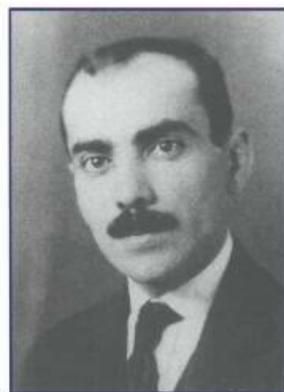


Jangadeiros, retirantes e camponeses do Ceará são, junto com paisagens e figuras européias, o sincero retrato de uma época, sem qualquer obediência às tendências artísticas desse mesmo tempo. Assim é a múltipla obra do inquieto Raimundo Cela.

Texto: Ricardo Viveiros

Raimundo Cela

A força de um acadêmico que nunca deixou de ser moderno



Desde os anos 30 e até um pouco depois do fim da Segunda Guerra Mundial podemos observar desenvolvimento na arte moderna além das fronteiras do Rio de Janeiro e de São Paulo — onde “fervilhava” a cultura no Brasil. Enquanto Vicente do Rego Monteiro se contrapunha, em Pernambuco, ao trabalho convencional dos pintores “herdeiros” de Telles Júnior, no Ceará, distanciando do que chamava “modismos”, Raimundo Cella, seguia indiferente às notícias dos avanços conquistados na Semana de Arte Moderna, de 1922, evento promovido pelos tais “modernistas” paulistas. Indiferente à nova estética, Cella pintava a dura vida de seu povo com emoção e qualidade. O pintor nasceu Raimundo Brandão Cella, aos 19 de julho de 1890, em Sobral, no Ceará.

Mãe brasileira e professora, pai espanhol e mecânico de automóveis, Cella viveu sua infância em Sobral e sua adolescência em Camocim, à época uma vila de pescadores. Na primeira cidade, o calor terrível da caatinga; na segunda, a temperatura suavizada pelo vento do mar. Uma paisagem rica, colorida, cheia de inspiração para o rapazinho que desenhava tão bem na escola.

A mudança para Camocim foi determinante. Cella passou a sonhar mais. Embora criado sob severos padrões de comportamento, ousava “viajar” nos movimentos das grandes velas dos barcos para, quem sabe, a distante terra do pai. Embalado pelas histórias que lhe contava sua mãe, “dona” Maria Carolina, o jovem artista aproveitava a vida à beira-mar e queria ir mais longe, para algum lugar no futuro onde pudesse aprender e aprimorar seu talento nas artes plásticas. Inicialmente, foi para Fortaleza, onde estudou no Liceu do Ceará, depois seguiu para o Rio de Janeiro, ingressando na Escola Nacional de Belas-Artes e na Escola

Politécnica da Universidade do Brasil (fez Engenharia por exigência do pai).

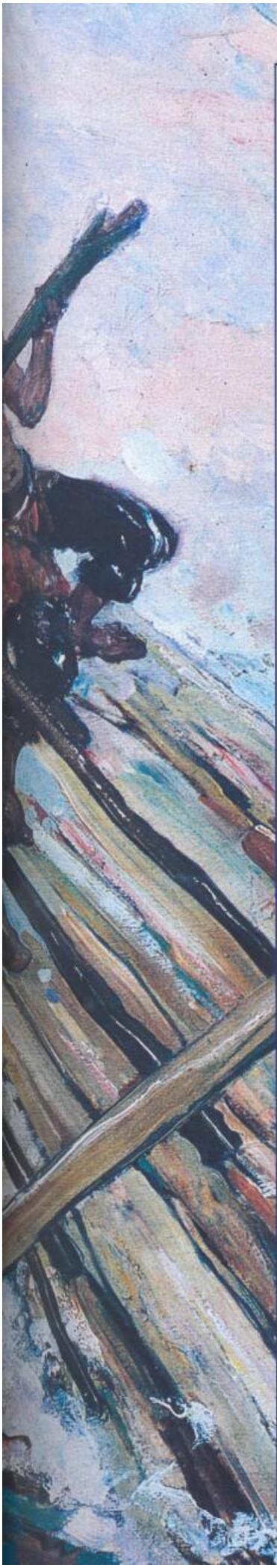
Na Belas-Artes, foi aluno de Eliseu Visconti, um admirador que o incentivava porque, entre outros méritos, Cella sempre obtinha o primeiro lugar. Na Poli, a mesma coisa. Parece demasiado? Não era. Ele ainda trabalhava e praticava esportes. Formouse, com distinção, em ambas as faculdades, atuando como desenhista em emprego público (no qual ingressou por concurso) e remando nas poucas horas vagas.

