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BERNINI'S DAVID in the Borghese Gallery

BYRON: An Exploration
of a Complex Genius

MANUEL JOSÉ DE LARA
IV International Poetry Prize
Juan Ramón Jiménez Coral Gables

CARMEN HERRERA
Straight Line



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Gian Lorenzo Bernini, David 1623–24, Marble, h. 67 in. Galleria Borghese, Rome.

Gian Lorenzo Bernini's David in the Borghese Gallery

Art-Sólido | Roma



Gian Lorenzo Bernini's David in the Borghese Gallery is a masterpiece that encapsulates the essence of the Baroque era while distinguishing itself from its Renaissance predecessors. This life-size marble sculpture, commissioned by Cardinal Scipione Borghese and completed between 1623 and 1624, portrays the biblical hero David in a moment of intense action, capturing the drama, emotion, and dynamic movement characteristic of Baroque art.

Unlike earlier depictions of David by artists such as Donatello, Verrocchio, and Michelangelo, Bernini's David does not focus on the aftermath of victory or the contemplation of the battle. Instead, Bernini presents David in the throes of action, winding up to hurl the stone that will bring down the giant Goliath. This portrayal is not just a snapshot of physical motion but also a powerful

representation of psychological intensity. David's furrowed brows, clenched lips, and determined gaze communicate a deep concentration and resolve. The tension in his muscles and the twist of his body, captured at the peak of his effort, make the viewer almost feel the force behind the impending throw.

Bernini's David breaks away from the static compositions of the High Renaissance, where figures were often arranged in pyramidal forms that emphasized stability and balance. In contrast, Bernini employs diagonal lines in his composition, a hallmark of Baroque art, to suggest movement, energy, and drama. The diagonal twist of David's body

"Bernini's David breaks away from the static compositions of the High Renaissance"

creates a sense of dynamism that invites the viewer to engage with the sculpture from multiple angles, experiencing the unfolding narrative in real-time.

This dynamic quality is further enhanced by Bernini's innovative



Verrocchio, David, 1473–1475, Bronze, h. 49 in, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.



Donatello, David, 1440s?, Bronze, h.62 in, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.

use of space. Unlike the self-contained figures of Donatello or Michelangelo, Bernini's David interacts with the space around him. The figure seems to reach out beyond its marble confines, drawing the viewer into the scene. This engagement is not just visual but also visceral; as we look at Bernini's David, we are not merely observers but participants, instinctively reacting to the tension and energy of the moment. The sculpture creates a sense of empathy, making us feel what David feels—a characteristic feature of Baroque art, which aimed to evoke an emotional response from the viewer.

The Baroque emphasis on direct emotional appeal can be seen as a reflection of the period's historical context. The Catholic Church, facing the challenges of the Protestant Reformation, sought to renew its connection with the faithful through art that was immediate, emotional, and accessible. Bernini's David embodies this approach; it does not invite quiet contemplation like Michelangelo's David, which represents an idealized beauty and a moment of thoughtful preparation. Instead, Bernini's David demands an immediate, almost physical response, mirroring the Church's strategy of appealing directly to the emotions of the faithful.

Bernini's attention to realism in his portrayal of David also marks a departure from the idealized

forms of the Renaissance. While Michelangelo's David is an epitome of youthful perfection, Bernini's David is more human, more relatable. The grimace on his face, reportedly modeled after Bernini's own reflection in a mirror held by his friend and future pontiff Maffeo Barberini, adds a layer of authenticity to the sculpture. This realism, combined with the dynamic composition and emotional intensity, makes Bernini's David a true masterpiece of the Baroque era.

“Bernini’s David represents a pivotal moment in the history of art”

Bernini's David in the Borghese Gallery represents a pivotal moment in the history of art. It not only exemplifies the

Baroque style with its emphasis on movement, emotion, and spatial engagement but also offers a fresh interpretation of a well-known biblical story. By focusing on the moment of action rather than the contemplation before or the victory after, Bernini creates a sculpture that is alive with tension and energy, inviting the viewer to experience the drama of David's battle with Goliath in a deeply personal and immediate way. This ability to evoke empathy and involve the viewer so directly is what sets Bernini's David apart as a masterpiece, both in its own time and in the broader canon of art history.



Michelangelo, David, 1501-1504, Marble, h. 17 ft, Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence.



Whitney Biennial: Even worse than the Real Thing

Art-Sólido | New York



The Whitney Biennial has long been hailed as a bellwether of contemporary art, a crucible where the hottest topics and most pressing issues of the day are given form and voice. However, the 2024 edition, titled “Even Better Than the Real Thing,” has sparked controversy and debate, with critics questioning the depth and impact of its offerings.

Once considered a bastion of insider discourse within the art world, the Whitney Biennial has undergone a transformation in recent years. No longer confined to the rarefied circles of gallerists and curators, it now presents itself as an outward-facing event, inviting the broader public to engage with art and culture. While this shift towards accessibility is commendable, it has also raised concerns about the dilution of the Biennial’s once-incisive edge.

The title itself, referencing a U2 song from 1991, sets the stage for a discourse on artificial intelligence (AI) and the blurring lines between reality and simulation. However, the actual representation of AI-related themes within the exhibition is sparse, overshadowed by a preoccupation with more traditional subjects such as Gaza, climate change, and the aftermath of the pandemic. This raises questions about the coherence and relevance of the overarching theme.

Furthermore, despite the diverse backgrounds of the seventy-one participating artists and collectives, the aesthetic of the Biennial is characterized by its familiarity and predictability. Critics argue that while the subject matter may be contemporary, the forms and styles employed by many of the artists harken back to earlier decades, resulting in a sense of



stagnation rather than innovation.

Indeed, while there are certainly standout works within the Biennial that offer fresh perspectives and incisive commentary on the con-

temporary moment, they are often overshadowed by a sense of complacency and conservatism. As art critic Jerry Saltz, notes, “most of

what you see could have been made in the 1970s, 1980s, or 1990s; the forms and styles are old. Only the subject matter is new.”

However, proponents of the Biennial argue that it serves as a vital platform for artists grappling with pressing social and political issues, providing a space for difficult ideas to be engaged and considered. They point to the

exhibition’s subtitle, “Even Better Than the Real Thing,” as a nod to the complexities of authenticity and identity in an age of AI and heightened political polarization.

*“Whitney Biennial 2024
it fails to capture the
intricacies and paradoxes
of the present age.”*

Ultimately, the Whitney Biennial 2024 showcases a diverse array of works, yet it fails to capture the intricacies and paradoxes of the present

age. While it succeeds in amplifying important voices and provoking thought on pressing issues, it also falls short of fully realizing its ambitious aims, leaving critics and audiences alike questioning the quality and impact of contemporary art in an increasingly fractured world, wondering if this is the real thing.





Small informational label at the bottom left of the diorama.

Byron

A LIFE IN MOTION

Lord Byron chewed his nails. He chewed tobacco, too, during his frequent dips to save off hunger pangs. He loved softier wares, fish sauce, horseback riding, pistols, sex, swimming, and fancy clothes. He slept with adolescents, male and female, acts that were so more legal or socially acceptable, dicey than they are now, and just as harmful to survivors, and sex between men, as Byron knew, was a capital offense. Byron was fanned sexually abused as a child by his nurse. He suffered from hemorrhoids, gonorrhea, and possibly other sexually transmitted diseases. He spoke up for wronged workers while protesting he be addressed by his associate title. Out of shame for the disability that afflicted his right foot, he never spent the whole night with his many lovers.

And yet.

It isn't Byron's crimes and failings we remember, at least not first. It's his poetry, his letters, his journals. It's his voice knowing, witty, kind, cutting, vulnerable, cerebral, steady, funny. It's his portraits, his parades, his charms, his breathtaking sarcasm that still, when it goes you right off, will draw you right in. There is no warning up Byron, no reconciling his contradictions, no need to forgive the unforgivable. He seems "I love the thing a problem, like all things," just before breaking off his masterpiece, *Don Juan*, to go on to the next big thing: *Frankenstein*.

Two hundred years after his death, Byron, despite or because of his lifetime, still brings readers along with him.

Adapted from the New York Public Library's *Byron Lives!* Program and presented by David Byrne, David Byrne Presents at NYPL, Queens Museum and New York Public Library. Photo: Thomas and Catherine van der Wal.

Large-scale photo by permission of the New York Public Library. Photo: David van der Wal.



Byron A LIFE IN MOTION

The image shows the ornate marble entrance to a museum gallery. At the top, a marble bust of a man is set within a circular niche. Below it, a dark blue frame contains the title 'Byron' in a cursive font and 'A LIFE IN MOTION' in a sans-serif font. The view through the doorway shows a long gallery with people, display cases, and informational panels.



Byron: An Exploration of a Complex Genius

Art-Sólido | New York



The exhibition *Byron: A Life in Motion* at the New York Public Library's Stephen A. Schwarzman Building offers a rich, multifaceted view of Lord Byron, a poet whose short yet eventful life continues to captivate audiences two centuries after his death. Running from September 7 through January 12, this thoughtfully curated collection delves into the tumultuous life of George Gordon Byron, exploring not only his literary achievements but also the contradictions and complexities that defined him. Through a carefully arranged selection of personal letters, literary manuscripts, paintings, prints, and everyday items like wine bills, the exhibition constructs a vivid portrait of a man whose life was marked by fame, scandal, and a profound engagement with the political and cultural revolutions of his time. Byron's fame, first ignited by the publication of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in 1812, forms the central arc of the exhibition. *Childe Harold*, a lengthy

and semi-autobiographical poetic travelogue, catapulted the young poet into the public eye and made him a celebrity almost overnight.

The exhibition captures the scale of this momentous shift in Byron's life, with items like letters from admirers and newspaper clippings detailing his sudden rise to fame. These documents, which bring to life the poet's early literary success, also serve as a reminder that Byron's life was as much about his public persona as it was about his private writing. His flamboyant lifestyle, widely reported in the gossip columns of his day, became inseparable from his literary output, and the exhibition reflects this duality through artifacts that chronicle both the poet's creative genius and his lavish, often scandalous existence.

One of the most compelling aspects of *Byron: A Life in Motion* is its exploration of Byron's contradictions. As curator Elizabeth Denlinger aptly points out: "Byron was a fascinatingly mixed



character. Despite his well-earned reputation as a party boy and misogynist, he was also a committed writer for whom writing wasn't the most important thing in life; his ultimate commitment, expressed in joining the Greek war for independence, was to the principles of self-determination and liberty". The exhibition provides a nuanced view of Byron's engagement with political causes, culminating in his ill-fated journey to Greece in 1823, where

he hoped to aid the Greeks in their fight against Ottoman rule. Byron's letters from this period, displayed alongside maps and

prints depicting the war-torn region, reveal a man driven by ideals larger than himself. He never saw battle, succumbing to illness before he could fight, but his death at the age of 36 immortalized him

as a hero in Greece and marked a significant chapter in his complex legacy.

The exhibition also traces Byron's physical movements throughout his life, which were extensive. Born into a family of declining nobility, Byron

spent his early years in Aberdeen, Scotland, before attending school in Nottinghamshire and later Cambridge. But it was his travels

"I mean to marry, prudently if possible; that is, wealthily; I can't afford anything to Love. [...] I am here boxing in a Turkish pelisse to prevent obesity, and as usual very much yours, Byron"

To John Cam Hobhouse, August 30, 1811.
Quote on the gallery walls

abroad that shaped both his life and his writing. After his initial success with *Childe Harold*, Byron spent time in Switzerland, where he famously joined a group of fellow writers that included Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Shelley. This summer gathering in Geneva, immortalized in literary history as the moment when Mary Shelley conceived of *Frankenstein*, was also a turning point for Byron, allowing him to refine his poetic voice and experiment with new forms. The exhibition beautifully captures this period of creativity and camaraderie through manuscripts and portraits of Byron's circle, offering visitors a glimpse into the fertile intellectual environment that surrounded the poet. From Switzerland, Byron's travels took him to Venice, where he embarked on his most ambitious work, *Don Juan*.

The exhibition's section on Byron's Venetian years showcases manuscripts from *Don Juan*, alongside letters to and from his lover and muse, Contessa Teresa Guiccioli. These years in Italy were characterized by both literary productivity and personal turmoil. Byron, by this time estranged from his wife and living in self-imposed exile, cultivated an air of romantic melancholy that permeated both his life and his work. The exhibition

does not shy away from these contradictions—here was a man whose genius was matched by his self-destructive tendencies, who could pen a biting satire like *Don Juan* while simultaneously engaging in affairs that would add to his notorious reputation.



Perhaps the most poignant part of the exhibition is its conclusion, which looks at Byron's final turn away from poetry and toward military action. The artifacts from this period, particularly Byron's letters and documents relating to his preparations for the Greek campaign, reveal a man seeking redemption and purpose beyond the written word. His death in 1824, at the age of 36, marked the end of a short but dazzling life, and the exhibition's final room reflects on his posthumous fame. Byron's remains, which were paraded through London before being interred in the family vault in Nottinghamshire, shook the public one last time, and the exhibition captures this moment of national mourning and fascination. In its final section, *Byron: A Life in Motion* turns its gaze to the poet's enduring legacy. Byron's influence on literature, politics, and even pop culture is addressed through a selection of modern responses to his work, reminding visitors that Byron remains a figure of fascination long after his death.

His life, lived in constant motion both physically and emotionally, continues to inspire, provoke, and challenge readers and artists alike.

