this workshop brought together artists such as Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, among others, who worked in order to produce decorative objects –tapestries, carpets, pottery, integral decoration of interiors. As regards pottery, in 1914 Fry stated:

First of all, we must work from the premise that pottery is of all the arts the most intimately connected with life, and therefore the one in which some sort of connexion between the artist's mood and the life of his contemporaries may be most readily allowed. A poet or even a painter may live apart from his age, and may create for a hypothetical posterity; but the potter cannot, or certainly does not, go on indefinitely creating pots that no one will use. He must come to some sort of terms with his fellowman¹⁰.

In 1918 Xul also designed tapestries with abstract motifs, sometimes geometrical ones. This choice should not be surprising, as it is quite traditional to find these kinds of motifs in the repertory of the decorative art. It is in fact in this “minor art” where abstraction makes its incursions in a freer way. Even superficial comparisons with the ones designed by Vanessa Bell or Fry himself, is enough to establish a real connection with the Omega Workshop. Also Xul's friendship with Söene, who entered the studio in 1918 as a clothes designer, and the one with Nina Hamnett, related to Fry's group, indicate ways of approach.

From all this production, only two examples evidence the leap from the project phase to the execution itself. The first of them is the set of tarot cards he created probably around 1918-1920. It was certainly in Italy where he got to know the rich local tradition of the *tarocchi* and among its iconography chose the Early Renaissance models. Although the set is not complete, it presents some peculiarities, among them the fact that each card is identified by the numerical value of the Hebrew letters, following thus the occultist tradition established by the end of XVIIIth century. When its use was taken into account, one of the cards

–“Love”– was varnished so as to protect it; another two present on their back an abstract design which is the opposite of the *grutescos* that decorate the Tarocchi Fini set (Milan, mid-XIXth century) that Xul kept with him.

The second example, a piece of tapestry –this term being loosely applied–, a water-coloured and *gouache* painted cotton fabric, in which his idea of artisan work reappears. The painting itself seems to carry us into works of larger dimensions such as *Man-tree* and relates with others such as *Ofrenda cuori* [Heart Offering]: at the centre of the vertical space, defined by the outer limits of the canvas (117 x 38,5 cm), a tree surges up and features two figures in its trunk; with its roots buried in the nether world –the hellish one, symbolized by the demonic manifestation on the bottom right corner– it accompanies the two figures on their way towards the higher world represented by the cup.

Although there are no other works that expand on the idea related to the concrete application of his designs, the design mentioned above applied to the whole and to every object with a decorative interior can be observed through his stage designs for theatre. In them, all this universe of forms is displayed, as occurs in *Escena I* and *Escena II* [Scene I and Scene II]. Apart from this, if we do not know the works for which these sets have been created –that is, if they have to do with that first dramatic and musical poem of 1912 or were destined for the interpretation of other authors' works– they lead us to a different level of action. When, in 1953, Xul develops his puppet-theatre for adults, he speaks of a goal that might have been the one that was at the origin of these sets: “to stage only plays of religious sense –mystical or poetic– from the world theatre”¹¹.

From 1920 he also developed other types of architectonic designs related to his cathedrals, but here the painter-cum-architect echoed ideas exposed by the The Glass Chain group (gläserne Kette). Although up to now it was impossible to document a real relation with the work of architects such as Bruno Taut¹², in a 1920 notebook, Xul took several notes and there is one which is of particular interest. It recorded “crystal & crystalformed rooms (palaces)”, plus a sketch of a building respecting the principle of glass architecture¹³. One of his designs in particular, dated 1921, presents a glass crown and shut windows, while the walls are trapezoidal forms defined by colour planes. But, most interestingly, Xul did not feel limited by the idea of an architecture made of iron and crystal structures.

On the contrary, his interest seems to be connected with the topic developed by Paul Scheebart, in *Glasmarchitektur* (1914), for whom the space in which man lives bears a decisive influence on culture: if the aim entailed raising culture to a higher level, the transformation of architecture was inevitable. It was at this point that he proposed crystal architecture¹⁴. In Xul it is precisely his faith in the transforming power of architecture over culture that encouraged him to envisage new architectural projects.

The other important aspect of his work for the period 1920-1922 was the incorporation of words into his paintings. This had started in 1918 but with a different sense: the incorporation of titles of works over the cardboard on which the painted paper is mounted. At this moment it had more to do with a lettering that, at times, attempted to reinforce the sense of the painted image and, at others, to clarify it: it is the “I” of the first person narrator who expresses himself. At some point the painting itself must have seemed insufficient in the face of his commanding need to convey subject matter. The text surpasses the very image and the incorporation of writing allows him to solve the mentioned difficulty. Moreover, in some cases the writing happens to compete with the painted image and provides in every case a deeper density while the viewer –now literally a reader as well– must deal with two different codes at the same time.

In his painting, this sort of lettering is, from another point of view, related to those investigations that Xul was carrying out about language and which it is possible to date around 1917. As Jorge Schwartz explains in his article in this catalogue, this first moment was marked by a process of oralization, phonetization, and creolization of the language. Only by 1920 is it possible to fix an attempt to work on that new language that Xul christened Neo-Creole, a posteriori, an artificial language¹⁵. Neo-Creole, which arises initially as a result of the fusion of Portuguese and Spanish—in a process of transformation and change to which every one of his creations is subjected—also happens to incorporate roots of French, English, German, Greek, Latin and Sanskrit¹⁶.

What we would like to point out here is that the first formulation of Neo-Creole coincides with a larger project, the aim of which was the unification of Latin America. A project which was translated into images—and words—within paradigmatic works of this century, such as *Tlaloc* or *Nana Watzin*, in which Xul recreated the beliefs of the Pre-Columbian world¹⁷. And also in some of his architectonic projects of 1921, whose origin is fairly obvious, as in *Pirámide* [Pyramid], or others such as *Neo bau* [Neo-buildings], or buildings that he may have seen in London and Paris which appear mediatised probably by their maquettes¹⁸.

Although Xul was not able to see the *Objects of Indigenous American Art* exhibition at the Burlington Fine Arts Club in June 1920, which, as has often been mentioned, represents the first exhibition in which Pre-Columbian art was officially presented as “art”, it is important to take the latter into account. Its immediate context had been Roger Fry’s just published book, *Vision and Design*; a collection of texts published in different reviews. It included articles dedicated to the bushman, to African sculpture and also to “Ancient American Art”, published in 1918 in the *Burlington Magazine*. According to Barbara Braun, this book “provided a new theoretical basis for constituting Pre-Columbian objects as art by articulating, for the first time in English, the formalist and universalist credo of modernist art – that art need only have formal meaning and that form was a universal medium of vision”¹⁹.