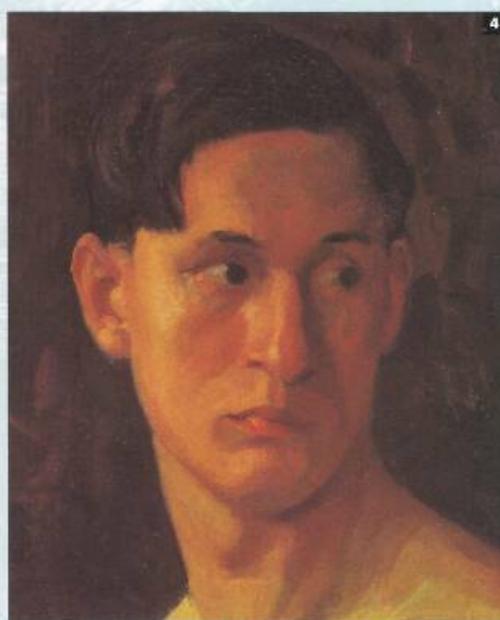
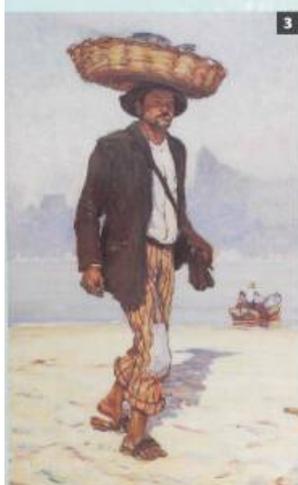
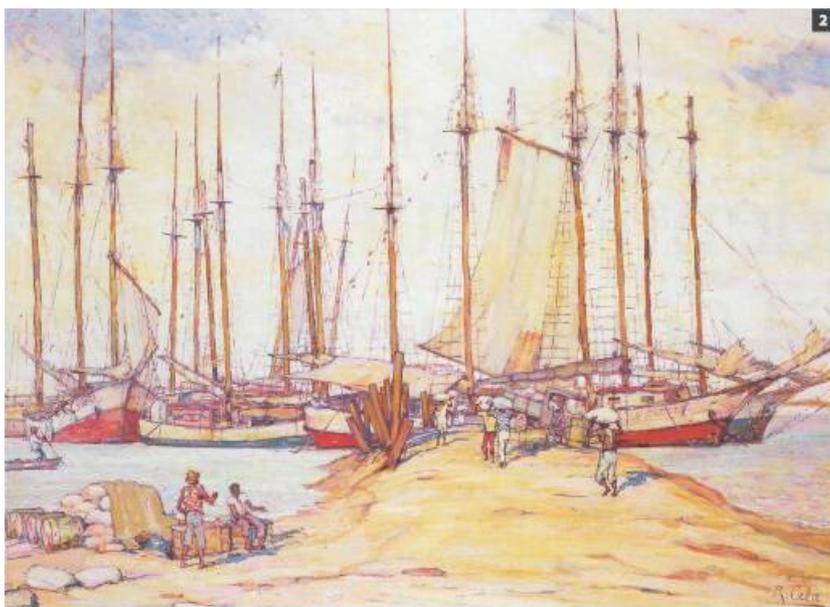
A Europa

Em 1917, Cella conquista o prêmio de “Viagem ao Estrangeiro” na Exposição Geral de Belas-Artes, com a tela “Último Diálogo de Sócrates”. Espera dois anos para formar-se engenheiro, planeja a viagem e somente em 1920 chega à Europa. O artista desembarca em Paris com o objetivo principal de aprimorar seu trabalho, razão do prêmio conquistado que o levará ali para três anos de estudos. Dificuldades iniciais não lhe permitem ter um estúdio em Paris. Como alternativa, visita outros países aprendendo arte: Inglaterra, Bélgica e Holanda. Volta à “Cidade Luz” e se instala em seus arredores, Dampierre — pequena aldeia, a uma hora de trem.