In sum, the exhibition *Byron: A Life in Motion* is a masterful tribute to one of the most iconic and enigmatic figures of the Romantic era. It captures the many contradictions that defined Byron's life—his hedonism and his heroism, his literary genius and his personal failings—and presents them in a way that allows visitors

to appreciate both the man and the myth. For anyone interested in the intersections of art, politics, and personal identity, this exhibition is not to be missed.

The exhibition is organized by The New York Public Library and curated by Elizabeth Denlinger, Curator of the Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle.

“Then I have fallen in love with a very pretty Venetian of two and twenty, with great black eyes. She is married— and so am I—which is very much to the purpose.”

To Augusta Leigh December 18, 1816.
Quote on the gallery walls



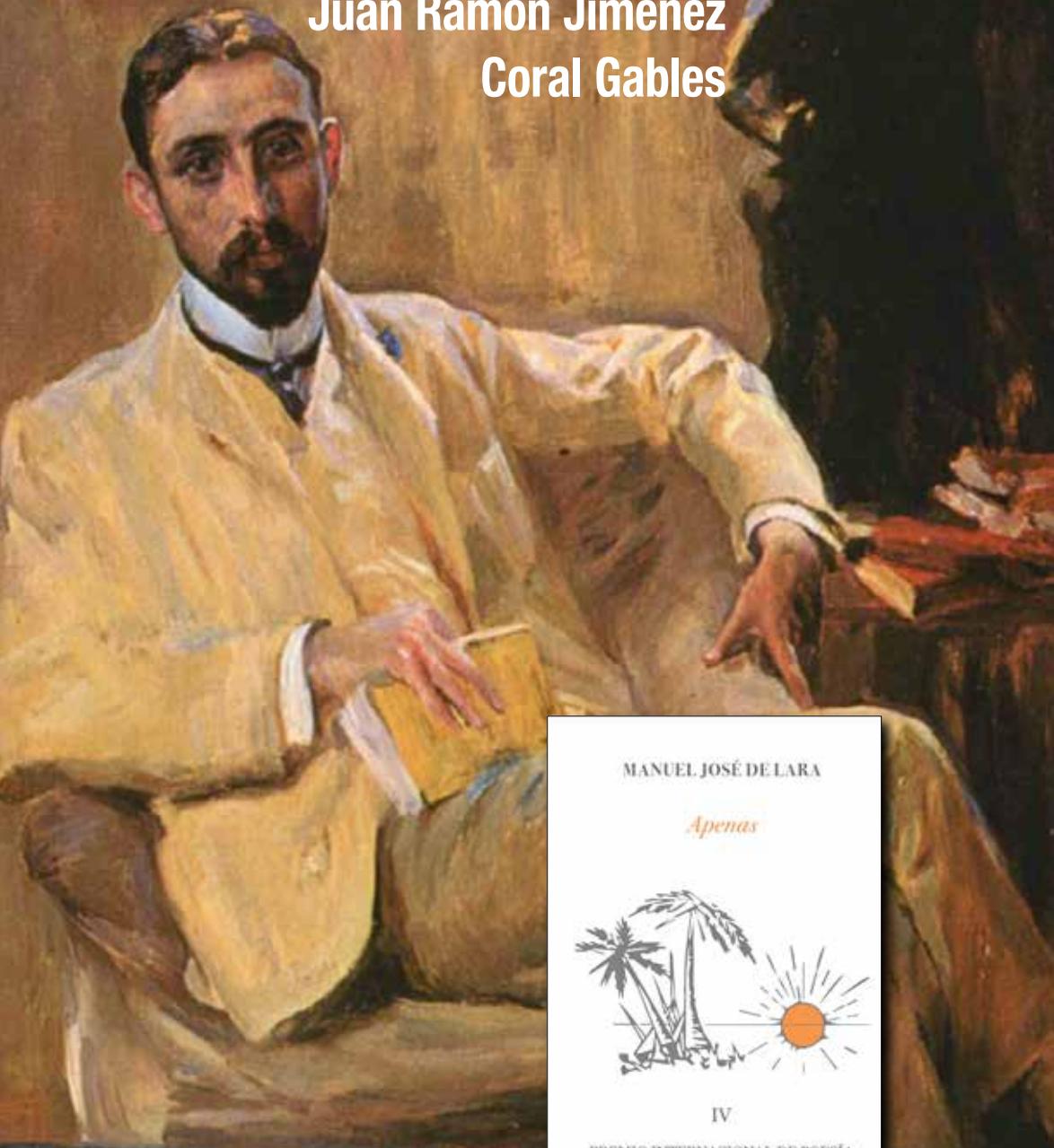


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Small informational text block on the right side of the display wall.



IV International Poetry Prize
Juan Ramón Jiménez
Coral Gables



MANUEL JOSÉ DELARA

Apenas



IV

PREMIO INTERNACIONAL DE POESÍA
JUAN RAMÓN JIMÉNEZ
Coral Gables

A. JUAN R. JIMÉNEZ

J. SORULLA 6

Manuel José De Lara

IV International Poetry Prize

Juan Ramón Jiménez

Art-Sólido | Coral Gables



Manuel José de Lara (Huelva, Spain, 1963) holds a PhD in History from the University of Seville and is a professor of Modern History at the University of Huelva. He is also a specialist in the Cultural History of the Enlightenment, director of the Center for Hungarian Studies and member of the Royal Seville Academy of Fine Letters.

As a poet, he has published *The Book of the First Insecurities* (Huelva, 1986), *The Detained River* (Huelva, 1996), *Collection Remains* (Málaga, 2020), *Family Book* (Seville, 2022) and *Apocryphal Portrait* (Pamplona, 2022). In *Pliegos de Yuste: Journal of European Culture, Science and Thought* he published the collection of poems *To my father* (2012).

His work is collected in *History of poetry in Huelva* (1987) and

Panorama of Andalusian poetry (1991). His poems appear in numerous anthologies, including: *Lyrics of an Atlantis* (1986), *Manuscripts* (1986), *Juan Ramón de fondo* (1987), *Poeti di Huelva a Genova* (1989), *Tribute to Juan Ramón Jiménez* (2008), *Alchemy of the Earth* (2013) and *Poetical, sound archive of the Andalusian Center of Letters* (2018).

He was director and presenter of the radio poetry program *Celacanto*. His poems have been set to music by the singer-songwriter José Luis Pons. Among others, he has won the National Poetry Prize “*Salvador Rueda*” and the International Poetry Prize “*Ciudad de Pamplona*” in Spain. Now, with the book *Apenas*, he has won the *International Poetry Prize Juan Ramón Jiménez of Coral Gables 2023*.

Harmonious and brief, poetry passes

René Fuentes | Montevideo



As a member of the jury that awarded this book by Manuel José de Lara, I noted in the minutes:

“It is Apenas the winner of this prize; because, as the title suggests and the assembled poems fulfill, here is poetry about lightness—very condensed, very personal, and rhythmic. This collection of poems is like a subjective map, made to explore both outward and inward, into the voice of the speaker.

With a sober language, the lyricism gradually leads to the darker stations of intimacy. If the adverb ‘Apenas’ in any of its uses or meanings is almost not, barely something, a faint limit, a fragile possibility of a discontinuous line between what is possible and what is denied, then this book, by its own merit, opens a careful path to make poetry a place for the brief and the fragile. The poem does not confirm; it is merely a possibility.”

Continuing and expanding on those criteria, now thinking

about what to share with readers in this foreword, it’s worth highlighting that this poetry collection recirculates and extends the tradition of a certain current in Spanish poetry. For example, here, Antonio Machado and Juan Ramón Jiménez are cited and remembered (through some poem epigraphs), as well as José Hierro (through the book’s epigraph, from which its title comes). These and other underlying voices are connected by their clear poetry, with periods of simplicity and great creative austerity. These traits are taken up and extended by Manuel José de Lara.

Perhaps that’s why in this book, constructed in a single section or part, there are poems that open up a theme or motif, while others revisit, reinterpret, and delve into contained and expressed experiences. Always from a very personal place to reach another, either within or very close to intimacy. Always moving from one poem to the next without raising the voice. Always with a slowness that shapes and reshapes a

beauty that is sometimes disen-
chanted and other times torn from
the world. In the poem that gives
the book its title and functions as
a poetics of all that follows, there
are verses that describe the vital
landscape and the features of the
poet's gaze:

*“There is nothing more
than the echo of a
memory
so light, fleeting,
an echo that belongs to
no one
and almost no longer
exists.
It barely touches the sun
on the bricks.”*

And it is precisely that
“echo of a memory,” with its dou-
ble distillation (both semantic and
sonic) and the faint trace of what
barely remains written, that the
notion of poetry celebrated by this
book becomes apparent—nour-
ished by others, yet also its own
and foundational in its practice.
As if to say that “barely” is enough
for expression, that it does not
need to surpass the little and sing
of it much or with much. Only the
essential, and with the essential.

Manuel José de Lara's
voice is neither grave nor ag-
grieved. It does not revel in rhe-
torical adornments or forced ref-
erences, nor does it rely on a desire
for modernity. On the contrary,
its power lies in the whisper, in
measured songs, in enjambments,
and in staggered verses that con-
struct images in flight, yet precise
in their emotional states and the
places through which the poet
passes, exists, and creates.

Thus, during this natural
and existential journey, in another
poem, he says: “Of what I was,
nothing remains / but broken
glass.” And in another poem, he
says and asks:

*“Everything will be a rain
of silence and distance.
Eternity will be brief;
the fleeting will be
nothing.*

*And love?
Behind me.”*

The rain, one of the best-arranged
themes and backdrops in this
poetry collection—with its me-
ticulousness, like the broken mir-
rors in their fragmentation—here
leaves in the distilled drippings of
what is said and its temporality,
another powerful element of this
voice: the treatment of silence,
its purification verse by verse, the
transparency of its desolation.

*“You know me well,
silence.
You are born
to me from the last words
of the heart.”*

(From “Silence,
You Accompany Me”)

*“I keep this silence
of no one and for no one.”*
(From “Boredom”)

*“Gray and green.
In the silence,
another silence is heard.
The memories have stayed
guarding their last voices.”*
(From “It Rains”)

In these poems and, in some way, throughout the book, the poetic act makes silence a contained figure, an enunciating figure, a multiple trope, a recipient, a message, and the form of the message. It is not merely the necessary habit of chiseling and leaving behind what is refined and characteristic of writing in this literary genre.

No, the different versions and assignments of silence and for silence here offer us, as readers and listeners, a privileged place: the conscious humanity of everything that the poet, throughout the poem, says and silences. That indelible, irreducible “Apenas,” grounded in its anguished and serene path. As readers, we witness what is written about the unsaid. The unsaid that founds and summarizes what is written. Poetry, after all, as spiritual essence.

“Time, do not wake / the sleeping things,” says the poet at the end of a little romance. As if he preferred for himself, for us, and even for the inert and inanimate things, the fertile dream of that spirituality. He also says and tells us: *“Enter. Come in. Save me.”*

And those who dive into the flow of this book, also in silence and with silence, will understand that between looking and feeling, harmoniously and briefly, poetry passes.

Let us read *Apenas*, as a fragmentary sum of visual and auditory images of what silence and memory can unite, not erase or avoid.

MANUEL JOSÉ DEL LARAS



APENAS

The sun hits the bricks
of the wall.

The afternoon
slides into
another afternoon.

Nothing more
than the echo of a memory,
slightest, fleeting,
an echo that belongs to no one
and almost no longer is.
The sun barely touches
the bricks.

There is
nothing more.

Only the echo
of a memory.

Perhaps
it was an afternoon.

Maybe
I was happy as I passed by.

But it isn't true,

no.

It isn't true.

SOMETIMES

Sometimes it's a Tuesday.
Other times a Wednesday.
Sometimes at night.
Sometimes in the morning.

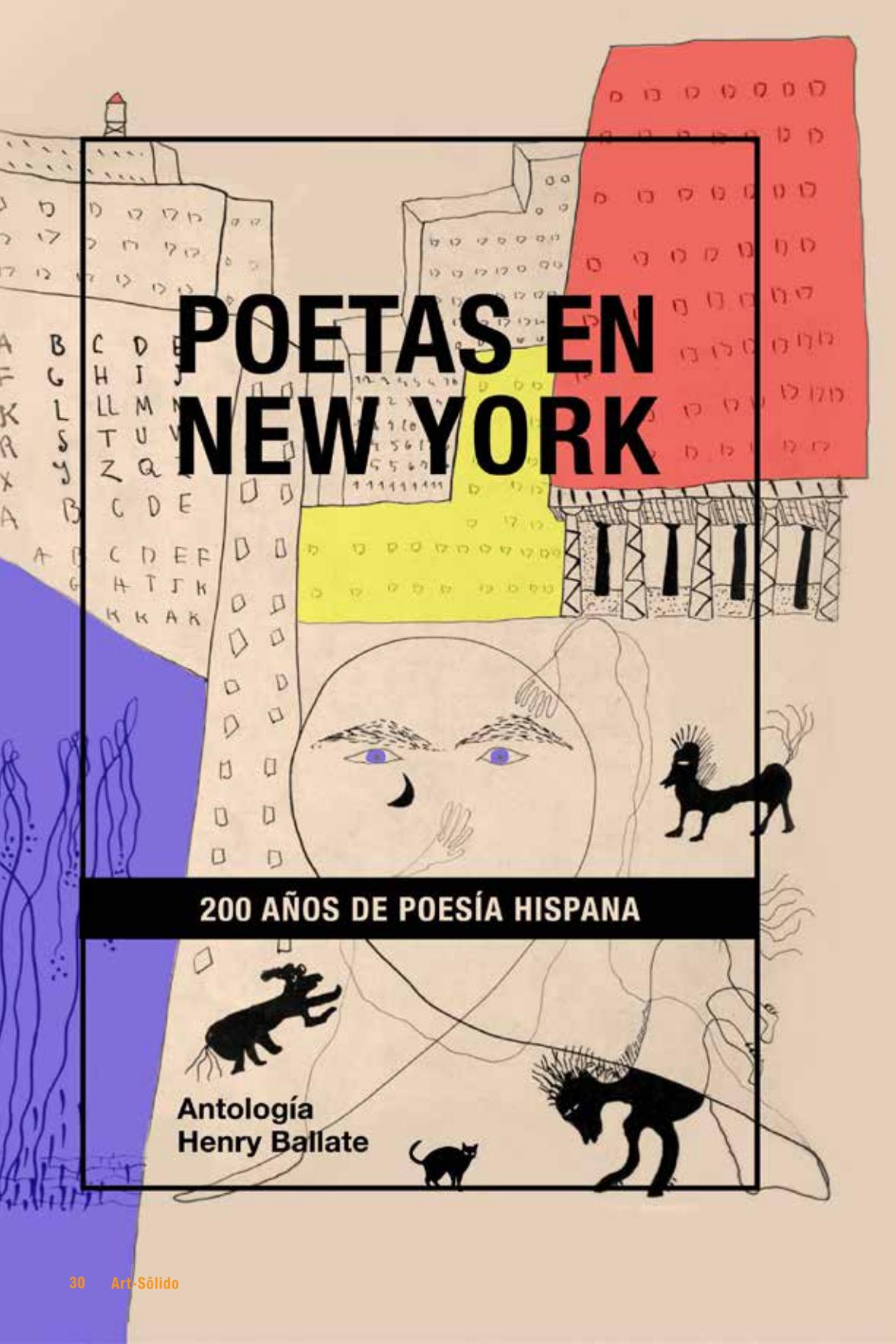
Sometimes it's the past
or the day that's coming.
Sometimes it's October.
Other times November.