For Xul, both his architectonic projects and those paintings that conform to what is known as the American cycle are far from a purely ethnographic and archaeological interest. For him, the Pre-Columbian world—with its system of beliefs and rituals—was still “alive” and, being the new artist that he was, he felt capable of reshaping it and providing it with a new meaning. Within this same context, the New World—America—revealed itself as a physical and spiritual space where the new man will develop his plan, so it should hardly sound strange that one of his works from this period is entitled *Nuevo Mundo* [New World]. An alternative to a—first—postwar Europe. Xul recreates it in many of his paintings, sometimes in his myths (*América*), in his story (*En el Tigre* [At El Tigre]) or as a space to be rediscovered (*Chaco*).

It is in two texts from 1923 that his attitude began to become clearer. These are texts dedicated to his friend Pettoruti, with whom, from 1916, he had shared projects and trips and with whom, in 1922, he planned to come back to Argentina. Even though we touched upon this before, it is now important to return to this fact, partially at least, because it is essential if we are to understand his art and Neo-Creole as expressions of one and the same project. In 1923, Xul introduced his friend in the following way:

He is, however, proud of his pure Italian blood—for the racial flexibility too—and wants to be a creole, as creole for us as a feathered Indian, like the vast, distant, unexplored pampas, our legacy.

Neo-Creole people will gather all that remains from the old nations of the Southern Continent, not the dead remains but those which are alive and which will be dressed in different clothes; we contribute with the experiences of this age, and with what we were taught by eclectic cultures, and above all with the individualist spiritual restless vigour of the Aryan

people, the majority of us.

COLOURS: White race, red race, black race; with the blue daydream of the future, the golden intellectual halo, and the half-breed of the mixtures²⁰.

A little later he added:

We are and we feel new people, old and foreign paths don’t lead towards our new goal. Let’s differentiate ourselves. We are grown up people and we still haven’t ended our wars for independence. So much for the Europe’s moral tutelage - Let’s assimilate what is digestible, let’s love our masters; but let’s not love any more our unique M e c c a s overseas. In our brief past there are no artistic geniuses able to guide us (or tyrannize us).

The people of Ancient Cuzco and Palenque and Tenochtitlan destroyed themselves (and we are no longer the only red race). We can clearly see the urge to break the invisible chains (they are the strongest) that in so many fields reduce us to a COLONY, the great LATIN AMERICA with 90 million inhabitants.

Let’s look within ourselves and think over what we have already admitted and search for what is a caprice, but above all let’s do something for our country...

To this tired world, let’s contribute a new meaning, a more varied life and a higher mission for our race which is in the ascendant. Each nation should not be something closed, xenophobic, mean, but should just be like a specialized department of HUMANKIND, in which kindred spirits cooperate to build the future and faraway land, in which each man –now superhuman– SHALL BE COMPLETE.

Because we are an aesthetic race, with art –its mother, POETRY– we will start to say a new thing that is ours and ours alone²¹.

In those texts, both with a strong programmatic content, Xul reported what were the constituting elements of the new man, the Neo-Creole: there is the red race (in which some diffusionist theories are echoed)²², the Pre-Columbian world, Mme. Blavatsky’s theosophy and the seven Root-Races²³ and gnosticism, as applied to that “superhuman”. The heterogeneous cultures he mentions certainly include every non-Western tradition and constitute a repertory that Xul translates into images during 1923: *Plai, De Egipto* [From Egypt], *Una drola, Hipnotismo* [Hypnotism]. What can be distinguished in both writings is the intellectual and religious syncretism that supposes an inversion of the point of view, a project of self-definition formulated in Europe but which, for the first time, incorporates Brazil. It is in this context that the new language, Neo-Creole, must be considered. A new race that, in the course of time, will become a “sanctified race” demands a new language. And not least, if what Xul was looking for was to provide an American identity—a project of unification—the question to which he partially replies in those texts would act as a basis for it.

Only a sentence of Aleister Crowley, who met and worked with Xul in Paris in 1924, alerts us to this²⁴. In Crowley’s diary, in an entry on May 16th, the English occultist reported his meeting with the Argentinean painter: “He comes from Argentina & tells me that his True Will is to unify South America on Spiritual lines”²⁵. This explanation is of vital importance because it indicates the change of direction taken by Xul during the time he stayed in Europe. This was a change that, far from being a unique experience, inserts itself in the general development of his ideas at the beginning of the XXth century. The crisis he went through around 1910 was basically a crisis of consciousness of a religious nature, to which the occult seemed to offer solutions. However, and as Webb affirms, after World War I, the occult mingled with other matters of an ethical and social order²⁶.

On the other hand, it was this Latin American project—and its underlying message—the one that, once spread in Argentina, allowed

him to join the vanguardist group brought together for the *Martín Fierro* review (1924-1927), which, from 1924 and with figures such as Pedro Figari and Oliverio Girondo, launched its own project of an “intellectual brotherhood” among Latin Americans²⁷. In this new reversal of Xul’s point of view, which now looks from America to Europe, there is no doubt a key work: *Drago* (1927) –and also *Proa* (1925), a poster created for the *Proa* review– where a beflagged dragon, decked with every Latin American flag advances towards the conquest of the Old World, signifying a new path to be walked that implies a reversal of colonisation and domination.

Neo-Creole occupies, at this point, a central place in his Latin American project of the 20s and it is likely that, notwithstanding Xul’s views on its function –a vulgar language aimed at the communication of American people–, it may have had a religious slant. In fact, his *San Signos* were translated into Neo-Creole, besides the fact that Xul also occupied himself with translating from English into Neo-Creole part of the *Liber Legis* [Book of the Law], a sacred text revealed to Crowley in 1904.

It was at the beginning of the 30s that Xul decided to publish his visions –analyzed by Daniel Nelson and Jorge Schwartz in this catalogue– and, coincidentally with this “spreading of the word”, he brought to light a group of works which are in fact a transcription, in artistic terms, of those visions that he had started to experience from 1924 and under Crowley’s guidance. This doesn’t mean that Xul had not previously recorded them in a painted form; proof of this can be found in *Cintas* [Ribbons, 1924, Malba] and also *Bárbaros* [Barbarians, 1926].

