

ESTEBAN VICENTE was born in Turégano, Spain in 1903. His father served in the Civil Guard, a police force in the Castile region and was an amateur painter who took the young Vicente with him on visits to the Prado Museum. In 1918, Vicente entered military school, but left after three months. At fifteen years old, Vicente began at the School of Fine Arts of the Real Academia de San Fernando in Madrid. As a young man living in Madrid, Barcelona, and Paris, he developed friendships with artists and writers. In 1928, he had his first exhibition with Juan Bonafé at the Ateneo de Madrid.

Vicente left Europe for New York City in 1936. The United States became the artist's permanent home. His contemporaries and associates included Willem de Kooning (their 10th Street studios were on a shared floor), Elaine de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Franz Kline, Barnett Newman, and Ad Reinhardt.

Vicente spent a good portion of his career teaching. He was among the faculty at Black Mountain College, Black Mountain, NC; the New York Studio School of Drawing, Painting and Sculpture, New York, NY; and the University of California, Berkeley, CA, among other institutions.

In addition, he received numerous awards, some of them being the most prestigious given to an artist in the United States. His work may be found in important collections and museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, among others.

At the end of his life, the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Esteban Vicente, a museum in his honor, was opened in Segovia by the Spanish government. Vicente attended the museum's opening in 1998.

Vicente died at the age of 97 in 2001 in Bridgehampton, NY, ten days before his 98th birthday. He had a long and prosperous career, living and working with multiple generations of artists and painting well into his 90s at his home in Bridgehampton.

CHRONOLOGY

1903

Esteban Vicente is born on January 20 in Turégano, Spain, in the region of Castile y León. He is the third of six children of Toribio Vicente Ruiz and Sofía Pérez y Alvarez. His father, a Civil Guard officer, is also an amateur painter.

1904-1917

His father resigns from the Civil Guard to take up a post as a property administrator with the Banco de España in order to bring up his children in Madrid. Esteban studies at a Jesuit school. From the age of four, he accompanies his father on visits to the Prado Museum.

1918

Vicente enters the Military Academy but leaves after three months. He then enrolls in the Escuela de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in Madrid at the age of fifteen. He studies sculpture there for three years.

1922-1928

Develops friendships with the poet Juan Ramón Jiménez and members of Generation of 1927, an influential group of poets that included Rafael Alberti, Jorge Guillén, Pedro Salinas and Federico García Lorca. He also befriends the future film director Luis Buñuel, the writer and publisher Ernesto Giménez Caballero, and the painters Juan Bonafé, Francisco Bores, and Wladyslaw Jahl. He shares a studio on the Calle del Carmen with the American painter James Gilbert; their friendship continues until Gilbert's death in the 1970s. He holds his first exhibition in 1928 with Bonafé at the Ateneo de Madrid.

1929

Goes to Paris. Lives in a hotel and later shares a studio with the painter Pedro Flores. Earns a living retouching photographs and working on stage sets at the Folies Bergère. Visits Picasso at his studio on the rue La Boétie and participates in the Salon des Surindépendants. Meets the young American Michael Sonnabend, who later becomes his art dealer in New York. Spends time in London, where he visits the painter Augustus Johns and members of his circle.

1930-1934

He moves to Barcelona and through his dealers, Joan Merli and Montse Isern, exhibits at the Galeries Syra. Returns to Paris (1930-31), thanks to a grant from the Junta para la Ampliación de Estudios for study abroad. Meets the Surrealist painter Max Ernst through an English friend, Darcy Japp. Again exhibits in the Salon des Surindépendants. Has one-man shows in Barcelona at Avinyó (1931), Syra (1931), Busquets (1934) and Catalònia (1934). Exhibits in Madrid in the salon of the Heraldo de Madrid (1934).

1935

In Barcelona, he marries Estelle Charney (Esther Cherniakofsky Harac), a young American studying at the Sorbonne. They spend a year on the island of Ibiza.

1936

Returns to Madrid in July at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Works at camouflage in the mountains near Madrid before leaving for America. Lives on Minetta Lane, in the Greenwich Village section of New York City.

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1937

His daughter Mercedes is born. Thanks to the painter and critic Walter Pach, he has his first solo show in New York at the Kleemann Gallery. At the request of Fernando de los Ríos, the Spanish ambassador to the United States for the Republic, he works at the consulate in Philadelphia until the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939.