Sometimes it's the sun
over the green fields.
Sometimes it's the rain
on old walls.

Sometimes it's a memory,
a brief premonition.
Sometimes it's a never,
and other times a forever.

Sometimes it's life,
and sometimes it's death.
Sometimes I am not myself,
and suddenly, I am.





POETAS EN NEW YORK

200 AÑOS DE POESÍA HISPANA

Antología
Henry Ballate

The poets who taught us to read New York in Spanish

Henry Ballate | New York

The contemporary poet is a man between men and his loneliness is the promiscuous loneliness of the walker lost in the crowd.
Octavio Paz.



Hispanic poetry in New York is born within the city. The metropolis we know today was envisioned and designed in 1811, when commissioners Gouverneur Morris, John Rutherford, and Simeon De Witt presented the development plan consisting of rectangular street grids and equal lots, stretching from The Battery to Upper Manhattan. This not only marked the birth of a new city, but also the beginning of a way of life, of coexistence that, ultimately, would trace the geography of new poetic paths.

The first publication in Spanish appeared in New York City in 1823 with the newspaper *El Habanero*, founded by Father Félix Varela. In this same year, José María Heredia went into exile in New York. He is, considered by many to be the first romantic poet of America and the initiator of Romanticismo Hispanoamericano. His poems appear regularly in the newspaper and in 1825 the Gray and Buye printing press, located at 129 Broadway, published the book *Poesías* by Heredia, thus initiating

a Hispanic poetic tradition that continues to date.

After a few years, the struggles for independence in Cuba and Puerto Rico would unite these two countries within and beyond their borders. In New York, Eugenio María de Hostos joined the Cuban Revolutionary Committee and became the editor of *La Revolución* magazine. Hostos (better known as the Citizen of the Americas) was among the most faithful supporters of Ramón Emeterio Betances' proposal to create an Antillean Confederation between Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Cuba. This initiative would also catch the attention of writer José Martí, an active advocate of insular sovereignty. In this way, the voices of these poets and thinkers began to sound in unison off New York in different Spanish-speaking countries.

José Martí lived and wrote most of his work in this American city, presenting his vision of New York, its inhabitants and its poets to the Hispanic world. Martí's influence

was extensive he wrote for children, free women and men, slaves, the rich, the poor. Martí wrote for all of *Nuestra America*. The Hispanic world met Walt Whitman when Martí published about the American poet in the Argentine newspaper *La Nación*. This letter of introduction set the standard for “the cult of Whitman” in Hispanic letters. This recognition will get writers together, from modernists to postmodernists, including avant-garde and social poets from all over the Spanish America. New York has Whitman, but it also has Martí his pedestal within the Hispanic literary world is as big and robust as the one that supports his statue at the main entrance to Central Park.

Likewise, the city also opened its doors to Rubén Darío, who was received by Martí on his first trip to New York in 1893. During this period, Darío met Charles A. Dana, editor of *The New York Sun*. By this time, Darío already had a presence in Spain and throughout the Americas, but his stay in New York served as a platform for his literary creation, which would leave an indelible mark on the Hispanic poets of subsequent generations.

When the avant-garde decade of the twenties arose, other names joined the literary map of the city. Such is the case of José Juan Tablada, whose work led into a new poetry by this time, and it is considered by many to be the beginning of Spanish-American modernity. These are the times at which several of the poets of the Generation of ‘27 found comfort in New York. Some will only do so temporarily, as is the case of Federico García Lorca, who, despite his short

stay in the city, would set a before and after within Hispanic literature in the metropolis and for the rest of the world, with his volumen of poems *Poeta en Nueva York*. Others, however, would remain in love with The Big Apple for a long time León Felipe, José Moreno Villa, Pedro Salinas, Jorge Guillén, all of whom would influence our city and allow themselves to be influenced by it. Another of the indelible signatures of these years is Juan Ramón Jiménez, whose ephemeral presence is more than enough to leave an eternal mark on the New York imaginary, through his volumen of poems *Diario de un poeta recién casado*.

From the 1930s on, the conflicts and lack of freedom in Hispanic countries have caused a constant exodus of poets to the United States, and to a great extent, to New York City. The dictatorships of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua, Alfredo Stroessner in Paraguay, Fidel Castro in Cuba, Augusto Pinochet in Chile, and Jorge Rafael Videla in Argentina, are just some of those wholead many writers into exile, and perhaps more importantly, their readers. While our countries were facing political, economic, and cultural chaos, New York continued to perpetuate itself, maintaining its shape and essence, offering its eternal refuge the newly arrived poet walked the same streets as previous poets did, and each one was welcomed individually by the permanent and unquestionable presence of the city that never sleeps.

The poets in this book arrived in New York by boat, train, plane, or

car, crossing the Brooklyn Bridge or the Lincoln Tunnel, to become New Yorkers from day one. Some will return to their roots, staying New York -inevitably- in their work and life experiences. Others will understand that a return is impossible, like Lourdes Casal, who described herself as “*Too much of a New Yorker to be, -even to be again- anything else.*” Everyone, in some way, helped to describe with maternal sounds what was strange to us and populated the foreign landscape with accents: Broadway and the Hudson River, Upper and Lower Manhattan, opening the door of the corner coffee shop, where every morning we make an order in Spanish.

The city every day became increasingly more attractive to Hispanic writers. Authors from all over the continent found a shelter and an audience in New York. The cosmopolitan experience and a living language, including its different faces, enrich the poetic imagination of immigrants, who also count today on the academic support of various Hispanic American literature programs at renowned New York universities.

This validation platform has made it possible for several anthologies of Hispanic poets in New York to come to light. These compilations, in general, have taken as their leitmotif the authors’ countries of origin, or specific time periods, such as *Los Poetas Puertorriqueños*, by Alfred Matilla and Iván Silén; *Poetas Cubanos en Nueva York*, by Felipe Lázaro; *Papiros de Babel: antología de la poesía puertorriqueña en Nueva York*,

by Pedro López-Adorno; *Los paraguas amarillos: los poetas latinos en New York*, by Iván Silén; and *Entre rascacielos: Doce poetas hispanos en Nueva York*, by Marie Lise Gazarian Gautie, just to name a few titles.

This anthology was born to fill current gaps and to interconnect different narratives the city that has welcomed us, presenting the reader with a chronological journey through the work of the Hispanic poets who have left their mark on New York. This chronological journey addresses only the poets’ birth dates, but does not differentiate authors by country or period, but rather connects and places them on a single stage full of lights and sounds that certainly becomes the quintessence of his poetic proposal. Much has been written since early 1823, and much remains to be written. Let this book be our humble way of honoring these first 200 years of Hispanic Poetry in New York City.

The authors included in these pages, in addition to their contributions to universal literature, have kept poetry in Spanish alive in New York. If it is essential to read Walt Whitman and Hart Crane in their allegories of New York within the American poetic tradition, it is also a must to visit the names of Hispanic literature *who slept on the benche of the Hudson river* if, we want to start understanding this vast city with the presumptuous eagerness of a child discovering the world.



POETAS EN NEW YORK

José Juan Tablada

Alternate Nocturne

New York's golden night
Cold Moorish lime walls
Rector's champagne, foxtrot
Silent houses, strong bars
And turning back to glance
Over the quiet rooftops
A petrified soul
The white cats of the moon
Like Loth's wife

And yet,
it is
the same
in New York
and in Bogotá

The Moon...!!

Ely Rosa Zamora

I Speak a Word

and it smells of you,
it smells of winter,
of damp earth from
a Verlaine poem, of honey
from bees that once stung
the glass of my labyrinthine ear.

I speak a word
that dissolves as I think it.

I see it in the air,
I tug it by a corner
and caress my face
as if it were a flower.

But it falls apart over me,
its clay root shatters,
its mythical rib,
its rotten apple under
Diana's tree.

I speak a word
that dissolves as I think it,
but it embraces me
when you're not here.

Isabel Fraire

Wet Bricks

wet bricks
green grass
sun
and the shadow of water

the buildings like lizards

thousands and thousands of
 books
thousands and thousands of
 windows

and just a man
between the shadow and the
 water.

Francisco Álvarez Koki

Sonata to a body bathing in a tub

Like a vessel, the bathtub
Rocked you in time,
And I was your silence
Across the water.
Your exquisite body
Sank in the tenuous water,
While the moon filtered in
With all its mysteries.
The window blinds
Played with the wind,
And the tub embraced you
With its arms of iron.
The water forever
Climbed up your skin
With its tender swashing
To break your codes.
I was the gale
Stirring your sails,
I was the tsunami
Shaking your tub.
At the end, however, time was
Relentless, and I surrendered,
Becoming harbor and seashore,
To be the water in your bathtub.





Truth



DAVIDSON

Raciel Gómez Golpe: The Truth

Píter Ortega | New York



In the year 2000, Cuban artist Raciel Gómez Golpe graduated from the San Alejandro National Academy of Fine Arts, located in Havana, one of the most prestigious art schools in the entire country. And he did it with two superb works, which from such an early period predicted that what was coming for Cuban art was an enfant terrible, a rebellious artist whom the art market, critics and cultural institutions could never tame or pigeonhole into predetermined molds. In one of those works Raciel showed several fish locked in coffins, and its title was “Prisoners of Sheol”. It was an installation made of clay, oxides and wood that referred to the world of the dead, while the fish were humanized as well as languishing, dying. Beyond the possible religious meaning, those caged fish symbolized the destiny of an entire society devoid of many freedoms, whose illusions had been kidnapped. We were already seeing a key characteristic of Raciel’s work: he is a patriot, an artist who never turns his back on the destiny of his country and its people. A humanist who knows that the ethical dimension of creation is as important as the aesthetic.

Raciel’s initial idea was to make a public intervention in a cemetery with about 20 or 30 coffins. Due to a logistical problem it was not possible, and so the artist mounted the pieces on a wheelbarrow, took them to the Old Cemetery of Guanabacoa, in Havana, took photos of them once inside and left. All of this clandestinely. Raciel did not give up, as he has never done in his entire extensive artistic career.

Raciel’s clandestine action has more value and impact than his own physical work, because it symbolizes the irreverence of an art that does not bend to the norms of a surreal, abnormal society and island, sick with bureaucracy. That is why saying that Raciel is a painter, a sculptor, a photographer or a potter are all imprecise, incomplete terms that simplify the scope of his visual production. Raciel is more than all that: he is a visual anthropologist obsessed with the future and the present of the human species and the island where he was born. He is a humanist who puts his art at the service of emancipation and the struggles of man



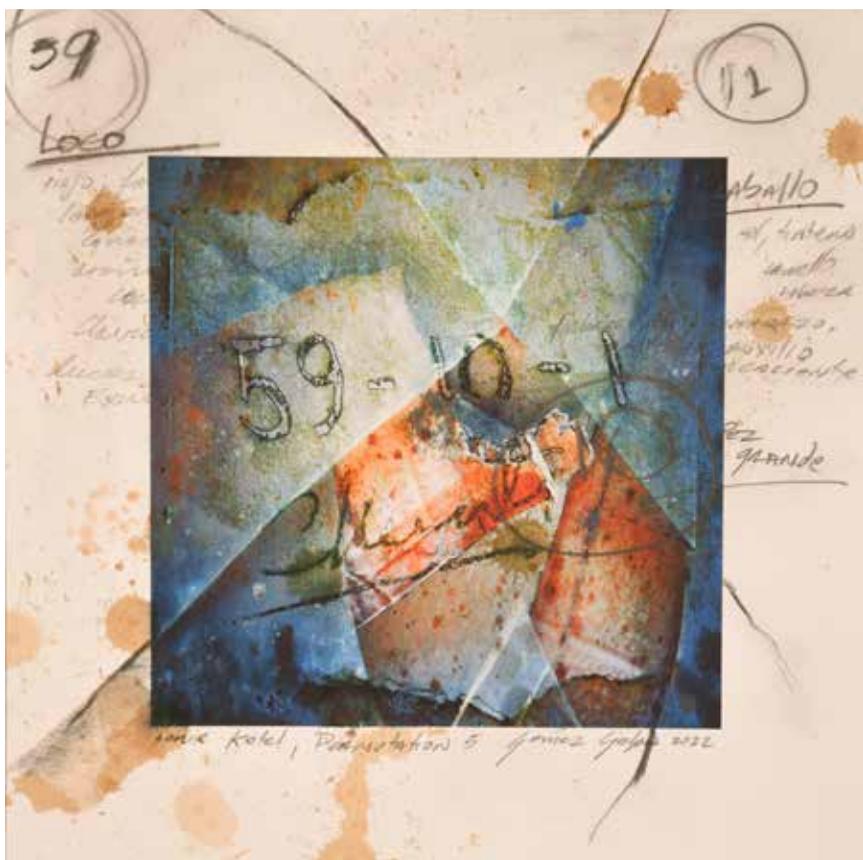
Raciél Gómez Golpe, Serie Kotel Permutation 3, 2022 Técnica mixta sobre papel 12 x 12"

to live in a fairer world. He is an acerbic philosopher trapped in the universe of artistic creation.