As can be read in the previously mentioned text by Nelson, paintings such as *Palacios en Bría* [Palaces in Bría] have a direct link with visions that integrate his *San Signos*, also known as *El Libro del Cielo* [Book of the Heaven], an unpublished text that collects 64 visions attained as a result of his work with the hexagrams of I Ching or *Book of Changes*. Which is why, when we think of that book of paintings from the beginning of the 30s –among them *Bri-pais-genti* or *Visión en fin del camino* [Vision at End of Road]–, we need to bear in mind that they represent a further stage in a process of translation, this time from writing to painting, each of which possesses its own codes.

But it is necessary here to make a digression. We know that the meeting with Crowley was essential for Xul’s life, as Crowley provided him with a “formal” method for capturing his visions, which derives from the practices of the Order of the Golden Dawn. This is a technique based on “using symbols as a means of obtaining controlled astral visions”, as Francis King defines them:

The process used is best described as auto-hypnosis by means of a symbol. The seer begins by holding before his mind a symbol –it may be physically present, painted on a card, or, more difficult, formulated in the imagination only– and persists in this until no other factor is consciously present in his thinking. He then, in his mind’s eye, deliberately transforms the symbol into a vast door (or sometimes a curtain, ornamented with the symbol), wills the door to swing open, passes through it in imagination, and allows the day-dream to commence²⁸.

The symbols to be employed could differ, but it was usual to make use of tarot cards and I Ching hexagrams. Yet the crucial point in the relation with Crowley was that it was he who disciplined Xul. He instructed him that it was necessary to keep a journal of his work, and that no sooner had the vision elapsed, than he should describe it in writing, registering it in the most exact and complete way, featuring all that he had perceived with his five senses. This is the point of departure for his *San Signos*, as this book is the result of a long process of rewriting, translation and rearranging that has its origin in three of the four notebooks in which Xul noted down his visions right after they took place, just as Crowley had indicated to him.

An example of that kind of work with symbols can be found in *Revue* [Pray, 1929]. The figure represented there –Xul himself– is praying (the wings and his winged feet indicate his astral projection) stooped over the “painted” symbol on a black plane: the “door”. But the most amazing thing here is the selected symbol, which includes, in the inferior part, a geometrical figure, the heptagram, which represents the seven planets. As William Breeze states, the construction of the superior part:

[...] might have been done according to the rules set out by John Dee in his book “The Hieroglyphic Monad”. The cross symbolizes the four elements, the crescent the Moon and the disk the Sun. Dee arranges these elements in various ways to generate the symbols for the planets (this being the essential thesis of his book, that all the planetary symbols can be derived by rearrangement of the elements of this “monad”). In other words, if you put the crescent on top, with the disk in the middle and the cross on the bottom, one would get the traditional symbol for Mercury²⁹.

Mentioning John Dee brings us back again to the matter of a magical language: the Enoch language that had been revealed in two stages, in 1583 and 1584. *Monas Hieroglyphica* (1564) was the result of his intellectual work, although his aim was the same: “à savoir d’une ‘clé universelle’ en mesure d’ouvrir les mystères de l’univers”³⁰. Regarding this matter, Umberto Eco –following Nicholas H. Clulee– affirms that:

The Monas presents itself as an enunciation of a writing system with precise rules, in which each character refers to one thing. In this sense, the language of the Monas would even be superior to the Kabbalah precepts, because the latter helps to analyse things the way they are said (or written), while the Monad allows to signify things the way they are. Thanks to its possibility of universal use it invents or finds again Adam’s language. According to Clulee, resorting to points, lines and circles, it looks like Dee is referring to the graphic construction of alphabetical letters created by Renaissance artists, making specific use of squares and compasses. This is why, by means of a unique device, not only can all the significations can be generated but also all the alphabets in the world³¹.

If we take into account that there exists a direct relationship between the chosen symbol and the consequent vision –Francis King brings up an example related to William B. Yeats, one of the remarkable members of the Golden Dawn³² – it is crucial to remember that, already by 1929, Xul had stated that he was devoted to a reformation of writing, showing a journalist from the daily *La Nación* a “curious “stenography”, a document in which work in shorthand appeared. The study of this system of writing can be followed from its beginnings through the existing books in his library. There, shorthand is present in the methods of Francisco P. Martí and Isaac Pitman, and in the copy of *Curso teórico-práctico de taquígrafía Sistema Pitman* (1920) where we find the traces of his studies. It doesn’t seem just by chance that he became interested in this system, not only because it had a wide influence but also because the Pitman System had a peculiarity: Pitman had departed from a scientific analysis of language, from a phonetic point of view.

Its “universal” character –because all languages can be written– and its phonetic value as well –which, as Schwartz shows, is one of the initial instances of the linguistic work of Xul– seem to be at the basis of his choice. From this work derives the execution of his first “pictographs”, documented in the middle of the 30s. But the central theme, at least for this period that goes well into the 30s, is the declaration included in the interview mentioned above. In it, it was said:

- I’m revolutionising writing...
Waving hooks, broken geometries, thin tentacles. Which, of course, has

an imaginative and a shorthand-like aspect. Xul Solar contemplates it thoughtfully and observes some figures that hold for him a particular beauty.

- Without those cyphers we wouldn't be able to write the new language...

- Is he also revolutionising the language?

- Oh, sure!... Spanish is stopped evolving for many centuries... It is a language of extremely long words, cacophonous [...]³³.

Once again we find ourselves facing the Neo-Creole that, as a *new language*, also demands a new writing system. The allusion to these signs as "cyphers" leads us back to the sphere of magical languages (and writings). In 1940, in the catalogue of his exhibition at Amigos del Arte, it is recorded that out of twenty five works exhibited, eleven carry a marginal note: "15. Tritones (All written); 16. Pais Monti (All Written); 17. Puerto (All Written); 18. Texto (All Written); 19. Texto Nochi (All Written); 20. Borrasca (All Written); 21. Barcos (All Written); 22. Zintas (All Written); 23. Armazón (All Written); 24. Grafía (All Written); 25. Otra Grafía (All Written)". And once again one feels that there exists a sort of correspondence between both codes and that the limits between one and another are not always as easy to distinguish as in *Tritones* [Tritons], *Marina* [Seascape] or *Grafía antica*.