1939

Returns to New York. Has his second individual exhibition at the Kleemann Gallery.

1941

Participates in a group show at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia.

1942–1946

He becomes an American citizen in 1942 and lives at 70 Grove Street in New York City. Teaches Spanish at the Dalton School and works as an announcer for Voice of America during World War II. His daughter, Mercedes, dies in 1943. Lives at 280 Hicks Street in Brooklyn and works in a studio at 43 Greenwich Street in Greenwich Village. He divorces Estelle Charney in 1945. He teaches painting at the University of Puerto Rico in San Juan from 1945–1946.

1947–1948

Returns to New York. Lives and works at 138 Second Avenue. Forms friendships with the painters Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Franz Kline and Barnett Newman, and the critics Harold Rosenberg and Thomas B. Hess. He marries the literary critic and educator María Teresa Babín in 1948.

1949

Teaches at the University of California, Berkeley, and begins to work in collage.

1950

Sets up a studio at 88 East 10th Street. His studio is on the same floor as de Kooning's studio. Chosen by the critic Clement Greenberg and the art historian Meyer Shapiro for the show "Talent 1950" at the Kootz Gallery in New York. Participates in the Annual exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Has a solo show at the Peridot Gallery in New York. Establishes lasting friendships with the painters Balcomb Greene, Aristodemos Kaldis, Elaine de Kooning, Mercedes Matter and Ad Reinhardt, and the sculptors David Hare, Ibram Lassaw, Philip Pavia, and George Spaventa.

1951

Helps organize and participates in the historic 9th Street exhibition. Included in the seminal work on the New York School by Thomas B. Hess, "Abstract Painting: Background and American Phase." Works daily in his studio and receives visits from Philip Guston, Earl Kerkham, and Landes Leitin, as well as from the art collector Ben Heller. Chosen for the first group show of the New York School sent to France and Japan. Named director of summer courses at the Highfield Art School in Falmouth, MA, on Cape Cod.

1953

Elaine de Kooning's article "Vicente Paints a Collage" is published in Art News. Vicente has one-man shows at the Allan Frumkin Gallery in Chicago and the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco. Teaches during the summer at Black Mountain College in

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Black Mountain, NC. Other teachers include the poets Charles Olson and Robert Creeley, the composers Stefan Wolpe and John Cage, and the dancer Merce Cunningham. Among his students is the painter Dorothea Rockburne. He exhibits in several collective shows throughout the United States.

1955

Has solo show at the Charles Egan Gallery in New York, a gallery that also exhibits work by Giorgio Cavallon, Joseph Cornell, Willem de Kooning, Kline, Reuben Nakian, and Jack Tworkov. Participates in several collective exhibitions.

1957

Has one-man show at the André Emmerich Gallery in New York. Accepts a teaching position at New York University, where he remains until 1964. Considered by Harold Rosenberg to be one of the "leaders in creating and disseminating a style...[that] constituted...the first art movement in the United States."

1961

Divorces María Teresa Babín and marries Harriet Godfrey Peters. Lives in the Gramercy Park section of New York.

1962

Awarded a grant from the Tamarind Lithography Workshop in Los Angeles. Teaches at the University of California, Los Angeles, and Yale University.

1964

Founding member of the New York Studio School of Drawing, Painting and Sculpture, together with Mercedes Matter, Charles Cajori, and George Spaventa. With his wife, Harriet, buys a Dutch colonial farmhouse in Bridgehampton, NY. Sets up a studio there and plants a flower garden.

1965

Artist-in-residence at Princeton University, where he has an individual show. Travels to Mexico.

1966

Travels to Morocco.

1967

The death of his friend Ad Reinhardt deeply affects him.

1969

He is artist-in-residence at Honolulu Academy of Fine Arts. Selected to exhibit in "The New American Paintings and Sculpture: The First Generation," curated by William Rubin at The Museum of Modern Art in New York.

1972

Josh Ashbery writes in Art News that Vicente is "widely known and admired as one of the best teachers of painting in America." Moves to West 67th Street. Makes a second trip to Morocco.

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1973

Teaches at Columbia University.

1975

He accompanies Harriet on a Jain pilgrimage to India.

1979

First solo show at the Gruenebaum Gallery in New York.