A vida no pós-guerra era dura, e bastante cara. Cella até pensou em ir para a Espanha, terra do pai. Não foi preciso: superou as adversidades e, mais tarde, conseguiu um ateliê próximo da capital francesa. O artista adoce, vítima de uma hemorragia cerebral. Interrompe vários trabalhos que vinha realizando para atender encomendas, inclusive do Brasil. A vida austera e sacrificada que levava acabou por lhe tirar a saúde. Seus trabalhos, em água forte e óleo, inscritos no Salão de Paris, são elogiados pelo público e pela crítica.

Cella, na Inglaterra, estudou com o famoso gravador e litógrafo Frank Brangwyn. E





1 (página dupla anterior) A virada, óleo sobre madeira
 ⇨ (previous spread) Capsized boat, oil on wood. 99 x 132 cm, 1943.

2 Barra do Ceará, aquarela sobre papel ⇨ Docksides in Ceará, watercolor on paper. 35 x 52 cm, 1944.

3 Peixeiro, Canto do Rio, Niterói, RJ, óleo sobre tela ⇨ Fishmonger, Canto do Rio, Niterói, RJ, oil on canvas. 130 x 80 cm, 1947.

4 Cabeça de um jovem, óleo sobre tela ⇨ A youth's head, oil on canvas. 31 x 25 cm, 1916.

5 Labirinteira do Ceará, óleo sobre tela ⇨ "Labirinto" lace maker from Ceará, oil on canvas. 80 x 104 cm, 1945.

aproveitou bem os ensinamentos. Foi considerado um "mestre" pelos organizadores do *Salon*, um título com valor de prêmio, obtido por poucos. Quando iria caminhar para o reconhecimento internacional, a doença o faz retornar ao Brasil. Por questões de ambiente para melhor recuperação, opta por viver em Camocim. Pouca gente entendia sua maneira introspectiva de ser, fruto da rígida criação paterna. Era definido por muitos como "esquisito".

Vanguarda

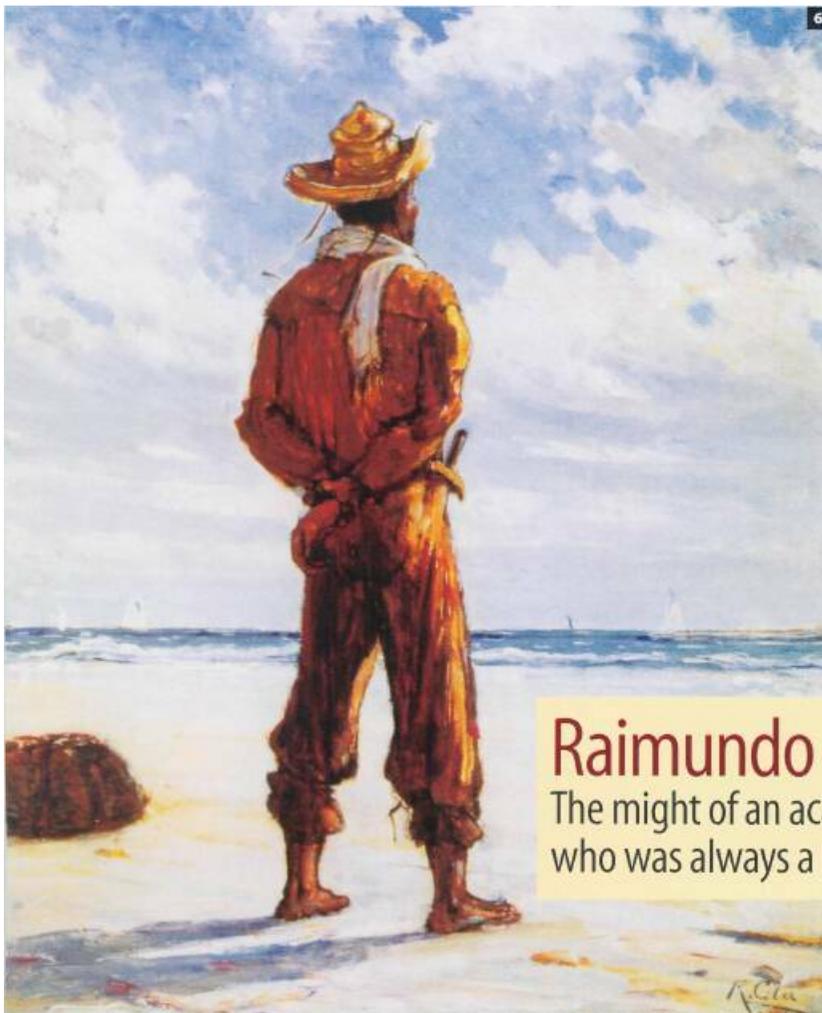
Cela distancia-se do ambiente cultural; nos círculos artísticos brasileiros e europeus comenta-se que ele não produz mais. Por questão de sobrevivência, o artista assume a direção da usina de energia elétrica da cidade, afinal era engenheiro. Na verdade, nunca parou de desenhar, gravar e pintar. Cela foi, por muitos, tomado como morto. Passada uma década, o artista, já recuperado, volta a Fortaleza. Havia

