

Alex Tavares

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The following tribute from Alex Tavares' friend the late W.R. Maciel appeared on the program for his first Nairobi one-man exhibition, at Chemchemi Cultural Centre in 1965

It was a little less than a year ago that I met Alex Tavares, and discovered that he was an artist intent on doing what he felt mattered most and pleased him most.

These personal beliefs, I am afraid, are most difficult to encounter in Nairobi, and I was impressed to find an artist who did not care less of what others thought or said about him, as long as he carried on doing what he considered to be the most important facet of his life.



"RECEDING FIGURES" 1965



"METAPHYSICAL PORTRAIT" 1965

The religious facets are quite different. Aside from the seething eruptions of anger, discontent and frustration he shows the immensity of those basic Christian concepts of charity and love and mercy. To Graham Greene this would be his ideal way of expressing, in paintings, what he knows of our times. But to an artist alone is that unfathomable gift endowed to depict in colour and in expression what our age is.

Living in India, in Spain and in East Africa has its advantages. The observations of tensions are universal and necessarily deserve to be depicted as such. It is not the glamour of society, it is not the comfortable existence of a bourgeoisie that interests Alex. He is a man with a mission.

In a seemingly obscure locality of the city, in Eastleigh to be precise, he lives and in a small balcony, since converted into a studio with glass enclosures, he works as what one can best describe as a habitation bohemian, clustered and fragmented. But in this little studio he has put onto canvas and brought into his sculpture the inspiration of a man of the world, determined to depict the changeless rhythm of life in works of art which will alone portray to posterity the intense gravity and tensivity of our lives.



"TRAUMA" 1965

To a critic it is not left to prophesy but to note, explain and comment. To the artist art is a veritable game and one to which we can confidently feel Alex Tavares is making his own dynamic contribution.- W.R.M.

Surrealism or expressionism aside, Alex Tavares does not show a sympathy for the generation he lives in. The fatalism in his art is symptomatic of our times. Claustrophobia, psychopompia, internal gastrations and mental disruptions are what he portrays.