1982

Travels to Turkey with Harriet.

1983

Leaves his studio at 88 East 10th Street for a new one on West 42nd Street in the heart of the theater district.

1984

Receives an honorary doctor of fine arts degree from the Parsons School of Design in New York.

1985

Receives the Saltus Gold Medal from the National Academy of Design of New York and an award from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters as “one of the most gifted painters of the first generation of Abstract Expressionists,” with “a sensibility trained in Europe with the express purpose of opening the eyes and ears of Americans to the peculiar beauty around them.” Travels to Spain.

1987

Has a major retrospective in Madrid at the Fundación Banco Exterior de España: “Esteban Vicente, Pinturas y Collages, 1925-1985,” and also exhibits at the Yares Gallery in Scottsdale, AZ. Continues teaching at the New York Studio School of Drawing, Painting and Sculpture and maintains contact with students, artists, and friends of all ages.

1988

Receives the Childe Hassam-Eugene Speicher Purchase Award from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters in New York. He exhibits at the Galería Theo in Madrid and is included in eight group shows, among them “Aspects of Collage, Assemblage and the Found Object in Twentieth-Century Art” at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York.

1989

Has a solo show of recent oil paintings and collages at the Berry-Hill Galleries in New York.

1990

Has two one-man shows in Spain. Participates in the exhibition, *Drawing Highlights: Eric Fischl, Roy Lichtenstein, Esteban Vicente*, at the Parrish Art Museum in Southampton, NY.

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1991

Receives the Gold Medal in Fine Arts from King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofía at the Prado Museum. Has a street named after him in Turégano, his hometown, in honor of his distinguished career as an artist. Teaches master classes at the Parsons School of Design and has six individual showings, including one at the Centro de Exposiciones y Congesos in Zaragoza, Spain, and another at the Galerie Lina Davidov in Paris.

1992

Travels to Spain to attend the opening of a solo show at the Palacio Lozoya in Segovia. Has three one-man shows in the United States: at the Berry-Hill Galleries in New York, the Louis Newman Galleries in Beverly Hills, CA, and the Guild Hall Museum in East Hampton, NY. A selection of his work is chosen for the show "Paths to Discovery: The New York School," at the Baruch College Gallery in New York. He continues to teach master classes at the New York Studio School and the Parsons School of Design.

1993

Elected a member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters at the age of ninety and awarded an honorary doctorate in the arts from Long Island University, Southampton College. Receives a Lifetime Achievement in the Arts Award from the Guild Hall Museum in East Hampton.

1994

His most recent works are shown at the Century Association of New York. Celebrates his ninety-first birthday with an exhibition of his latest works at the New York Studio School of Drawing, Painting and Sculpture in the company of past and present students. Travels to Spain to visit family members, among them, his sister María, and attends the opening of his one-man show at the Galería Elvira González in Madrid. "Five Decades of Painting" opens at the Riva Yares Gallery in Santa Fe, NM.

1995

There is a major retrospective of his collages at the IVAM, Centre Julio González, in Valencia, Spain. Hudson Hills Press publishes the monograph Esteban Vicente by Elizabeth Frank. Vicente has exhibitions of recent works at the Riva Yares Gallery in Scottsdale and the Berry-Hill Galleries in New York. The Glenn Horowitz Gallery in East Hampton shows a selection of small collages and unique divertimentos.

1996

The exhibition "Esteban Vicente, Collages 1950-1994" travels from Valencia, Spain, to the Patrick and Beatrice Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University, Milwaukee. Vicente has solo shows of recent works at the Riva Yares Gallery in Santa Fe and the Galería Elvira González. He returns to Spain with Harriet for a family visit. In the fall, he moves his studio to 1 West 67th Street, next door to his apartment. He abandons the use of the spray gun.

1997

He paints twenty works in three months in his new studio. Receives visits from friends William Maxwell and Susan Crile, among others. His longtime friend Willem de Kooning dies. Writes an article in de Kooning's honor in the ABC (Madrid). Holds exhibitions at The Century Association in New York City, the Riva Yares Gallery in Scottsdale, and Berry-Hill Galleries in New York. Restoration work is begun on the future Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Esteban Vicente, sponsored by the Diputación Provincial de Segovia. The board of trustees of the museum is created, and the painter and his wife make a formal donation of 148 works.