Around the decade of the 1940s, Xul worked intensively on his new creations: Panchess, panlingua and probably his first ideas for a new type of theatre. Most of the pieces from the early part of the decade present a chromatic reduction –*Fiordo* [Fiord], *Valle hondo* [Deep Valley], *Muros y escaleras* [Walls and Staircases], *Ciudad y abismos* [City and Abysses]– that, at the moment of describing this technique, he defined as "drawings", which in fact they are not. It is about temperas where he limits himself to working at depth, but they seem to give us the key to understanding the basis of his whole oeuvre: there is no painting without colour. It is also interesting to remark on the atmosphere he creates, the depth achieved through the use of blacks. In order to achieve that it is likely that he used stereoscopic views –which have the peculiarity of producing a tridimensional effect when looked at through a stereoscope– that he owned and that, without leaving his small studio, provided him with a wide repertory of foreign landscapes. As has been indicated³⁴, these paintings probably bear a direct relation with the international climate, marked by the beginning of World War II, and clearly mark a contrast with the positive vision of "Jerusalem celeste" from *Vuel Villa* [Flying City, 1936]³⁵.

However, they also can be thought of in the context of Xul's activity related to various groups, among them the American Spiritual Universality of Rosario, headed by his friend Santiago Bovisio, and, as from 1943, the Independent Group of Esoteric Studies, from the Martinist Order of South America, with headquarters in Montevideo. Jehel, its founder, stated that Xul had been promoted to the 5th Grade of the Order in a letter addressed to the president of the Saint Yves Group N° 17, which read as follows:

And, regarding this, I wish that you and the Members of the Group St. Yves meditate on what it means to the Order to enjoy among its Members the beloved Nil, the one who defines himself as "mentally underdeveloped", a being whose current thoughts are a proper expression or continuous meditation on Universal Laws, a being who looks into every thing, into every fact, the "Sakti", the animating Energy, into the reason for being and into the best way to design it, with all its connections in all fields. A being that is silent and evocative but who prolongs the Immutable Truths, who understands and admires them as an intellectual, who feels and translates them as an artist and who venerates and puts them in invisible motion as a contemplative person and a psychic³⁶.

This is probably one of the most complete approaches towards Xul and seems to indicate a possible place for us –the non initiated– to approach him. In this sense, a significant masterpiece is *San Haxe* [Holy Angel, 1949], because in it he introduces himself to his Guardian Angel. The adopted iconography as well as the title of the painting seems to refer directly to the Jewish-Christian tradition, in which one of the roles assigned for the angels was to protect not only prophets, saints and martyrs, but also ordinary sinners³⁷.

However, and due to the milieu in which Xul was working, it is possible to establish another kind of relationship, in particular with Aleister Crowley. According to Hymenaeus Beta, Crowley declares that:

the evolutionary goal of the new age inaugurated by his reception of The Book of the Law was nothing less than the conscious attainment by each individual of the Knowledge and Conversation of their daimon or Holy Guardian Angel. This is, he declared, the Next Step in human evolution. The Book of the Law's dictum "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law" admits more than might be apparent at first reading. Crowley made each individual's realization of their Holy Guardian Angel or daimon central to the religious, magical and social system of Thelema –itself a Greek word meaning "will". He taught that each individual possessed a true will which was identified with the daimon or Guardian Angel; to know the one is to know the other³⁸.

On this point, it is useful to expand a little more on the above, due to the controversial character of the Magus figure, generally associated with the scandals in which Crowley found himself involved during his lifetime. In this sense, it is interesting to evoke the voice of the Portuguese writer Fernando Pessoa, whose esoteric writings are nowadays an subject of study. Pessoa, as is known, was in contact with Crowley and expressed a clear interest for the Thelema doctrine, which he tried to explain as follows:

There is apparently something degrading in such a formula as "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law", but it so happens that this formula can be understood in many senses, the thing being to have the right one. [...]

In immediate appearance, the formula is a simple call to licence in all ways. But if it be understood that Will means the soul's true Will, the whole is changed, for the soul cannot rightly desire that which is its own bondage, as licence is.

The formula, in its essence is, Find out what you are; Find out what you are wants [sic]; Do what you want as such as you are³⁹.

In 1924 Xul had made his vow before Crowley: "I solemnly pledge myself to the Great Work which is to discover my true Will and to do this"⁴⁰. From that point on, it all amounted to constant work in search of who he was. This task had taken various paths but, no doubt, they were all inter-related to one another.

There is music, music which reappears in an explicit manner in a number of paintings of larger dimensions at the end of the 1940s –among them, *Impromptu*, *Montiondas con cruz* [Mountwaves with Cross] or his homages to Chopin and Bach–, an aspect examined by Cristiá in this catalogue. However, all his elements –music, panlingua, Panchess and, at the beginning of the 50s, his zodiac symbols– fuse with his personal beliefs, which are tied to the occult tradition which permeates all his inventions. Probably the most complex invention is Panchess, which, as its name suggests, has a universal aim, namely to be played in every part of the world, and whose board is also the dictionary of a new and perfect language⁴¹.

Xul worked hard for almost twenty years on panlingua and, despite publicly stating that its aim was to unite the inhabitants of the three

(political) blocks in which the world had been divided after the Second World War: Pan America, Pan Europe and Pan Asia, it was in reality a language that not only aspired to be perfect and universal, but also to be a magical tongue.

Related to this, it is possible to believe that at some point Xul may have lost his faith in Neo-Creole as a perfect (magical) language capable of allowing man access to hidden truths. By the mid-30s, this artificial and mongrel language had lost its transparency and became incomprehensible for readers. The process that had taken place was comparable to the one that Eco describes regarding Volapük, with which Neo-Creole has more than one similarity: "It is not really an *a priori* language because it borrows its roots from natural languages; but it is not an *posteriori* language either, because it submits these roots to systematic distortions, decided a priori, which make them illegible. As it tends to be so different from every known language, it becomes difficult for the speakers of all languages"⁴².

Despite this, Neo-Creole turned into the language Xul chose to use in his everyday life, and his letters and writings did not even go through a process of translation from Spanish to Neo-Creole. However, Spanish was reserved for contact with those who did not know how to use his new language or was used when publishing some works during the 50s in different media.