That installation is so good that it earned him the second prize at the Amelia Peláez Ceramics Biennial in Cuba, when he was only 21 years old. Raciél went beyond the traditional concept of ceramics and opted for a strongly conceptual piece where the process, the performative character and the intervention in the space were the true protagonists. The clay was just a pretext.

In another early series, even before graduating from the San

Alejandro Academy, that deep ethical dimension of creation that I have spoken about before is evident. The series is entitled "SOS Natura", and in it the artist launches a strong criticism of the destructive and irresponsible action of human beings on our planet and its species. Here too the fish is the fundamental symbol, and it is seen subjected to nails, chains, shackles and other sharp objects that lacerate it. But there is a specific work that is extremely important because of the procedure used by the artist. In it we see a dead fish on top of a coral, and on the mutilated body of the animal appears the imprint of



Raciel Gómez Golpe, Serie Kotel Permutation 5, 2022 Técnica mixta sobre papel 12 x 12"

a boot, a human footprint. It was Raciel himself who stamped that boot on the work, in a process of aggression or destruction of his own art. Once again, the artwork goes beyond its physical presence or its final result to include an important phase of the process. And here is another feature of Raciel's art that will accompany him throughout his career as an artist to this day: the self-conscious nature of the work, art thinking of itself in an intense, strong way. In this sense we can say that Raciel carries conceptualism in his veins. Even when we see him disguised as a landscape

artist, that is nothing more than a strategy to mislead the untrained viewer. Raciel will never be a pure landscape painter.

Even in his landscapes that seem more traditional, Raciel digs into the deepest wounds in Cuban society and the works end up being a cry of pain, a howl of desolation and despair. Whether in the landscapes made with acrylic or those made with charcoal, the artist represents destroyed houses, many of them on the verge of collapse. An almost uninhabitable architecture, where the fragility of the support structures become

a metaphor for the fragility of a failed, incompetent social system. They are houses where, curiously, the human being never appears, but we can feel his suffering. We can imagine the sadness that dwells in the interiors, even when Raciél shows us the exterior. We can imagine an anguished mother trying to figure out what to prepare for dinner, or an old man in the most stale despair. In this direction, the doors become a decisive element, since they are mostly closed, as if hiding the collective secret of multiple generations of Cubans. There is only silence and solitude in those houses.

But in Raciél's landscapes we must also highlight his great technical virtuosity, without a doubt. The excellent job in recreating the textures of wood and stone, the magnificent contrasts between lights and shadows, the outstanding management of perspective and space, as well as the exquisiteness of his drawing, make his landscapes a sublime aesthetic experience. And in them two trajectories or patterns can be seen that will remain constant until today: the evolution from general views to detail shots and from figuration to abstraction. Raciél's landscapes mutated year after year in search of the synthesis and simplicity of the image. In this arduous path, the "Simple Form" series, from 2010, occupies a special place, and is probably one of the most valuable series made by the artist. Here the beauty and visual impact of the sienna and ocher colors, together with the audacity of the compositional schemes, are delightful. These are one of those

works that make you fall in love at first sight due to their elegance and good taste.

The "Limited Access", "The Wall" and "World of Shadows" series, which began in 2009, are also tremendously significant within the artist's creative career, due to 3 elements that have an important presence in these series and that define who Raciél is today: the appropriation of the graffiti universe, the importance of numerology, and the use of collages with paper and other materials. Within these, there is one piece in particular that I find extremely powerful because of its message. This is "Door 31", from the series "Limited Access". What we see is a closed, aged and practically dysfunctional wooden door, with the letters "TQM" painted on top, which refer in Spanish to the phrase "I love you so much". The message of the work is deep and shocking: love transcends any physical deficiency or economic precariousness, its strength is more powerful than all material misfortune, there is no door or obstacle capable of annulling its healing effect and its purity. What a beautiful work! And how important for the moment in which we live.

On this path towards visual synthesis, there is a group of works that represents a climax point. They are a series of abstractions from the year 2003 made with mixed media, essentially acrylic and charcoal. Although Raciél has been very close to abstraction at various times in his artistic career, it is only in this group of works that he has fully delved into it. In other series he has flirted with the abstract

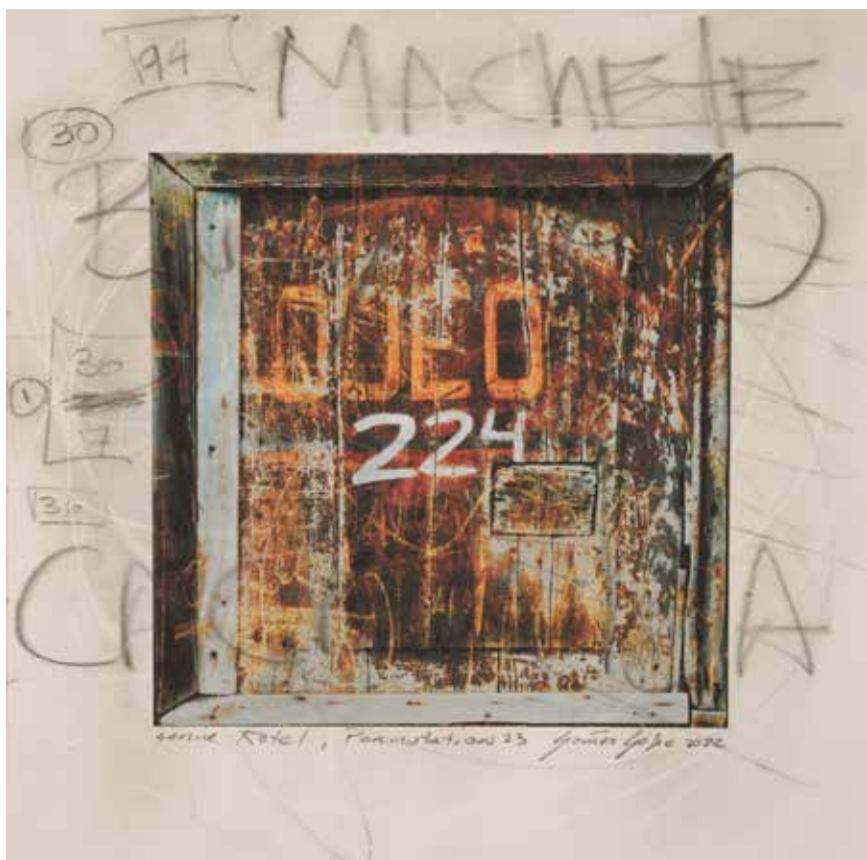
universe; but here he made the leap to the very center. The drippings of the red color on top of the gray, black and white tones of the background, give these pieces a powerful expressive force. The chaos and unbridled movement of areas and colors, together with the symbolic value of those red pigments that look like blood spilled on the cardboard, place these works among the best of Raciél's artistic production. Not to mention the "wounds" or cracks that the artist makes on the material, using a knife or spatula, which place the works on an even higher level. The level of the major leagues of art.

At this point in the text, it is necessary that we also talk about Raciél's photographic work. And I will do it by mentioning a series in particular, entitled "Sheep without a Shepherd." In these pieces, Raciél makes a cartography of the deepest Cuba, the one that escapes the narrative of the island's official press. The Cuba of those men and women who live frozen in time, without hope for the future, absorbed in the misery and pain of their day-to-day lives. Men and women adrift, without a "shepherd" to guide them, to protect them along the difficult and cobbled path. Among all the photos in this series, there is one that has been haunting my head for several days: it is a woman leaning on a wooden door and with her hand resting on her nose and mouth, while looking at the camera. The look of this woman is so strong that it is difficult to describe it in words. In those eyes there is so much pain and rage at the same time, so much impotence and anguish, so much distrust and

so many wounds... It is a look that contains the suffering of an entire people, the death of a nation's illusions. That poor woman needs her pastor, she cries out with those defiant, desperate eyes.

I had already mentioned the importance of graffiti and numerology in certain works by Raciél. But it is in 2012 when these two elements begin to acquire almost absolute prominence, through the start of an emblematic series: "Kotel". At this time Raciél was already living in the United States (he moved to this country in 2010), but he had in his possession images of documents of the most popular game for money in Cuba: "la bolita" (the "little ball"), the insular and clandestine version of the lottery. In this series, Raciél performs a digital manipulation of these images and prints them on canvas or photographic paper, to later add brushstrokes of acrylic and varnish on top. The result is fabulous: behind all those numbers the illusions and dreams of millions of Cubans are hidden, the desires, victories and failures of people who see in "la bolita" the only way out of the many problems of their lives. That is why Raciél could not have chosen a better title than "Kotel", establishing a connection with the Western Wall, a vestige of the Temple of Jerusalem and one of the holiest places of Judaism. Cubans place a large part of their faith and expectations for the future in "la bolita".

Also known as the "Cuban Charada", la bolita consists of a table of consecutive numbers from 1 to 100. As Gretchen Sánchez explains for the Cibercuba portal, this

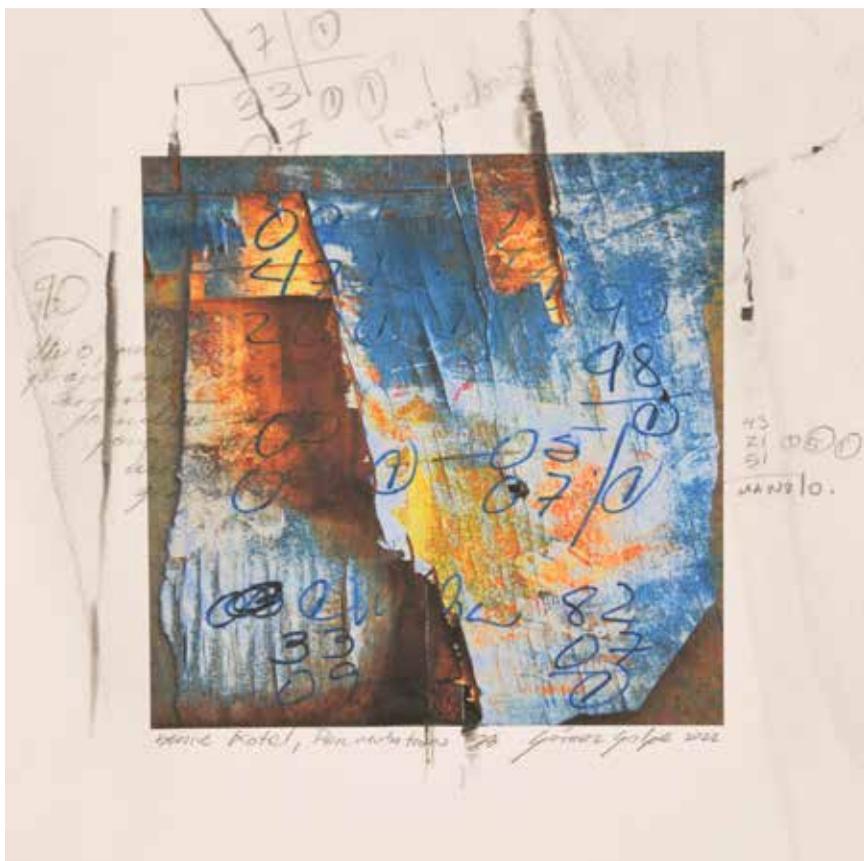


Raciel Gómez Golpe, Serie Kotel Permutation 23, 2022 Técnica mixta sobre papel 12 x 12”

is “one of the most popular games of chance in Cuba (...) Although some people write down their number lightly, most choose mystical or dream experiences that they assume as revelations and transform them into numerical codes. How can they do it? They know the meaning of each of the numbers in La Charada so, if they dream of a butterfly, 2 cannot be missing in the numerical combination.”

In the group of works entitled “Permutations (+ a number)”, made in 2022 and also belonging to the “Kotel” series, Raciel goes even further in his approach to

the universe of “la bolita”. Here the artist himself uses chance to name his works in an almost performative act. How does he do it? Well, he puts pieces of paper with the numbers inside a cup or other container and selects one of those numbers at random. That digit will then be part of the title of the piece. In addition, the artist writes various texts in the works to refer to the meanings of certain numbers in La Charada. But that “performative” sense that I spoke of does not only stay in the title. While enjoying a delicious coffee, Raciel spills this liquid on the pieces, letting the accident also form part of the



Raciél Gómez Golpe, Serie Kotel Permutation 28, 2022 Técnica mixta sobre papel 12 x 12”

visual narration. At other times he even stamps the coffee cup on the work. An entire atmosphere that defines the artwork as an experience and not just as a finished physical product.