se casado e tinha um casal de filhos. O pintor e professor Mário Barata auxilia Cela a retomar suas atividades artísticas. Juntos, fundam o Centro Cultural de Belas Artes, na capital cearense. Era a década de 40. Quebrando um jejum nacional e internacional de muitos anos, o artista volta a expor.

Cela é o pioneiro da gravura no Brasil. E não só foi um grande e premiado mestre nessa técnica, reconhecido na Europa, como ainda um dedicado professor de muitos artistas brasileiros. Mas, acima de tudo, soube também desenhar e pintar com a mesma emoção e qualidade empregadas na gravura. Um acadêmico por excelência, ele serve-se dos fundamentos técnicos do desenho para dar equilíbrio às telas num trabalho de linearidade perfeito. Ao mesmo tempo, surpreende ao usar manchas e se aproveitar da luz de maneira criativa, num inventivo pictórico de pura intuição, uma arte só possível de entender a quem já viu os movimentos de um jangadeiro na brava lida da pescaria.

A obra de Cela nos revela alguém que pode até ter sido anacrônico quanto às transformações estéticas de uma época, mas que por outro lado sempre esteve comprometido com a essência de um povo sofrido. E foi entre a técnica conservadora e a temática engajada com a realidade social de seu tempo que Cela se tornou o acadêmico mais modernista da arte brasileira. O modo de pintar do artista revela um compromisso com a liberdade em texturas ricas, vibrantes, cheias de abstração, próprias dos vanguardistas, embora, ao mesmo tempo, traga uma arte estruturada na geometria do também engenheiro Cela. Uma arte tão elegante quanto ele foi, na vida pessoal e profissional. Raimundo Cela morreu no Rio de Janeiro, em 6 de novembro de 1954, aos 64 anos.





Raimundo Cela

The might of an academic who was always a modern

9 Fitando o mar, óleo sobre madeira ◊ Watching the sea, oil on wood. 75,5 × 62,5 cm, 1943.

10 Anúncio circo, água forte ◊ Circus poster, aquafortis, oil on wood. 31,4 × 34 cm, 1952.

Fishing rafters, poverty-stricken migrants, and peasants from the state of Ceará are featured side by side with landscapes and European themes characteristic of a certain period. However, the artist did not follow the artistic trends of that time. Such is the multifaceted oeuvre of Raimundo Cela.