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1998

The retrospective “Esteban Vicente, Obras de 1950-1998” opens at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid. The exhibition later travels to Santiago de Compostela (Auditorio de Galicia), Valladolid (Museo de la Pasión and Monasterio de Nuestra Señora del Prado) and Palma de Mallorca (Fundación Pilar I Joan Miró and Casal Solleric). He receives the Premio Castilla-León de las Artes. He attends the opening of the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Esteban Vicente in Segovia, where a permanent collection of his artwork offers a broad view of his entire career. He continues supervising his students’ work at the New York Studio School of Drawing, Painting and Sculpture, where he began teaching in 1964.

1999

At the age of 96, he continues painting every day. Travels to Spain with his wife, Harriet, where they are awarded the Gran Cruz de la Orden Civil de Alfonso X el Sabio for their contribution to art. Vicente is also named “Segoviano del Año” and awarded the Premio Arcale by the city of Salamanca. Has a one-man show at the Riva Yares Gallery in Scottsdale. A permanent room devoted to his works opens at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. All these honors, together with his participation in several exhibitions, mark the culmination of his recognition as an important figure in twentieth-century Spanish art.

2000

Spends the winter in Bridgehampton rather than New York City for the first time. Does several drawings and sketches. Has one-man shows of drawings and collages at the Galería Elvira González and the Berry-Hill Galleries. The magazine Reviewny devotes its Lifetime Achievement Award issue (July) to Esteban Vicente. In November, a retrospective exhibition, Esteban Vicente Esencial, is held at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Esteban Vicente.

2001

On January 10, the artist dies at his home in Bridgehampton, shortly before his ninety-eighth birthday. Complying with his wishes, his ashes are buried in the garden of his museum in Segovia. His death coincides with the homage that was planned for him earlier by the New York Studio School of Drawing, Painting and Sculpture, of which he was a founding member and teacher for thirty-six years. The book “A Mis Soledades Voy”, consisting of famous Spanish poems illustrated with engravings by Esteban Vicente, is exhibited. The book, which he had worked on until shortly before his death, is also shown at an exhibit in the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Esteban Vicente with the title “El Color Es la Luz: Esteban Vicente 1999-2000”. Included in the catalog are his writings on art. The show later travels to the Museo de Bellas Artes in Bilbao, Spain, and the Monastery of Nuestra Señora del Prado in Valladolid, Spain. A retrospective of his work is held at the Heckscher Museum of Art in Huntington, NY, in September. That same month, an exhibition devoted to various aspects of his work opens at the Monastery of Silos in Burgos, Spain, a space that regularly shows an important selection of major contemporary Spanish art.

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SELECT COLLECTIONS

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH
American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, New York, NY
Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL
Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD
Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, University of California, Berkeley, CA
Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas, Austin, TX
Broad Art Center, University of California, Los Angeles, CA
Broad Art Museum, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI
Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY
Brunnier Art Museum, Iowa State University, Ames, IA
Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, OH
Carl Van Vechten Museum, Fisk University, Nashville, TN
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX
Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, DE
Detroit Intitute of Arts, Detroit, MI
Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI
Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
Grey Art Gallery, New York University, New York, NY
Guild Hall, East Hampton, NY
Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
Honolulu Academy of Arts, Honolulu, HI
Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH
Housatonic Community College, Bridgeport, CT
Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, NY
Institut Valencià d'Art Moderne, Centre Julio González, Valencia, Spain
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA
Memorial Art Gallery, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
Museo Colecciones del Instituto de Crédito Oficial, Madrid, Spain
Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Esteban Vicente, Segovia, Spain
Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao, Bilbao, Spain
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain
Museo Patio Herreriano de Arte Contemporáneo Español, Valladolid, Spain
Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA
Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
National Academy Museum and School, New York, NY

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GALLERY

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia
Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO
Neuberger Museum of Art, State University of New York, Purchase, NY
Newark Museum, Newark, NJ
New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, NJ
Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs, CA
Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, NY
Patrimonio Nacional, Madrid, Spain
Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ
Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA
Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, MA
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY
Syracuse University Art Galleries, Syracuse, NY
Tucson Museum of Art, Tucson, AZ
University of New Mexico Art Museum, Albuquerque, NM
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN
Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY
Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, MA
Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, MA
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT

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