In addition, astrology was what guided him in his investigations and is actively present in the majority of his creations, including panlingua, his tarot, puppet theatre for adults, the Pangame, his architectonic projects and his Pan-tree. At the beginning of 50s, this interest intensified in a group of paintings whose subject was the zodiac in general and the zodiac signs in particular, the tutelary planets and portraits such as *Retrato Sagitaria* [Sagittarius Portrait] (his wife Lita), in which the person was portrayed according to their sign. Immediately afterwards, Xul would try another variant, portraying the subject in a way which was very different from their external appearance, but which was dictated by what the planets defined as man's destiny. This had already been done in *Sagitaria*. In his horoscope-portraits, what the painter does is give artistic expression to their astral cards and there lie their own "self-portrait", that of his wife and those of some of his friends.

However, we also need to bear in mind that astrology, together with alchemy and magic rituals, is one of the occult sciences par excellence, and Xul's interest in it, in order to re-establish its scientific prestige, has to be considered in this context. Other creations from that period, such as his famous Pan-tree, ought to be examined in the same light. They build up to a sum of hermetic knowledge and it is hardly surprising that his perseverance in working on them –there exist countless documents in different states, notes, rough drafts and finished works- may allow us to circumscribe his work within magic formulas.

It is true that, as a total sum of knowledge, he adds astrology (including planets and zodiac signs) to it, music, panlingua, duodecimal numeration, leading to what he called "new-kabbalah". This new and universal Tree of Life generates questions for which answers do not exist as yet, but they clearly refer to the esoteric world. Perhaps just one example would suffice in order to demonstrate the complexity and diversity of interpretations that can be made from them⁴³.

The adoption of duodecimal numeration, to which Schwartz refers in his text "Sílabas las Estrellas compongan", determines changes in the traditional Tree of Life with its ten sefirot and the twenty-two steps that connect them. But, at the same time, the two lateral columns at each side of this system's Pan-tree –one which is ascending and the other descending- leads us immediately to the link between Kabbalah and the hierarchical system of orders such as the Golden Dawn or As-trum Argentinum, where, in the case of the former, the lower grade 0^o = 0 belongs to the Neophyte and 10^o = 1 to Ipsissimus⁴⁴.

At the beginning of the 50s, Xul worked on various projects simultaneously, although these, in fact, could be seen as one project only that manifested itself through different forms and where architecture once again occupies a central place. Almost at the same time, he bought his house in Tigre and carried out a series of architectonic projects comprising facades and buildings for the Delta. Once again, this proves that his main concern was to project and build a space for man more in tune with his spiritual nature and, at the same time, providing a communal meeting place. Yet the projects within the period 1953-1954, in addition to selecting architectonic projects according to geographical space, act as testing ground for his investigations into language. The facades are marked now with letters that determine its profile and it is language that, as in his life, infects everything. And if these facades, which are often built to look like geometric forms, seem to have no meaning, others refer to zodiac signs or related symbols or to God's kingdom on Earth. It is precisely during his retirement in Tigre that Xul returns to his grafías [writings], which he denominates arbitrarily "plastiútiles" [plastiuseful] or "pensiformas" [thought-forms], including in both denominations his own interests. In the case of "pensiformas" one can understand that this has to do with the artistic manifestation of certain thoughts, establishing a link between word and image. On the other hand, "plastiútiles" show that Xul granted them a specific use, meaning they were a kind of instrument that facilitated the expression of his thoughts. However, the subject itself, which has a strong moral message, speaks about utility in another sense, maxims of some kind: what the grafías conveyed was a message meant to affirm his own thoughts and to indicate the paths that lead to a state of inner peace, to harmony with oneself, and in this way we see that it was a form of "social art", which he himself declared at the beginning of the 1960s⁴⁵.

Neo-Creole finds its expression within these through different sign systems, as Xul explained, referring to himself in the third person: "He also studied the problem of different writings or grafías from logic and artistic points of view, apart from the practical one, this being the only one applied so far: mechanical, cursive and artistic lettering, plus many others of a more technical interest"⁴⁶. Despite the simplicity with which Xul explained his grafías, these conceal a great complexity. Firstly, and in relation to the technique, they are paintings, but the represented forms are in each case different systems of writing that, at the same time translate Neo-Creole. This implies that the viewer-reader that looks at his grafías has to undergo several tasks and go through various stages in a process of multiple translation. Only once he is able to decipher the different inscribed codes, will he be capable of reading its content, this consisting of different sayings by Xul and by other people, with a moral message which will lead to the ascent of man, by means of a higher knowledge.

Although no doubt related to his "plastiútiles" writings, his lettered-portraits present a different problem. They consist of a group of approximately twenty paintings which portray figures to which Xul assigned special worth as spiritual masters: Moses, Jesus Christ, Virgin Mary, Saint Paul, San Ignatius of Loyola, King Wen, Lao-Tse, Swami Ramakrishna, Aleister Crowley, Rudolf Steiner and his wife Lita, as *chela* or disciple. Except for Lita, the rest of the figures were highlighted as those who had had a revelation through direct contact with Jesus, such as Saint Paul or Saint Ignatius of Loyola, models of devotion in prayer. In addition there were those who had received the Law, such as Moses, or those who, like Swami Ramakrishna, had taught that God's revelation takes place in all periods. Crowley and Steiner were the only two that we could describe as contemporaries of Xul and who had created a new Law.

Those portraits present a new variant in his pictographs but, where- as in each of the diverse systems of letterings forms are variable –each

sign can also represent an animal, a tree, a human figure, or geometric forms, or to employ the modified shorthand system which he had begun to employ at the end of the 20s—, as regards portraits, its signs organize themselves so as to provide the face with a unity allowing it to be identified by the viewer. This type of construction relates, no doubt, to Archimboldo's composite-portraits, but also to some of the "bizareries" of other artists of the *seicento*, such as Giovanni Battista Bracelli.

In Xul's case, the face is constructed from signs that in their artistic organization configure eyes, ears, hair and beard, etc., and provide them with an expression that defines its character: the most literal, needless to say, is Moses's portrait. They are true physiognomical studies, whose background can be traced in his notebooks and folders containing clippings, one of them entitled "People", a true gallery of faces that Xul selected not only according to a historical relevance or to the place they occupy in the context of contemporary culture, but also because the portraits allow him to study the relationship between the character of the portrayed person and his physiognomy.