“Permutations” is also important because Raciél expands the limits of the work beyond the portion occupied by the printed digital image. Thus, he uses the empty space on the 4 sides of the image to give free rein to the texts or numbers written by him.

And precisely this desire for expansion reaches the top in the

artist’s most recent production: an intervention as a Site-specific art carried out in the Freedom Pavilion in Tampa, Florida. Almost all artistic manifestations converge here: photography, painting, drawing, installation, etc. The artist exhibited his works in a space of great historical significance for all peoples who have fought or are fighting for their freedom: The Berlin Wall Art Collection. The collection’s website explains that it “features one-of-a-kind art created from and on authentic remnants of the historic Berlin Wall, including pieces from the Rainer Hildebrandt Collection (...) The

collection contains 350 authentic slabs of steel-reinforced concrete from the East German side of the Berlin Wall that were purchased just before the wall was dismantled, in order to preserve history. “Rainer Hildebrandt was a German anti-communist resistance fighter, historian and founder of the famous Checkpoint Charlie Museum in Germany, focused on the Berlin Wall, the cold war and the most important of the border crossings in Berlin at the time. Among other things, the Checkpoint Charlie Museum maintains a list of deaths at the Berlin Wall.

Being an unconventional space, Raciél came up with a very effective solution: he covered the walls with kraft paper and placed the pieces from the “Kotel” series on top of it, to later complete the project with spectacular texts written in the style of graffiti that occupies a large part of the space and in which many things can be read: names of Cuban dissidents who have fought for the freedom of the island, names of victims of communism in East Germany and of the crisis in the Berlin wall, names of common Cuban and American citizens, numbers with their meaning in “la bolita”, among many other visual metaphors.

The realities of Cubans are very similar to those suffered by the people who tried to cross from one side of the Berlin Wall to the other in search of freedom. With the only difference that our wall is the sea, a sea as deep as it is dangerous and lonely. The parallel that Raciél establishes between the Cuban and German realities

is strong and heartbreaking. Even more so when we manage to read the largest text written on the wall: “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Because, beyond the original religious context of the phrase, many Cubans on the island need to know the truth in order to one day be free; they need to confront a lie that has subjugated them for more than 60 years.

This exhibition by Raciél in Tampa reveals a solid, mature artist at the most vigorous moment of his entire career. It has been 22 years since he graduated from the San Alejandro National Academy of Fine Arts, and today Raciél is more self-confident than ever. At every turn he seems to carry the deeper meaning of the words “nothing to prove, nothing to lose, nothing to hide” on his forehead. And, when an individual is so focused as a human being and as a good son of God, great things always happen. That is why we must closely follow the projects by Raciél that are coming. Judging from my conversations with him, there are plenty of surprises to come. A Raciél that reinvents itself and is reborn with each new idea.

So, let’s stay tuned. Meanwhile, let’s try to be closer to that truth that so honestly transpires in Raciél’s works.





Carmen Herrera, Tres (Orange) (1971/2019)

Carmen Herrera: Straight Line Paper and Paintings

Art-Sólido | New York



Lisson Gallery is currently hosting a mesmerizing exhibition of Carmen Herrera's paintings on paper, showcasing the artist's prolific output from the last decade of her illustrious career. The retrospective offers a unique glimpse into Herrera's meticulous process, highlighting her mastery of color, form, and geometric precision. The exhibition, titled "Carmen Herrera: Paintings on Paper," runs from March 7 to April 13, 2024.

Born in 1915, Carmen Herrera dedicated over eight decades to exploring abstraction through minimalist principles. Educated in Havana and Paris, Herrera's architectural background significantly influenced her artistic journey. This retrospective focuses on works created within the final ten

years of her life, offering a comprehensive survey of Herrera's dedication to her craft.

Herrera's paintings on paper reflect a three-part process, where she initially crafted rough sketches with rulers and colored markers. These sketches were then transformed into formal acrylic paintings, serving as fixed compositions. Some evolved into scaled-up canvas paintings, while others underwent further modifications in color, structure, and orientation. This methodology reveals the artist's commitment to a lifelong process of purification and refinement.

A standout aspect of the exhibition is Herrera's exploration of color. Notable works like "Untitled (2018)" employ two colors, marking a return to her Parisian years



and adding depth to her iconic dichromatic style. The signature pairings of yellow and green or white and black also make a prominent appearance, showcasing the artist's consistent themes throughout her seven-decade career.

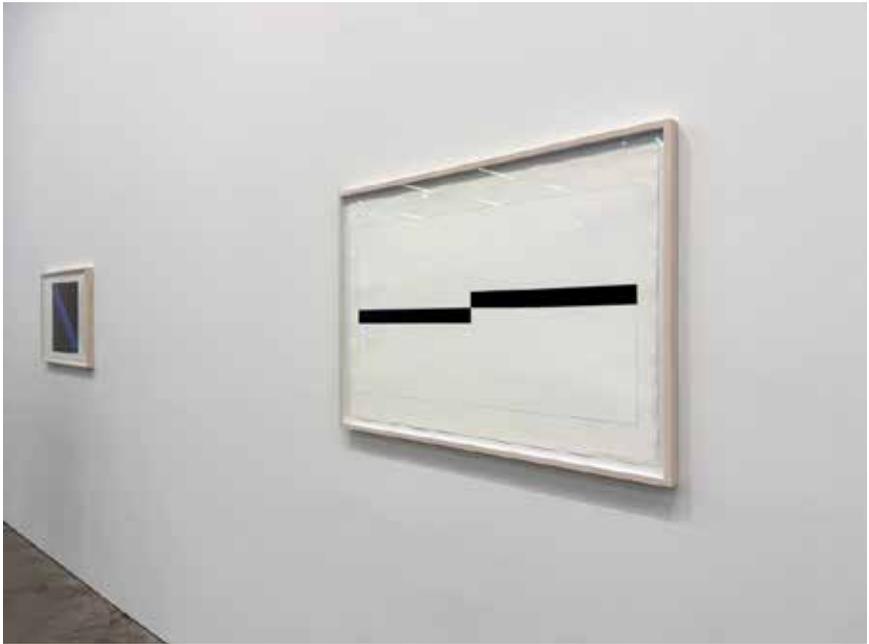
One compelling work, "Untitled (2012)," presents a slender, horizontal arrangement of black rectangles mirroring each other, emphasizing Herrera's approach of continual iteration and refinement. This piece, a variation of a canvas painting from 1970, underscores the artist's ability to distill color, shape, and structure to their essential elements over the years.

The solo standing sculpture on display "Tres (Orange), (1971/2019)," adds a third dimension to the exhibition through which you undoubtedly enter the world of the artist. Her dedication to simplicity and refinement echoes throughout her lifetime of work, with each stroke

embodying tension, purity, and aliveness despite its mathematical precision.

The tension between symmetry and asymmetry is a recurring theme in Herrera's oeuvre, evident in the dynamic compositions featuring sharp zigzags, wedges, and rectilinear forms. The interplay of positive and negative space, achieved through opposing planes of color, showcases Herrera's keen eye and deftness of hand. These paintings on paper capture the moment when a composition becomes "fixed," attesting to the artist's skill in distilling infinite possibilities to their essence.

Carmen Herrera: Paper Paintings at Lisson Gallery is a compelling and visually striking exhibition that pays homage to Carmen Herrera's enduring legacy which once again leaves us with the artist's own statement: "I Never Met a Straight Line I Did Not Like".



Carmen Herrera, Untitled (2012)

Carmen Herrera, Untitled (2018)





Ivonne Ferrer: From Surreal Narratives to Historical Metaphors

Art-Sólido | Miami

The creative imagination of Ivonne Ferrer produces works that are as bizarre as they are provocative.

Carol Damian , P.h.D, Art Historian



Ivonne Ferrer, a visionary artist with roots in Cuba, has captivated audiences with her unique blend of surrealism, historical references, and social commentary. Through meticulous draftsmanship and a keen eye for composition, Ferrer invites viewers into a world where reality merges with fantasy, challenging perceptions and provoking introspection.

Ferrer's artistry is characterized by its surreal narratives, populated by a diverse cast of characters that defy traditional categorization. Women of all ages and backgrounds take center stage, their stories intertwining with elements of satire, irony, and humor. Ferrer's compositions are not merely depictions but reflections of her own narrative, blurring the lines between reality and fiction. Through techniques such as collage and photomontage, she constructs complex allegories that challenge viewers to question the nature of identity and perception.

Central to Ferrer's work is the interplay between historical references and contemporary motifs. Drawing inspiration from Cuba's rich graphic tradition, as well as popular culture and literature, Ferrer creates a visual tapestry that reflects the complexities of modern society. Ancient statuary, metaphysical architectural elements, and commercial branding converge to create a narrative that transcends temporal boundaries. Through her use of Neo-Pop appropriation, Ferrer subverts familiar imagery, offering a scathing critique of consumerism, social decay, and political disillusionment.

Throughout her career, Ferrer has defied artistic conventions, transcending boundaries of style, medium, and cultural influence. Her work challenges viewers to confront the inherent contradictions of contemporary society, while offering glimpses of hope and resilience amidst the chaos. By embracing the fluidity of language and symbolism, Ferrer creates a visual language

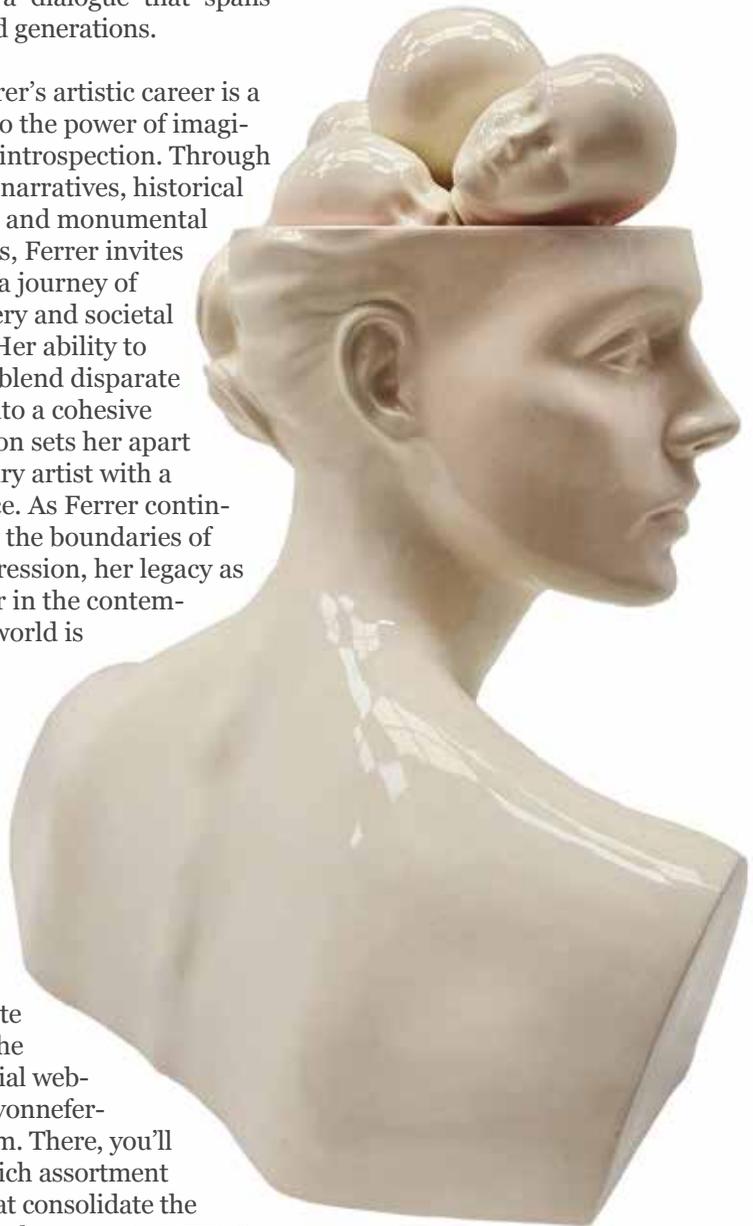


Ivonne Ferrer, El amor de Canova, Mixed on canvas, 60 x 40". Rodriguez Collection