By Ricardo Viveiros
Translated by Izabel Burbridge

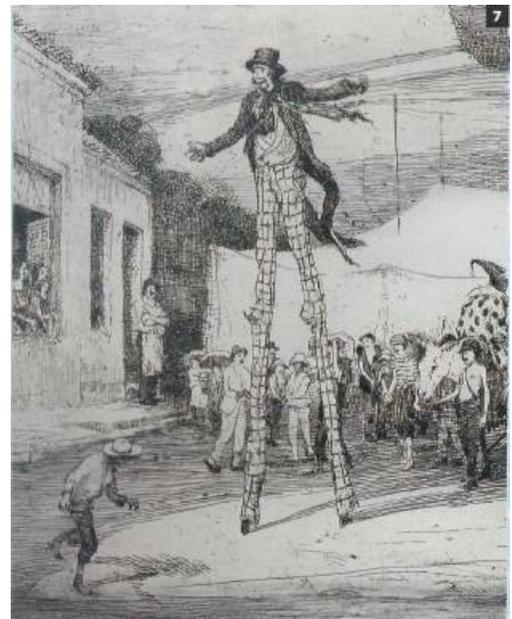
Beginning in the 1930s and up until shortly after the end of World War II, a development of modern art was observed beyond the artistic circles of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo — two cities where culture "sizzled" in Brazil.

At the same time that in the northeastern state of Pernambuco painter Vicente do Rego Monteiro set a contrast to the conventional painting of the "heirs" of Telles Júnior, in Ceará, a northern state that remained unmindful of the current artistic trends, Raimundo Cela worked away, taking no heed of the new developments that "modernists" were introducing in São Paulo with their "Semana de Arte Moderna" [Week of Modern Art] in 1922. Indifferent to the new aesthetics, Cela painted with

quality and emotion the hardships in the daily lives of his fellowmen. Raimundo Brandão Cela was a painter born on July 19, 1890 in Sobral, a small town located 145 miles northwest of Fortaleza, the capital of the state of Ceará.

Cela's mother, "Dona" Maria Carolina, was a Brazilian school teacher and his Spanish-horn father, a car mechanic. The hoy grew up in Sobral and spent his teen years in Camocim, then a fishing village. In his hometown, he endured the stifling heat of the drought-stricken, barren scrub-brush land known as caatinga. In Camocim, he enjoyed the milder temperatures brought by the sweeping ocean breeze, and a rich and colorful natural scenery — a great source of inspiration for a youth that drew so well in school.

The transfer of the Cela family in Camocim was a turning point for the boy who, despite having been brought up under his father's strict code of behavior, allowed himself to daydream. Now he dared to "embark" on the swaying movement of the large sails and let his imagination flow to his father's faraway birthplace. Lulled by the stories that his mother used to tell him, the young artist enjoyed his life by the seaside and looked forward to moving away to a place where he could study art and improve his artistic skills. Cela began by moving to Fortaleza, where he studied at Liceu do Ceará. Later he headed south to Rio de Janeiro and enrolled in both the National School of Fine Arts and the Universidade do Brasil's Polytechnic School (he became an engineering student to meet his father's demands).



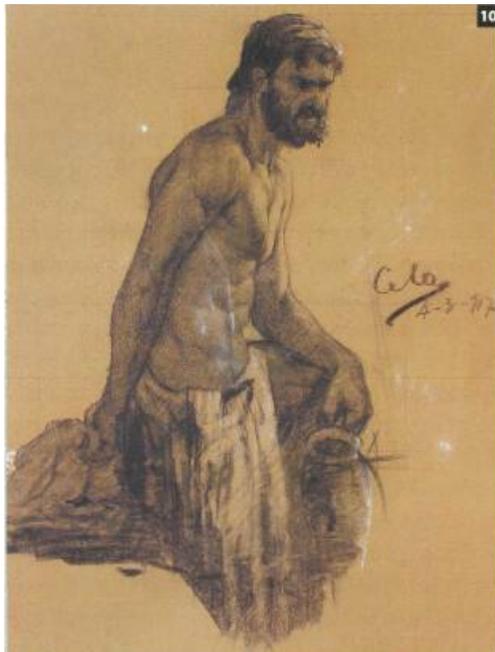


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8 Maternidade, óleo sobre madeira ♦ Maternity, oil on wood, 70 x 60 cm, 1940.