In his lettered-portraits exist an ambiguity close to the one inherent in the calligrammes, with which they are related in some way, at least in one aspect. As Foucault states:

The calligramme makes use of this quality that letters have: to act at the same time as linear elements that we display in space and as signs that we display according to the unique chain of the sonorous substance. In its quality as a sign, the letter allows us to fix words; as a line, it allows us to represent the thing. Thus, the calligramme pretends to playfully erase the most ancient oppositions of our alphabetical civilization: to show and to name; to represent and to say; to reproduce and to articulate; to imitate and to signify; to look and to read⁴⁷.

As Foucault himself asserts, in order for

the text to draw itself and for all its juxtaposed signs to form a pigeon, a flower or a storm, it is necessary for our perception to avoid every possible deciphering; it is necessary for the letters to remain as dots, for sentences to remain as lines, for paragraphs to remain as surfaces or masses: wings, sticks, petals; it is necessary for the text to say nothing to the one that looks, and who is a peeping-tom not a reader. In fact, from the moment he begins to read the shape vanishes; around the acknowledged word, the understood sentence, the other graphisms vanish, carrying with them the visible fullness of the form and leaving just the linear and consecutive development of meaning [...]⁴⁸.

But in the case of Xul's lettered-portraits, the moment the reader thinks he is about to decipher the text, to linger on it, an effect of disquiet appears: the portrait itself may disappear, but in this action what surfaces is the impossibility of a reading, since we lack the necessary code and capability to be able to update it. Even the positioning of the signs in space does not have a linear coherence, which would help us if they were written in a natural language and which would allow their meaning to be re-established. Instead they often "diverge" or forget the line of reasoning when approaching some facial feature, where a further level to the signified-signifier relationship is added, which has to do, in artistic terms, with representation. At other times, especially in the rest

of his pictographs, what could be something linguistic in fact is not, and is connected, at least in theory, with an artistic need.

In her "Xul Solar and music: a meeting of the arts" Cintia Cristiá examines Steiner's portrait and its relationship with music, in a comprehensive study that allows us to understand the creation of the portrait and the relevance that Xul gave to the founder of anthroposophy. Also, we may also focus on Crowley, this Magus-like figure, so often criticized, or silenced even, due to the controversy that marked his life. Perhaps it is for this very reason that our attention is drawn to fact that Xul devoted a portrait to him, placing him among his spiritual mentors.

His portrait says: "Alistör Crowley, bon/ Muy mori mastro/ Mui mago"⁴⁹, that is: Aleister Crowley, good man/ Grandmaster of morals/ Great Magus". Although Great Magus, in fact, was one of the grades Crowley had, that Xul called him "Grandmaster of morals" demands at least some explanation. The graphism representing his last name has been divided in to three parts "Cro", "w" and "ley". The third part ("Ley" also meaning "Law") is represented by the sign that envelops and defines his mouth. This word and its placing strengthen the sense of the lettering, since the Magus had expressed a new Law to which we have already referred when touching upon Pessoa.

In some of his "pensiformas" Xul added to the cardboard on which the paper is mounted a "translation" of the portrait in Neo-Creole. The meaning was made clear although the text included as a caption does not say all that is expressed in the lettering. This need to make the contents accessible also reveals, however, the difficulty of being able to understand their meaning.

These are some of the reflections that his pictographs or letterings propose in most cases. Even so, it is appropriate to bear in mind that at the time of his death, 9 April 1963, Xul was in the midst of preparing an exhibition of them. If his later work focussed on creating "a social art", it found its artistic realization in those pictographs, inasmuch as painting kept its role as a vehicle or means for the message. But the most significant thing was the gesture of generosity which Osvaldo Svanascini remarked on in his prologue to the catalogue:

Xul's calligraphies hung in spaces with low horizon-lines, in terraced planes, perhaps in predictably mystic dimensions. None among us has been capable of communicating in such a generous way. But the whole mechanics of it is organized by a writing that is cursive, geometrical, syllabic, gesticulating, vegetal or animal, or knitted—which is how he rightly manages to gather it—and conceived them to stimulate goodness, the way a sermon by a bodhisattva with a peculiar sense of humour would, to provoke a symbiosis between reality, the permanent, the metaphysical, the naive, the poetical, the oneiric, the unexpected, the unearthly, the exalted every day, the magical, the divine⁵⁰.

Xul wished to convey that which he had found after almost fifty years of constant search and work: if he was not able to found a new religion, he did have a message he wanted to share with those who wanted to listen. This message was culled from different sources, convinced as he was that all religions had equal worth. Thus, his new system allowed Anthroposophy and Buddhism, Catholicism and the Law of Thelema or, the magical and the divine, to coexist. The main thing was to understand what these said, and in order to achieve this man had to embark on a never ending journey towards a new truth.