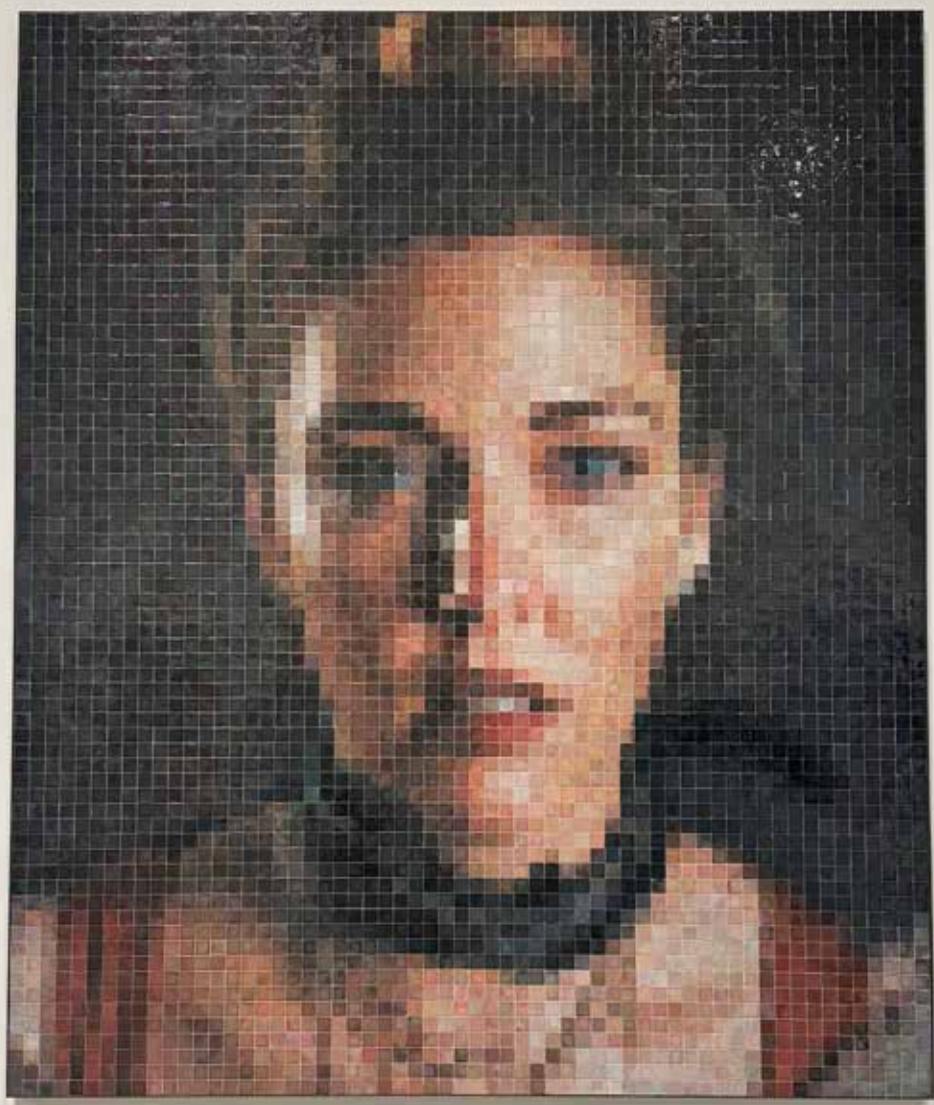
that transcends traditional categorizations, inviting viewers to participate in a dialogue that spans cultures and generations.

Ivonne Ferrer's artistic career is a testament to the power of imagination and introspection. Through her surreal narratives, historical metaphors, and monumental installations, Ferrer invites viewers on a journey of self-discovery and societal reflection. Her ability to seamlessly blend disparate elements into a cohesive artistic vision sets her apart as a visionary artist with a unique voice. As Ferrer continues to push the boundaries of artistic expression, her legacy as a trailblazer in the contemporary art world is assured.

To delve deeper into the captivating world of Ivonne Ferrer's artistic endeavors, don't hesitate to explore the artist's official website: www.ivonneferrerartist.com. There, you'll discover a rich assortment of works that consolidate the intersections between PAINTING, SCULPTURE, PUBLIC ART, CERAMIC, SERIGRAPHY, COLLAGE and beyond. Immerse



yourself in Ferrer's creative universe and uncover the essence of his profound talent.



Chuck Close: Red, Yellow, and Blue

Art-Sólido | New York



The Chuck Close exhibition, “Red, Yellow, and Blue: The Last Paintings,” at the Pace Gallery in New York is a compelling retrospective that showcases the artist’s final works, many of which have never before been publicly exhibited. Chuck Close, known for his groundbreaking approach to conceptual portraiture, took the art world by storm from the late 1960s onwards, challenging conventional modes of representation in an era dominated by Minimalism and abstraction.

The exhibition provides a fascinating glimpse into the last decade of Close’s life, during which his artistic style underwent a radical transformation. In these late paintings, Close departed from his iconic grid-based system and adopted a

new technique. Using only three colors – red, yellow, and blue – he applied thin, transparent washes of oil paint, treating them almost like watercolors. The result is a series of portraits that appear as if on the brink of abstraction, with faces only fully emerging when viewed from a distance or through the lens of a camera.

Close’s exploration of perception, facial recognition, and information processing is evident in these late works. The deliberate use of a limited color palette adds a layer of complexity to the viewing experience, challenging the audience to engage with the paintings on a deeper level. The artist himself described the effect as “total abstraction,” reinforcing his commitment to pushing the boundaries of artistic expression.



The narrative of Chuck Close's life, particularly his resilience in the face of a spinal aneurysm that left him paralyzed from the neck down in 1988, adds a poignant layer to the exhibition. Through a grueling process of rehabilitation, Close not only regained the ability to paint but also reinvented his approach. His use of a brush-holding device strapped to his wrists and forearms is a testament to his determination and ingenuity, transforming the trajectory of his career and the history of art itself.

The process behind the "Red, Yellow, and Blue" series, as outlined in the exhibition information, further highlights Close's meticulous approach. Each painting is a culmination of three distinct layers, with red, blue, and yellow successively added to create the final full-color portrait.

This method not only speaks to Close's technical skill but also underscores the complexity and depth inherent in each composition.

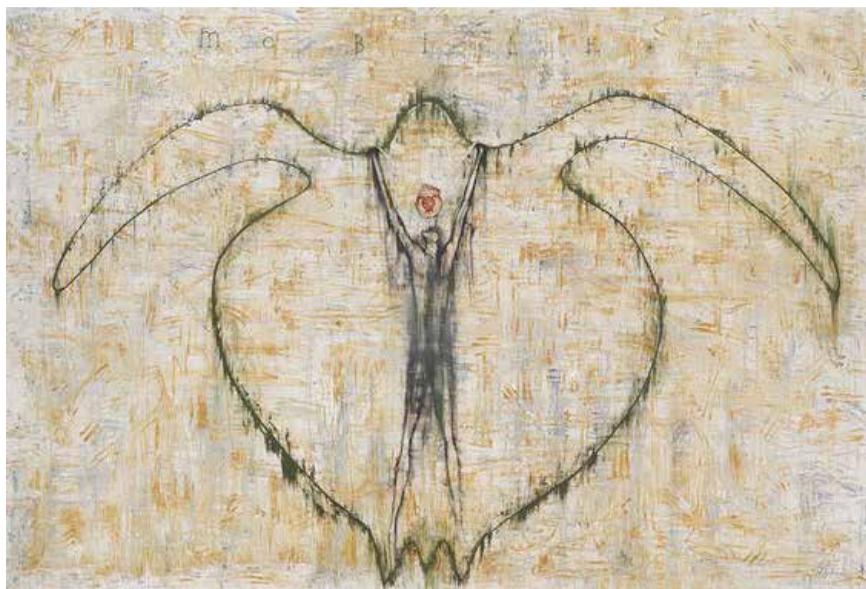
In summary, "Red, Yellow, and Blue: The Last Paintings" is a thought-provoking exhibition that encapsulates Chuck Close's artistic evolution and the profound impact of his innovative spirit. It is a fitting tribute to an artist who, despite facing significant physical challenges, continued to push the boundaries of his craft until the very end. The Pace Gallery provides a space for reflection and appreciation of Close's lasting contribution to the world of contemporary art.





Call the pretty horses.





José Bedia, *Mobile*, 2022, Acrylic on canvas, beads, and a perforated shell, 92 x 120"

José Bedia: Bestiary & Idols

Art-Sólido | New York

▲
● José Bedia's latest exhibition, "Bestiary & Idols," showcased at Mendes Wood DM in New York, offers a profound exploration of mythology and spirituality through the lens of the artist's transcultural experiences. Bedia, born in Cuba and now based in Miami, has crafted a body of work that delves into the realms of fauna and mythological beings, drawing from his extensive interactions with indigenous communities across Africa and the Americas.

The exhibition invites viewers into a world where mythological animals and revered idols serve as gateways to understanding the

interconnectedness of human and spiritual realms. Bedia's artistic journey began with his formal training in Havana, followed by immersive experiences within diverse cultural landscapes, including his Caribbean roots, Africa and indigenous communities across the Americas.

One of the exhibition's highlights is "Bundanga" (2020), a striking piece featuring ochre checkerboard textile from Mali adorned with pictographic figures from Palo Monte, an Afro-Cuban diasporic religion. Through acrylic, textiles, and assemblage, Bedia bridges the secular with the spiritual, aiming to transcend the

temporal constraints of contemporary art and reconnect with timeless religious iconography.

The monumental paintings “Mobile” (2022) and “Dos Ídolos” (2022) draw inspiration from the myths of the Seri people of Sonora, Mexico. These works, resembling woven textiles, depict revered animals such as manta rays and leatherback turtles, symbolizing the duality and symmetry in nature. Bedia’s exploration of indigenous symbolism reflects his commitment to honoring traditional cycles of learning and knowing, inviting viewers to contemplate alternative ways of perceiving the world.

Central to Bedia’s artistic practice is the use of half-cosmograms, deviating from Western art history’s conventions to convey cosmological observations and engage in unconventional storytelling. Works like “All the Pretty Horses” (2024) integrate material references from

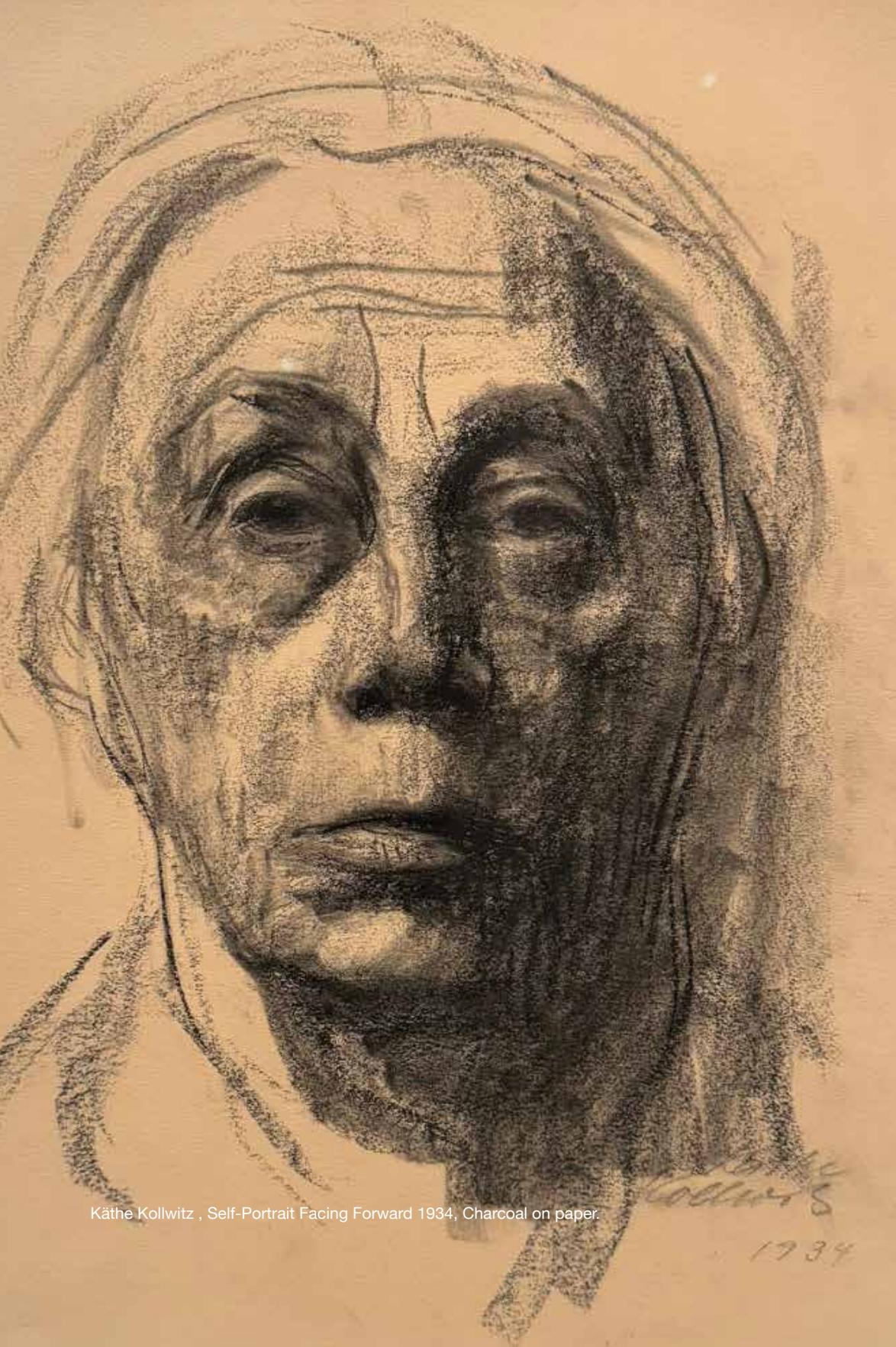
Cormac McCarthy’s novel and Bedia’s childhood experiences in Cuba, celebrating transcultural resistance and recovery.

Bedia’s art is deeply rooted in his syncretic approach to spirituality, informed by his experiences as an initiate and healer in the Palo Monte religion and his interactions with indigenous belief systems across the Americas. Through his visual language, Bedia invites viewers on a transformative journey, drawing connections between diverse cultural traditions and the universal quest for spiritual enlightenment.

In essence, “Bestiary & Idols” serves as a testament to José Bedia’s ongoing exploration of mythology and spirituality, offering viewers a glimpse into a world where the sacred and the secular converge, and where ancient traditions continue to inform contemporary artistic expression.



José Bedia, Bundanga, 2020, Acrylic on handmade textile, wooden objects, 55 x 88”



Käthe Kollwitz , Self-Portrait Facing Forward 1934, Charcoal on paper.