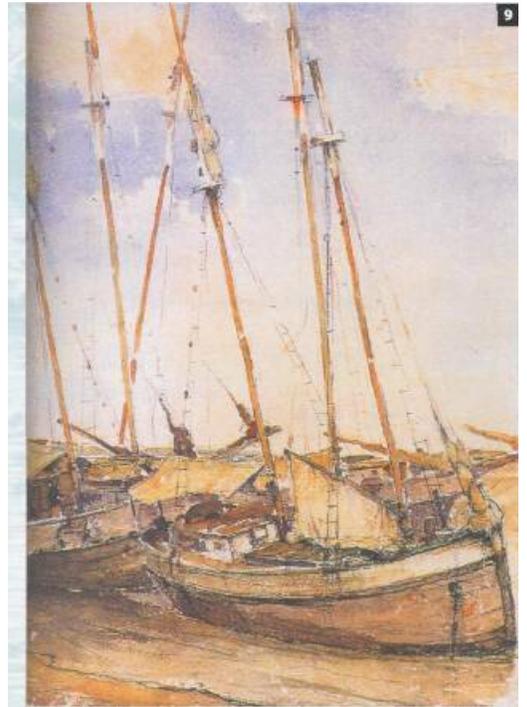
9 Barra do Ceará, aquarela sobre papel ♦ Dockside in Ceará, watercolor on paper, 25 x 49 cm, 1944.

10 Estudo para "Último diálogo de Sócrates", carvão e crayon sobre papel ♦ Study for "Último diálogo de Sócrates," charcoal and crayon on paper, 56 x 46,3 cm, 1917.



10

At the School of Fine Arts he took lessons from Eliseu Visconti, who became his admirer and gave him considerable incentive because, among other merits, Cella was always the top student in his class. His performance in engineering school was quite similar, and it did not take great pains. Besides attending two schools, he also worked and practiced sports. Raimundo Cella graduated with honors from both colleges while working as a graphic designer for a state-owned institution, and rowing in his (limited) spare time.

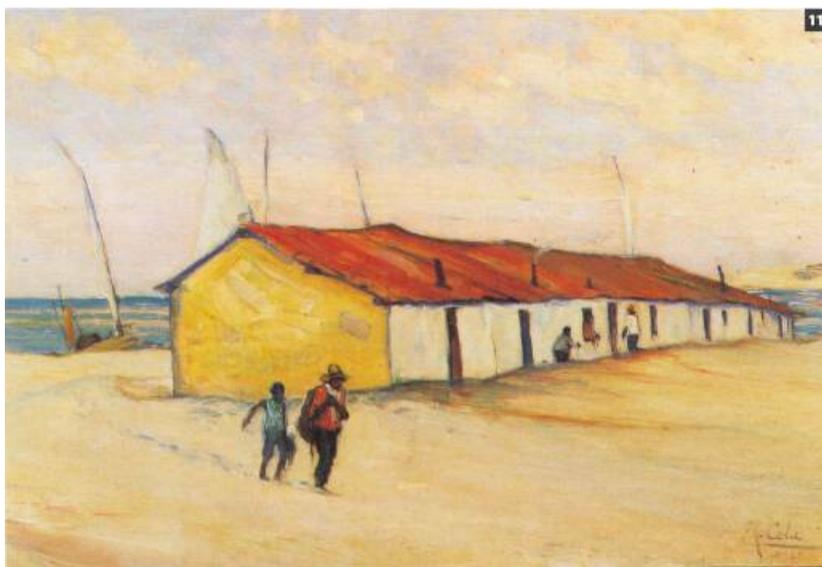


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Europe

In 1917, Cella was awarded the "Travel Abroad" prize at the General Fine Arts Exhibition for his canvas "Último Diálogo de Sócrates" [Socrates' Last Argument], when he still had two years to go before graduating from engineering school. He planned his trip to Europe, which only took place in 1920. Upon landing in Paris, the artist had as main objective to improve the work skills that had earned him the three-year study abroad program. Initial difficulties prevented him from setting up a studio in Paris, so he opted for learning an while visiting other countries — England, Belgium and Holland. After a while he returned to the "City of Lights" and settled in Dampierre, a small village in the city's outskirts, and only one hour away by train.