1. According to the terminology used by Jocelyn Godwin: “*esoteric* and its derivatives *esotericist*, *esotericism*, always presuppose the existence of a corresponding *exoteric* body of knowledge or doctrine, such as a scriptural text or a religious ritual. The esotericist’s object is to penetrate the surface meaning in order to reach a secret and superior knowledge. [...] The *occult sciences* in the West include astrology, alchemy, ritual magic, practical Kabbalah, certain breathing and sexual practices, and various forms of divination. [...] *Occultism* as a concept dates only from the mid-nineteenth century, as the term for the pursuit of occult science in deliberate opposition to the prevailing beliefs of scientific materialism”. Jocelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1994, p. xii.
2. Clorinda Solari. Notebook, n./d. Documentary Archive. Fundación Pan Klub – Museo Xul Solar (henceforth, FPK).
3. Oscar Alejandro Schulz Solari, “Began in the spring of 1910”. Manuscript, dated 1910-1912. FPK.
4. *Ibid.*; entry “End of January 1912”. We maintain the original punctuation of the text.
5. In a letter to his brothers, Emilio Schulz Riga informed them: “Just dropping you a line to let you know that Oscar has gone to London. It was such a sudden decision that he had just time enough to pack his luggage. He’s gone to Europe on his own and in order to study. And ready at last to work on something to earn his living and finance his studies. You can imagine how desperate Agustina and Clorinda are. I think it’s just a little adventure. His provisional address will be Oscar Alex Schulz-Solari, Poste restante Argentine Consulate, London”. Letter dated “Buenos Aires, May 1st 1912”. The original is in German. FPK.
6. James Webb, *The Occult Establishment*, Illinois, A Library Press Book/Open Court Publishing Company, 1976, pp. 7-20.
7. Luis Falcini, *Itinerario de una vocación. Periplo portierros y hombres*, Buenos Aires, Losada, 1975, p. 109.
8. This information derives from a letter addressed to Xul and signed by a certain “Ralph”, dated “Sept. 5” (probably later than 1917). FPK.
9. Cf. James Webb, *The Occult Establishment*, op. cit., p. 47.
10. Roger Fry, “The art of pottery in England”, in *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, London, no. 132, v. 24, March 1914, p. 330.
11. *Apud* Carlos A. Foglia, “Xul Solar pintor de símbolos efectivos”, in *El Hogar*, Buenos Aires, year 49, no. 2288, September 18, 1953. From Alejandro Xul Solar, *Entrevistas, artículos y textos inéditos*, Buenos Aires, Corregidor, forthcoming. Patricia M. Artundo ed. (hereof, *Entrevistas*).
12. Cf. Mario H. Gradowczyk, *Alejandro Xul Solar*, Buenos Aires, Alba / Fundación Bunge y Born, 1994, p.43. Also Katya García-Antón and Christopher Green plus intervention from Dawn Aedes, “The Architectures of Alejandro Xul Solar”, in GREEN, Christopher (ed.), *Xul Solar: The Architectures*, London, University of London, Courtauld Institute Galleries, 1994, pp. 22-25.
13. Alejandro Xul Solar, Notebook, n./d. [1920]. FPK.
14. Paul Scheerbat, *La arquitectura de cristal*, Murcia, Colegio Oficial de Aparejadores y Arquitectos Técnicos de Murcia, 1998, p. 85. Edited and plotted by Antonio Pizza.
15. It is useful to note that it was probably during his first exhibition at Galería Arte in Milán (November-December 1920) that Xul signed and dated several of his works done during the previous years. This exhibition’s catalogue remains the first record of his new name, “Alessandro Xul Solari”. Cf. in this same catalogue, Jorge Schwartz’s essay, which expands on this subject.
16. Cf. Daniel Nelson’s article, “Los San Signos de Xul Solar: El libro de las mutaciones”, published in this catalogue.
17. For an analysis of these works, cf. Adriana Armando y Guillermo Fantoni, “Dioses y códigos prehispánicos en la obra de Xul Solar”, in *Ciencia Hoy*, v. 7, no. 37, 1997, and “Sobre el primitivismo en la obra de Xul Solar”, in *Eldorado. Revista del Centro Interdisciplinario de Literatura y Cultura Argentina y Latinoamericana*, Rosario, year 1, no. 1, 1994, pp.49-57.
18. Regarding this topic, cf. Diana Fane, “Reproducing the Pre-Columbian Past: Cast and Models in Exhibitions of Ancient America, 1824-1935” and Elizabeth A. Williams, “Collecting and Exhibiting Pre-Columbian Art in France and England, 1870-1930”, in Elizabeth Hill Boone (ed.), *Collecting the Pre-Columbian Art. A Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks*, Washington, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 6th and 7th October 1990, pp. 141-176 and 123-140, respectively.
19. Barbara Braun, *Pre-Columbian Art and the Post-Columbian World: Ancient American Sources of Modern Art*. New York, Harry N. Abrahams Inc., 1993, p. 39. During his third stay in London (November 1919-May 1920), Xul got a copy of Fry’s book. He was not able to see the Maudsly Collection exhibition (Dic.1922) at the British Museum, which displayed plaster casts of Mayan remains, besides sculptures. However, in 1924 he took part of the *Exposition d’Art Américain-Latin* organized by La Maison de l’Amérique Latine and L’Académie Internationale des Beaux-Arts, which showed –alongside artists from Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile and Ecuador– fabrics and objects belonging to several private collections, among them that of Camilo Egas.
20. A. Xul Sol, “Pettoruti y Obras”, dated “Munich June 1923”. Collected in

Entrevistas..., op. cit.