Käthe Kollwitz: A Testament to Social Advocacy and Artistic Brilliance

Art-Sólido | New York



The current exhibition at MoMA featuring the works of Käthe Kollwitz offers a profound journey into the artistry and social consciousness of this remarkable artist. In a period where many artists were embracing abstraction, Kollwitz stood firm in her commitment to art with a purpose, focusing on themes of motherhood, grief, and resistance. Through approximately 120 drawings, prints, and sculptures, visitors are immersed in her world of social criticism and deep empathy.

Born in the turbulent times of early 20th-century Germany, Kollwitz's art serves as a powerful voice for

the working class and women. Her representations of universal human experiences, particularly mourning and suffering, resonate with authenticity and emotional power. Despite the challenges faced by women in the art world of her time, Kollwitz forged her own path, shifting from painting to graphic arts, including etching, sculpture, lithography, and woodcuts, each medium reflecting her evolving artistic vision.

The exhibition not only showcases Kollwitz's iconic projects but also offers insights into her creative process through preparatory studies and working proofs. Curated



by Starr Figura and Maggie Hire, the exhibition provides a comprehensive overview of Kollwitz's enduring legacy as both an artist and an advocate.

One of the exhibition's highlights is Kollwitz's self-portrait, a powerful assertion of her artistic ambitions and unwavering confidence. Displayed alongside works by her contemporaries, her self-portrait stands as a testament to her determination and commitment to representing the underrepresented.

Overall, the Kollwitz exhibition at MoMA is a poignant tribute to an artist whose work continues to inspire and provoke thought. It is a reminder of the enduring power of art to confront social injustices and advocate for change. Visitors have until July 20, 2024, to experience this remarkable exhibition firsthand.





Käthe Kollwitz , The Lovers 1913, Plaster



Tony Rodríguez, *The rapture of God*, 2022, oil on canvas 40 x 30".

Tony Rodríguez: Chronicles of the Soul

Art-Sólido | New York



Tony Rodríguez's solo exhibition, *Chronicles of the Soul*, at the Saphira & Ventura Gallery in New York City, presents a striking exploration of surrealism that feels simultaneously intimate and universal.

Tony Rodríguez, brings his extensive experience into this highly symbolic and thought-provoking collection curated by Alcinda Saphira. Through his figurative works, rendered with academic precision yet imbued with a contemporary surrealist sensibility, Rodríguez creates a world where the viewer can glimpse both the past and future, the personal and the collective. Rodríguez's pieces invite the audience to step into a surreal dimension, where ancient philosophies, poems, and modern technological elements converge. His towers, panoramic landscapes, and monumental machinery seem to rise from a dreamscape, embodying both the grandeur and fragility of human experience.

Within the work of this exhibition, time becomes fluid, allowing viewers to contemplate not only the passage of history but also the uncertain future. In a statement about his work, Rodríguez highlights his interest in uniting the past with the present through symbolic creations. He incorporates ancient motifs with modern symbols to represent a utopian world—a world that, in his work, is rich with complex layers of meaning.

Rodríguez imagery, reinforces a melancholic tone. His restrained palette emphasizes the theme of a world caught between life and decay, hope and desolation. One of the most compelling aspects of Rodríguez's work is his focus on centrality. In many of his pieces, a dominant figure or object takes center stage, around which the rest of the canvas gravitates. These central elements, whether they be massive structures or ambiguous human forms, command attention while simultaneously evoking a



sense of isolation and vulnerability. This isolation is heightened by his meticulous attention to detail—each painting is filled with small, intricate elements that hint at a broader narrative.

The cityscapes that Rodríguez depicts in many of his works are hybrid creations. They exist as both familiar and alien, as if fragments of history have been pieced together with elements of an imagined future. In this way, Rodríguez comments on the cultural decay and the challenges posed by rapid technological advancements. His cities, like the people who inhabit them, are in a constant state of flux, reinventing themselves in order to survive.

Rodríguez's work also plays with the symbolic power of objects, transforming everyday items into surreal metaphors. Objects that may seem mundane in reality take

on new significance in his dreamlike worlds. Machines, insects, buildings, and relics from the past are imbued with a sense of history and mystery, reminiscent of Sigmund Freud's exploration of the unconscious mind.

The symbolic language Rodríguez employs encourages viewers to interpret his work on a deeply personal level, as they are invited to explore their own subconscious connections with the imagery. The emotional intensity of Rodríguez's work is heightened by his textural approach to painting. His use of thick layers of paint and materials gives the works a physicality that is both tactile and evocative. The surfaces of his canvases often resemble the walls of ancient ruins, with cracks, chips, and layers of pigment creating a rich visual history. This textured approach adds to the sensation that time itself is a character in Rodríguez's work, as layers



Tony Rodríguez, *The visitors*, 2021, oil on canvas, 24 x 20".



Tony Rodriguez, *The new blue rider...tribute to Franz Marc*, 2021, oil on canvas, 60 x 40 in.

of history, emotion, and meaning accumulate on the canvas.

Rodríguez's ability to merge the surreal with the real, the past with the present, and the emotional with the intellectual makes "Chronicles of the Soul" a compelling exhibition. His work captures the essence of surrealism while expanding on its traditional boundaries, integrating elements of modernity and technology into a narrative that speaks to the human condition. His figures and forms may seem caught in a state of decay, but they are also imbued with a sense of resilience and persistence. In the end, Rodríguez's work is about the human soul's capacity to endure, to reflect, and to transform. His creations, with

their surreal juxtapositions and symbolic complexity, are not just reflections of his own inner world, but mirrors of the universal human experience.

In *Chronicles of the Soul*, Rodríguez proves that he is not only a master of technique but also a master of emotion, able to capture the complexity of existence in each brushstroke. For anyone seeking to experience a surreal yet deeply personal artistic journey, this exhibition at Saphira & Ventura Gallery is not to be missed.

Chronicles of the Soul
at Saphira & Ventura Gallery
Curated by Alcinda Saphira.



Lucian Freud

Works from the UBS Art Collection

The UBS Art Collection contains many treasures and notable pockets of depth, including more than 50 works by the acclaimed British artist Lucian Freud (1922 – 2011). These works have previously been the subject of dedicated exhibitions at renowned international institutions, such as the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, and the Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin. We are delighted to share the majority of the artist's late etchings complemented by two paintings with a wider audience for the first time at the UBS Art Gallery.

Lucian Freud is considered one of the most distinguished artists of the last century and the greatest portraitist of his time. Like most of Freud's oeuvre, the artworks presented here are not easily consumed. The simultaneous boldness and delicacy of the etchings, as well as the layered dimensions of Freud's subject matter, command our close attention and thought. It is our hope, that viewed in this context, they create even deeper moments of introspection.

The UBS Art Collection is one of the world's most important corporate collections of contemporary art with over 30,000 artworks by influential artists of our time. The UBS Art Gallery is a public art space that provides an opportunity to discover works from the UBS Art Collection.

On view from February 1, 2024
UBS Art Gallery at 1285 Avenue of the Americas





Informational plaque text, likely describing the artwork.



Lucian Freud, Double Portrait, 1988-90, Oil on canvas.

Lucian Freud: Portraits of Unfiltered Reality

Art-Sólido | New York



The Lucian Freud: Works from the UBS Art Collection exhibition at the UBS Art Gallery offers a rare opportunity to witness some of the most intimate and profound works of one of the greatest portrait artists of the 20th century, Lucian Freud. Showcasing over fifty works, including Freud's late etchings and two significant paintings, the exhibition highlights the

depth of Freud's artistic legacy and his unrelenting exploration of the human condition.

Freud, celebrated as the most distinguished portraitist of his time, had a distinct and sometimes unsettling approach to depicting his sitters. His portraits are raw, honest, and un sentimental, offering an unvarnished view of the human body and soul.

This exhibition, drawn from the renowned UBS Art Collection, reflects these qualities, inviting viewers to engage deeply with Freud's work. One of the standout pieces of the exhibition is "Double Portrait" (1988-90), which opens the show. It depicts a woman, one of Freud's regular sitters, alongside Pluto, the Freud family dog.

This painting encapsulates many of Freud's signature elements: an intimate, almost intrusive portrayal of the sitter, the tension of the moment, and the palpable discomfort of the prolonged hours of posing. The sitter's awkward pose, coupled with the dog's restless energy, adds to the tension between the subjects. Freud's penetrating gaze seems to strip away any artifice, capturing not just the physical appearance but also the underlying emotions of his subjects. This gaze is both fascinating and unsettling, a hallmark of

Freud's work that compels viewers to reflect on their own perception of vulnerability and exposure.

A key element of the exhibition is Freud's etchings, a significant but often overlooked part of his oeuvre. Freud's etching process was as meticulous and demanding as his painting practice. Standing in front of an upright copper plate on an easel, Freud would painstakingly create his etchings during extended sittings, focusing on the same obsessive attention to detail as in his paintings.

These etchings, created over 18 years between 1982 and 2000, represent the most productive period of Freud's graphic work and form the majority of this exhibition. Although Freud began experimenting with etching in the 1940s, it wasn't until the early 1980s that he fully embraced the medium. His



rediscovery of etching came when he was invited to create a special edition print for a monograph, sparking a renewed interest in the medium that would become a vital part of his artistic process. Freud's etchings, like his paintings, offer a raw, unsentimental view of his subjects. Many of his sitters were close to him, such as his studio assistant David Dawson or performance artist Leigh Bowery. Despite these personal connections,

Freud's portraits reveal little about the sitters' professions or personalities. Instead, they are intimate studies of the human form, stripped of any extraneous details.

Freud's etchings often depict his subjects with an unflinching realism, capturing the lines, wrinkles, and imperfections of their skin in meticulous detail. His linear constructions, combined with his use of cropping, create a heightened sense of tension and introspection in these works.

Another compelling aspect of Freud's work, which the exhibition highlights, is the autobiographical nature of his art. Freud's portraits were deeply personal, often depicting people from his close circle, such as friends, family members, or long-term acquaintances. His works were not just representations of others but also reflections of his own life and experiences. Freud himself admitted that his paintings

were records of his observations, making his portraits a form of self-exploration. His choice of subjects, the intensity with which he portrayed them, and the long hours he spent working with them all point to a highly personal connection between artist and sitter.

“These etchings, created over 18 years between 1982 and 2000, represent the most productive period of Freud’s graphic work”

The UBS Art Collection, which houses these remarkable works, is one of the world's most important corporate art collections, featuring

over 30,000 works by influential contemporary artists. The UBS Art Gallery, located in the lobby of the UBS Midtown New York Headquarters, offers the public a chance to engage with these works.

The current exhibition of Freud's work is part of the gallery's rotating program, which hosts several temporary exhibitions each year. Lucian Freud: Works from the UBS Art Collection is an extraordinary exhibition that not only showcases Freud's mastery of portraiture but also offers a deeper understanding of the artist's complex relationship with his subjects. Whether through the boldness of his etchings or the emotional depth of his paintings, Freud's work demands the viewer's attention and reflection. It is an opportunity to experience the raw power of one of the most influential artists of the last century, whose ability to capture the human form continues to resonate in the art world today.



Lucian Freud, Head of a Naked Girl, 1999.

Lucian Freud, Self Portrait: Reflection, 1996, Etching.





Pedro Ávila Gendis, *Insular Night*, 2019, Acrylic on canvas, 74 x 54" Private collection.

The value of an image: The 1000 words

Roxana M. Bermejo | Miami



During my time as a student in the Faculty of Arts and Letters of the University of Havana, I had a professor (one of those women that have all the knowledge of the world in their heads) that-- while explaining the expressionist movement to her students, added: "There are as many expressionism(s) as there are expressionist painters." It was, from the moment it was spoken, a phrase which I learned by heart; not just because it was vital to the exam, but because I believed it to be the truest thing I have heard during the course of my career. It was an axiom that I could not only apply to expressionism but a trend that, chronologically speaking, was ahead of abstraction (especially since,

more to the point, we could just talk about abstract expressionism). Nevertheless, it benefited me henceforth and thereafter, in describing every single artistic movement; each intimate detachment from the artistic creation.

I understood at that very moment that every creator is a world unto themselves, an idea which I bitterly suspected from the beginning. However, I was drowning in the face of the categorical convenience of the material, organized in great inclusive waves. That phrase first pushed me to begin to understand Art History as a methodology, such as the process of selecting; the election and discrimination that disguises itself behind every book, every class and museum.



Pedro Ávila Gendis, *Untitled*, 2006, Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 36", Rodríguez Collection

A little further along in my studies, I had the revelation--in part due to another of those powerful women who teach at the university--that this process of give-and-take (in which the methodology of this field was based) was largely supported by the principles of the Institutional Theory of Art. This was just one way of reading this mechanism, among many other possible approaches to interpretation (biography, formalism, positivism, iconology, iconography...). At the same time, the discovery of this theory has been the only thing capable of satisfying, in my mind, that crucial and inconclusive question: what is art?

Well, as advocated by the American philosopher George Dickie in his *Theory of Institutionalization*: "artistic works are those artifacts that have acquired a certain status within a particular institutional framework called the 'art world.'"

The latter concept had been taken from Arthur Danto's previous postulations and included everything related to the exhibition network of the piece: its creator, its audience and the judgements made concerning it.