Life in that post-war period was hard and rather expensive. Cella went as far as to consider moving to Spain, his father's birthplace, but then managed to overcome all hardships and even-



11 Casario nas dunas, aquarela sobre papel ◊ Housing on the dunes, watercolor on paper. 35 x 49 cm, 1930.

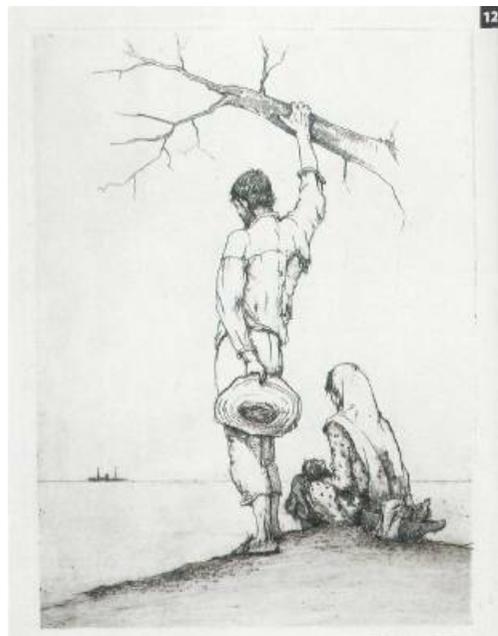
12 Retirantes, óleo sobre madeira ◊ Hammock vendor, oil on wood. 90 x 74 cm, 1944.

tually set up a studio near the French capital. Eventually the artist became ill with a brain hemorrhage that forced him to interrupt his work on a number of commissions, including those he received from Brazil. The austere and restraining lifestyle he led ended up impairing his health. The paintings in aquafortis and oil that Cela showed in the Paris Salon received high praise from the public and the critics.

During his stay in England, Raimundo Cela had been apprenticed to the famous etcher and lithographer Sir Frank Brangwyn, from whose lessons he duly profited. Paris Salon organizers referred to Cela as a "master," a title rarely conferred on artists and that therefore represented a prize in itself. Just as he was about to become internationally known, the artist fell ill and was forced to return to Brazil. He chose to live in Camocim, where he thought the climate and the environment would favor his recovery. Only a few people understood his introspective personality, in part a result of his upbringing under a strict father. By and large the artist was viewed as an "odd ball."

Vanguard

Cela removed himself from the cultural milieu and in the Brazilian and European artistic circles word got around that he was no longer painting. To earn his living, the artist assumed a director's position at the town's power company. He was a trained engineer, after all. The fact is, however, that he never stopped drawing, etching and painting, just when many people assumed he was dead. A decade later and having recovered from his ailment, Cela returned to Fortaleza bringing his new family that consisted of wife, son and daughter. Painter and art teacher Mario Barata helped Cela to resume his artistic activities and together they founded Centro Cultural de Belas Artes, in that city. It was the 1940s and the artist, breaking his fast of many years without showing in Brazil or abroad, resumed the presentation of his work.



Cela pioneered etching in Brazil. He was not only a many times awarded master of this print technique who attained acknowledgment in Europe, but also a dedicated teacher of numerous Brazilian artists. Most of all, however, he was an artist who drew and painted with the same emotion and quality that he devoted to his etchings. An academic par excellence, he resorted to the technical canons of drawing to confer balance on his canvases, with a perfectly linear creation. On the other hand, he unexpectedly made use of blotches and creatively took advantage of light to put out a purely intuitive and inventive pictorial production. His art is only fully understandable to those people who have observed the movements of a fisherman lifting his catch onto the log raft at sea in northeastern Brazil.

Cela's oeuvre shows us that he may have been anachronistic, even, in face of the changing aesthetics of his day; on the other hand, he was always committed to the essence of a destitute population. It was precisely in the gap between his conservative technique and his socially engaged themes that Cela became the most modernist of Brazilian academic artists. His brushstroke reveals a commitment to freedom in the rich, vibrant and mostly abstract textures that then characterized avant-garde artists, at the same time that they presented a geometrically-structured artwork created by an engineer — an art as elegant as he was in his lifetime as a person and as a career artist. Raimundo Cela died on November 6, 1954 at the age of 64, in Rio de Janeiro.



Capa/cover
Jangada voltando do mar,
óleo sobre madeira
◊ Raft returning from the sea,
oil on canvas. 96 x 136 cm, 1944.