21. [Alejandro Xul Solar], “P e t t o r u t i”, n./d. [1923-1924], *ibid.*
22. The expression “red race” probably comes from F. de Ba-saldúa, from *Memoir on The Red Race in Universal Prehistory*, Calcutta, Thacker, Sink and Co., 1911. Found in Xul’s library, this book propounded a common origin for the Basques, Egyptians from the first dynasty, Hindus and inhabitants from Central and South America during pre-colonial times.
23. When Xul speaks of the “Aryan” as one of us he means of the seven human Races whose origin and history had been determined by Mme. Blavatsky. The Aryan, the fifth race, was the true white race and like the others was divided into seven sub-races, the last two, not yet born, would appear in North and South America. Cf. H. P. Blavatsky, *Glosario teosófico*, Buenos Aires, Glem, 1957 (1st English edition, 1892). For further study on its later circulation among aryan cults, cf. Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism. Secret Aryan Cults and their Influence on Nazi Ideology*, New York, New York University Press, 2004 (1st edition 1985).
24. Mario H. Gradowczyk was the first to call the attention to the possible significance of Crowley for Xul. Cf. *Alejandro Xul Solar*, op. cit., p. 160.
25. Aleister Crowley, *The Book of the Magical Record of TO MEFA OHPION, Magical diary*, 3 April to 16 May, 1924, The York Collection, The Warburg Institute, University of London, Microfilm Edition, 2003, OS A13. I wish to thank Ordo Templi Orientis for having allowed me to work on the Crowley archive, part of which is kept at the Harry Ramson Center (University of Texas at Austin) to which the Order has also donated a copy of the documents kept at The Warburg Institute. Also, my research was carried out thanks to a post-doctoral grant awarded in 2004 by the Latin American Studies Center (University of Maryland), whose subject was “Avant-garde Art and Occultism in Latin America: The Reception of Aleister Crowley’s Writings in Alejandro Xul Solar’s Works” and which allowed me to work during four months under exceptional conditions. I wish to thank the Department of Spanish and Portuguese (University of Texas at Austin) which helped towards my travelling expenses and accommodation at Austin. Not least, the Fundación Pan Klub – Museo Xul Solar gave all its backing to this research project and I am grateful to them for this.
26. James Webb, *The Occult Establishment*, op. cit., p. 13.
27. On this topic, cf. Adriana Armando y Guillermo Fantoni, “El primitivismo martinfierrista: de Gironde a Xul Solar”, in *Oliverio Gironde. Obras Completas. Edición Crítica*, ALLCA, “Archivos”, París, 1999, pp. 475-489. Raúl Antelo (comp.); and my articles “Rafael Rodríguez Lozano y Julio Castellanos: El “Método Best Maugard en Buenos Aires”, in *Segundas Jornadas de Investigación*, Buenos Aires, Instituto de Teoría e Historia del Arte “Julio E. Payró”, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. UBA, December 1996, pp. 73-85; and “Pedro Figari y la nueva generación argentina: La problemática latinoamericana”, in *Cuartas Jornadas “Estudios e Investigaciones: Imágenes, Palabras, sonidos. Prácticas y Reflexiones”*, Buenos Aires, Instituto de Teoría e Historia del Arte “Julio E. Payró”. F.F.yL. UBA, 11-13 October 2000, pp. 409-416.
28. Francis King, “Prefatory Note”, in S.L. MacGregor Mathers and Others, *Ritual Magic of the Golden Dawn*, Vermont, Destiny Books, 1997, p. 65. Edited by Francis King.
29. William Breeze, Letter to the author, 4 March 2005. I thank Mr. Breeze for his help and cooperation with my research work.
30. Marco Pasi et Philippe Rébatet, “Langue angélique, langue magique. L’Énochien”, in *Politica Hermética*, Lausanne, no. 13, 1999. Marco Pasi was very generous in providing me with several of his works.
31. Umberto Eco, *La búsqueda de la lengua perfecta en la cultura europea*, Barcelona, Crítica, 1999, p. 162.
32. On this, Francis King points out that: “It is perhaps worth saying that most experimenters with this technique have found that the dream experienced bears a real relationship to the symbol used”, op. cit., p. 65. On the other hand, Crowley himself “would use this technique to test students also, i.e., do it where he knew the meaning of the symbol but they did not, and compare their results with what he knew”. William Breeze, Letter to the author. Cf. also Nelson’s article in this catalogue, which analyzes the connection between an hexagram and the vision attained in Xul’s case.
33. Ernesto Mario Barreda, “Por los reinos de la Cábala”, in *La Nación*, Buenos Aires, 20 October 1929. From *Entrevistas*, op. cit.
34. Mario H. Gradowczyk, *Alejandro Xul Solar*, op. cit., p. 170.
35. For an analysis of this work, cf. my own “Visiones de la era espacial: una introducción a “Vuelvilla” de Xul Solar”, followed by A. Xul Solar, “Vuelvilla”, in *Hispanérica*, Maryland, a. 32, no. 95, August 2003, pp. 44-53. Reproduced in a different version in “A. Xul Solar: una imagen pública posible”, in *Entrevistas*, op. cit.
36. Jehel [Leo Álvarez Costet de Mascheville], Letter to V. H. Grainville, A::M::, dated “Montevideo, 3 de agosto de 1944”. FPK
37. On this point, cf. Louis Reau, *Iconographie de l’art chrétien. T. II. Iconographie de la Bible. I. Ancien Testament*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1957, pp. 30-33.
38. “Editor’s Foreword to the Second Edition”, in *The Goetia The Lesser Key of Solomon The King. Lemegeton, Book I. Clavicula Salomonis Regis*, Boston, Wiser Books, 1995, p. xxi. Translated by Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers, edited, annotated, introduced and enlarged by Aleister Crowley.

Illustrated second Edition with new annotations by Aleister Crowley. Edited by Hymenaeus Beta, Boston, Weiser Books, 1995, p.xxi.

39. *Apud* Marco Pasi, "The influence of Aleister Crowley on Fernando Pessoa's esoteric writings", in Wouter J. Hane-graaff, Jocelyn Godwin, Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron, Richard Caron (ed.), *Selected Essays on Esotericism*, Peeters, Louvain 2001, pp. 693-710.

40. Alejandro Xul Solar, *San Signos I*, notebook dated 1924-1925, entry "Paris/ May 15/ 11am", p. 8.

41. Cf. Alejandro Xul Solar, "Pan-ajedrez o pan-juego, o ajedrez criollo", n./d. [1945?], in *Entrevistas, op. cit.* In 1958, in a letter addressed to Curecho, Xul thanked him for his interest in the Pan-game and warned him that it was not in his plans "to publish it until the language is perfect, untouchable, the one whose dictionary is the board. It's well under way, there are a good number of common-use words missing but the basis is strong and sounds very logical". Letter to Curecho [Joaquín Vedoya Beristayn], dated "Delta – 20 X. 1958". FPK.

42. Umberto Eco, *La búsqueda de la lengua perfecta, op. cit.*, p. 269.

43. For more information about theosophical kabbalah or name kabbalah, cf. the chapter devoted by Eco to "La pan-semiótica cabalística", in *La búsqueda de la lengua perfecta en la cultura europea, op. cit.*, pp. 33-39.

44. The four volumes by Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn: An Account of The Teachings, Rites and Ceremonies of The Order of The Golden Dawn (1937-1940)* and Aleister Crowley, *Magick in Theory and Practice (1929-1930)* remain in Xul Solar's library and allowed him access to the hierarchical grading system belonging to both orders.

45. "His main contribution to a social art lies in a series of co-ordinated systems of lettering, writing and symbols, of a wide practical and artistic use, which is only being disseminated this year", n./d. [1961-1962], in *Entrevistas, op. cit.*

46. Alejandro Xul Solar, "Xul Solar". Autograph in black ink, n./d. [1962?], FPK, in *Entrevistas, op. cit.* Most likely this presentation had been written on the occasion of a conference on language at the Archivo General de la Nación.

47. Michel Foucault, *Esto no es una pipa. Ensayo sobre Magritte*, Barcelona, Anagrama, 2004 (1st edition: 1973). I had access to the mentioned book thanks to Gênese Andrade's Doctoral Thesis, *Imagens eloqüentes. A escritura plástica de poetas e artistas latino-americanos* (USP, FFLCH, 2001), the introduction to which examines, among other things, the question of signified/signifier.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

49. I thank Martha Rastelli De Caprotti for this translation.

50. Osvaldo Svanascini, "Xul Solar", *Xul Solar. Óleos*, Buenos Aires, Galería Riobóo, 22 April – 4 May 1963.

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