In short, he meant that if a piece was showcased in a legitimate institution, such as a gallery or museum, signed by an author and presented to a viewer driven by the cultural world, the artistic nature of the work could never come into question. From that point on, artistic production could be judged as 'bad art' or 'good art,' but it would always remain within artistic parameters. You can imagine, in that instant, that Duchamp's *The Fountain* reached its full magnitude in my mind. Thus, I began to understand the complex significance of the art critic in the process of the validation, reassurance and guidance of artists because the voice of the critic



Pedro Ávila Gendis, Serie Paisajes sublimes, 2015, Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 60".

is arguably, the gateway to the art world. Consequently, an artist supported by professional opinion (especially if this opinion is supported by important names within the field...which is worth clarifying that the critic also undergoes the process of Institutionalization), will always be an artist to be considered and, most certainly, will be guaranteed a place in art history. Perhaps not everyone agrees on this point, perhaps there are many flaws in Dickie's theory. Nonetheless the truth is that, good or bad, the art world is sustained this way; maybe hiding behind the guise of the saying, 'millions of flies can't be wrong.'

In this case, the main objective of this book is the consolidation of all the critical insight developed around the figure of artist Pedro Ávila Gendis. The aforementioned information is an exercise focused on the formalization of this theoretical corpus, an infrastructure

that will allow us to verify the author's conclusion that Ávila Gendis is among one of the most prolific artists of the Cuban abstract expressionist tradition and is, without a doubt, one of the voices that will transcend generations, as well as barriers.

Possessing a solid style, a personal trademark and a visual prominence that not only manifests itself in the two-dimensional space of the painting, but achieves three-dimensionality. With equal luck, energy and gravitas, the work of Pedro Ávila deserves to be examined from the perspective of the critic, so that it can be verified that although "a picture is worth a thousand words"...behind Pedro's work lies texts that validate the image. The approach is simple: both processes, creation and criticism depend and feed off of each other; they are conditioned by their interaction. In view of this,

this bibliographic proposal includes the critiques of renowned names from both the Cuban national and international scene. This will help to demonstrate that the artists' work has reached--and can further achieve, different levels of comprehension and feasibility which are complemented by the environment and the interpreter who faces them.

Ultimately underlying this intention is the interest in placing the oeuvre of Ávila Gendis--which spans more than three decades of work--not just in a gallery or museum environment, but within the academic world. One of the goals of this study is to bridge the academic sphere in order to secure a dialogue between the new--and not so new, generations of art historians in charge of preserving (as already mentioned) with their curatorial practice and criteria, the

work of great artists; guaranteeing them a place on Parnassus.

At this point, the book we are launching today promises to function as a catalogue of the artists' production but also as a methodological tool to verify it. Consider this a detailed investigation whose innovation lies in the fact that it is not oriented around the work itself, but rather the importance of Pedro Ávila Gendis's work in the larger institution of art.



Pedro Ávila Gendis, Untitled, 2018, Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48". Private collection





Pedro Ávila Gendis, Untitled, 2019, Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 60". Private collection



Alexey Morosov: Exodus at Santa Maria della Spina

Art-Sólido | Pisa



The art exhibition “Exodus” by Alexey Morosov, hosted at the Santa Maria della Spina in Pisa, Italy, presents a profound dialogue between classical and contemporary art. This exhibition, part of a larger series installed throughout the city, is a testament to Morosov’s unique ability to intertwine historical narratives with post-modern aesthetics. Curated by Gian Guido Grassi and organized by the Municipality of Pisa in collaboration with Palazzo Blu and the Start Attitude association, “Exodus” serves as the third installment in a trilogy that seeks to explore the cultural and historical matrices of European identity.

Alexey Morosov, an artist originally from Kyrgyzstan and now based in Lucca, Italy, draws deeply from Hellenistic culture and humanism. His work is characterized by an exploration of myth, history, and the human condition through the lens of post-modernity. “Exodus” reflects Morosov’s philosophical

approach to time and history, which he views as fluid, overlapping, and interconnected. This conceptual framework is evident in his use of classical forms and materials, such as bronze, juxtaposed with modern themes like cyberpunk and post-apocalyptic scenarios.

The exhibition’s title, “Exodus,” evokes themes of migration, displacement, and the search for identity—topics that resonate deeply in the current global context. Through his sculptures, Morosov not only revisits ancient myths but also reinterprets them in a manner that speaks to contemporary concerns. The fusion of classical iconography with modern technological and social anxieties creates a narrative that is both timeless and timely.

The choice of the Santa Maria della Spina as a primary venue for “Exodus” is significant. This Gothic church, built in 1230 to house a relic of Christ’s crown of



thorns, is a symbol of Pisa's rich historical and religious heritage. The setting amplifies the thematic depth of Morosov's work, creating a dialogue between the sacred and the secular, the ancient and the modern. The exhibition also extends to other iconic locations in Pisa, including the Piazza dei Miracoli, the Fortilizio with the Torre Guelfa, and the exterior of Palazzo Blu, further embedding the artwork within the city's historical narrative.

The sculptures are strategically placed to create a path through Pisa that mirrors a journey through time. Starting at the Piazza dei Miracoli, a site steeped in medieval history, and ending at the Fortilizio with the Torre Guelfa, a symbol of Pisa's military past, the exhibition invites viewers to engage with the city itself as a living museum. Each location not only enhances the impact of the sculptures but also reinforces the exhibition's exploration of history, memory, and identity.

Morosov's work is distinguished by his mastery of both traditional and contemporary artistic techniques. A graduate of the Surikov Art Institute and a former student of the Moscow State Academy, Morosov has honed his skills in sculpture, painting, and drawing, often blending these disciplines to create multifaceted works. His sculptures in "Exodus" are monumental, evoking the grandeur of Soviet Realism while incorporating symbols and motifs from Mediterranean and cyberpunk cultures. This synthesis of styles reflects Morosov's belief in the interconnectedness of different historical epochs and cultural traditions.

One of the central themes of "Exodus" is the idea of form as an ontological concept. Morosov's sculptures are not merely representations of physical objects but are imbued with philosophical meaning. For example, his use of bronze, a material traditionally



associated with durability and permanence, contrasts with the transient and mutable nature of the post-industrial world he depicts. This tension between permanence and impermanence, between the ancient and the modern, is a recurring motif in Morosov's work.

"Exodus" has been met with critical acclaim for its ambitious scope and intellectual rigor. Filippo Bedini, Pisa's councilor for culture, praised Morosov for his ability to blend classicism with contemporary sensibilities, highlighting the exhibition's relevance to current cultural and social debates. The exhibition has also been noted for its innovative use of public space, transforming the city of Pisa into an open-air gallery that invites both residents and visitors to reflect on the intersections of history, art, and society.

Massimiliano Angori, president of the Province of Pisa, remarked on the power of Morosov's sculptures

to "shout and reproach," underscoring the exhibition's emotional and political resonance. In a world still grappling with the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing geopolitical conflicts, "Exodus" serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring human desire for peace, stability, and identity.

"Exodus" by Alexey Morosov is a landmark exhibition that challenges viewers to reconsider their relationship with history, art, and culture. Through his masterful use of form, material, and narrative, Morosov creates a body of work that is both deeply rooted in the past and strikingly relevant to the present. The exhibition not only affirms Morosov's place as one of the leading contemporary artists but also contributes to the ongoing dialogue about the role of art in understanding and shaping our world.







The Rodríguez Collection: A Pillar of Community Engagement and Patronage in Miami's Art Scene

Art-Sólido | Miami



Over the past two decades, Miami has experienced a vibrant transformation in its cultural landscape, driven in large part by the growing presence of private art collections that are not only for the enjoyment of the owners, but are shared with the public. Among these collectors, the Rodríguez Collection has emerged as a significant force, contributing to the city's reputation as a hub for contemporary art. Founded and curated by Leonardo Rodríguez, the collection has become a cornerstone for the community, fostering artistic dialogue, supporting the careers of emerging artists, and offering a rich, multicultural perspective that reflects Miami's diverse cultural fabric.

*A Visionary Collector
and a Commitment to
the Arts*

Leonardo Rodríguez, a Cuban-born collector with a passion for modern and contemporary Cuban art, began his collection over thirty years ago. His journey into the art world began in Havana, where he started buying and selling art in the late 1990s, cultivating relationships with artists and curators that would continue to shape his work as a collector. When Rodríguez moved to Miami, he expanded his collection to include artists from across the Americas, thus

embracing the multicultural essence of his new home. His collection, which spans several hundred pieces, reflects not just a personal passion, but a deep commitment to preserving and promoting the rich artistic traditions of Cuba, as well as exploring the broader spectrum of contemporary art from the Americas.

Rodríguez's approach to collecting is unique in its depth and intentionality. Rather than acquiring art on impulse, he carefully studies each piece and its context, striving to establish a personal connection with the work. This thoughtful engagement allows him to truly "live with" the art, and his collection has become a space for both reflection and dialogue. As Rodríguez has said, "When I buy a piece, I always investigate; I find out about its meaning and the context in which it was created. I have to establish a dialogue with the piece in order to live with it." This personal approach has allowed the Rodríguez Collection to evolve into a dynamic and ever-growing testament to his vision and the artists he supports.

Bringing Art to the Community

In 2016, Rodríguez made a groundbreaking decision that would elevate his collection's role in Miami's cultural landscape: he opened his collection to the public by creating Kendall Art Center. Situated in Kendall, an area not traditionally associated with the city's artistic activity, the

Rodríguez Collection sought to fill a void and bring art to a new audience. By choosing Kendall as the location for his exhibition space, Rodríguez challenged the conventional centers of Miami's art scene, which were mainly focused in neighborhoods like Wynwood, Little Havana, and Coral Gables. This decision reflected his belief that art should be accessible to all, regardless of geographic location, and that cultural offerings should reach beyond the well-established boundaries of the city.

The Rodríguez Collection has become a vital part of Miami's art community, offering free exhibitions and activities to the public. These exhibitions, often accompanied by lectures, talks, and specialized curatorial programs, aim to inspire, educate, and promote a deeper understanding of contemporary art. By collaborating with renowned curators and critics, the Rodríguez Collection ensures that its exhibitions are not only high-quality but also intellectually stimulating, creating opportunities for both art enthusiasts and newcomers to engage with the works on a deeper level.

Moreover, the collection is a platform for emerging artists, with many of its exhibitions focusing on cutting-edge works from contemporary creators. Through its acquisition program, the Rodríguez Collection continues to enrich its offerings with new pieces that reflect the global reach of contemporary art, while staying rooted in the diverse cultural influences that characterize Miami. As the collection has grown, it

has become an important source of support for artists, helping to launch careers and give visibility to works that may otherwise have gone unnoticed.

Expanding Beyond the Fine Arts

Art collector Leonardo Rodríguez has embarked on an exciting new chapter in his lifelong passion for art with the creation of the Museum of Contemporary Art of the Americas (MOCAA). Building on the success of the Kendall Art Center, his artistic vision has flourished, revealing his dedication and expertise as a passionate collector. The MOCAA has evolved into an institution that not only champions Cuban art but also serves as a bridge connecting diverse artistic expressions from across the Americas.

One of the key features of the Rodríguez Collection is its openness to different forms of artistic expression. While the collection initially focused on “fine art”, it has since expanded to include photography, video art, installation, performance and ceramics. In ceramics specifically, it has gone further by creating a separate workshop and collection specifically for this art form, which Rodríguez is passionate about and has been exposed since his childhood. This diversification has brought new vitality to the collection and attracted a wider audience.

Leonardo Rodríguez’s commitment to contemporary art goes

beyond mere acquisition; he aims to foster an environment where artists can take creative risks and push the boundaries of traditional mediums. The inclusion of diverse art forms such as video installations and performance art reflects his belief that art should evolve with the times and be responsive to contemporary issues. Through these exhibitions, the Rodríguez Collection has become a living stage for both established and emerging artists, offering a platform where creativity is not confined by conventional limits.

A Lasting Impact on Miami and Beyond

Through its exhibitions, acquisitions, and outreach efforts, the Rodríguez Collection has had a lasting impact on Miami’s cultural scene, not only enriching the local art community but also garnering attention from prestigious institutions beyond the city. The collection has been included in major museum exhibitions and academic programs, and it has donated works to institutions such as the Smithsonian Institution. These donations help ensure that the legacy of Cuban and Miami-based artists will be preserved for future generations, while also raising the profile of Miami as an important player in the global art world.

Rodríguez’s involvement in the arts also exemplifies the continued relevance of art patronage, which plays a crucial role in supporting artists and preserving cultural

heritage. Collecting art is not just about personal enjoyment; it is about contributing to the broader cultural dialogue, creating a legacy for future generations, and ensuring that the work of today's artists is seen, understood, and appreciated. By supporting artists and offering a public platform for their work, the Rodríguez Collection is doing just that, helping to shape the future of Miami's art scene.

The Rodríguez Collection represents more than just a private gathering of artworks—it is a living, breathing testament to the power of art to transform communities and inspire dialogue. Through its commitment to supporting contemporary artists, expanding the public's access to art, and fostering a diverse and inclusive cultural environment, the Rodríguez Collection has become an invaluable part of Miami's artistic landscape. Leonardo Rodríguez's personal connection to the works in his collection, along with his dedication to fostering a greater understanding of art, ensures that the collection will continue to thrive as a space for exploration, reflection, and cultural exchange for years to come. In this way, the Rodríguez Collection stands as both a patron of the arts and a catalyst for the future of contemporary art in Miami.





Art Sólido is an academic magazine with a strong emphasis on the efficacy of art and literature in our contemporary world. A collection of voices and perspectives from scholars, writers, and artists, Art Sólido is both a celebration of art and the artistic community, and how that community operates as agents of social change that aim to transform our perceptions of the world.

Founded in 2010, Art-Sólido work with artists, galleries, museums and collections offering a range of service in the artwork.

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ART-SÓLIDO