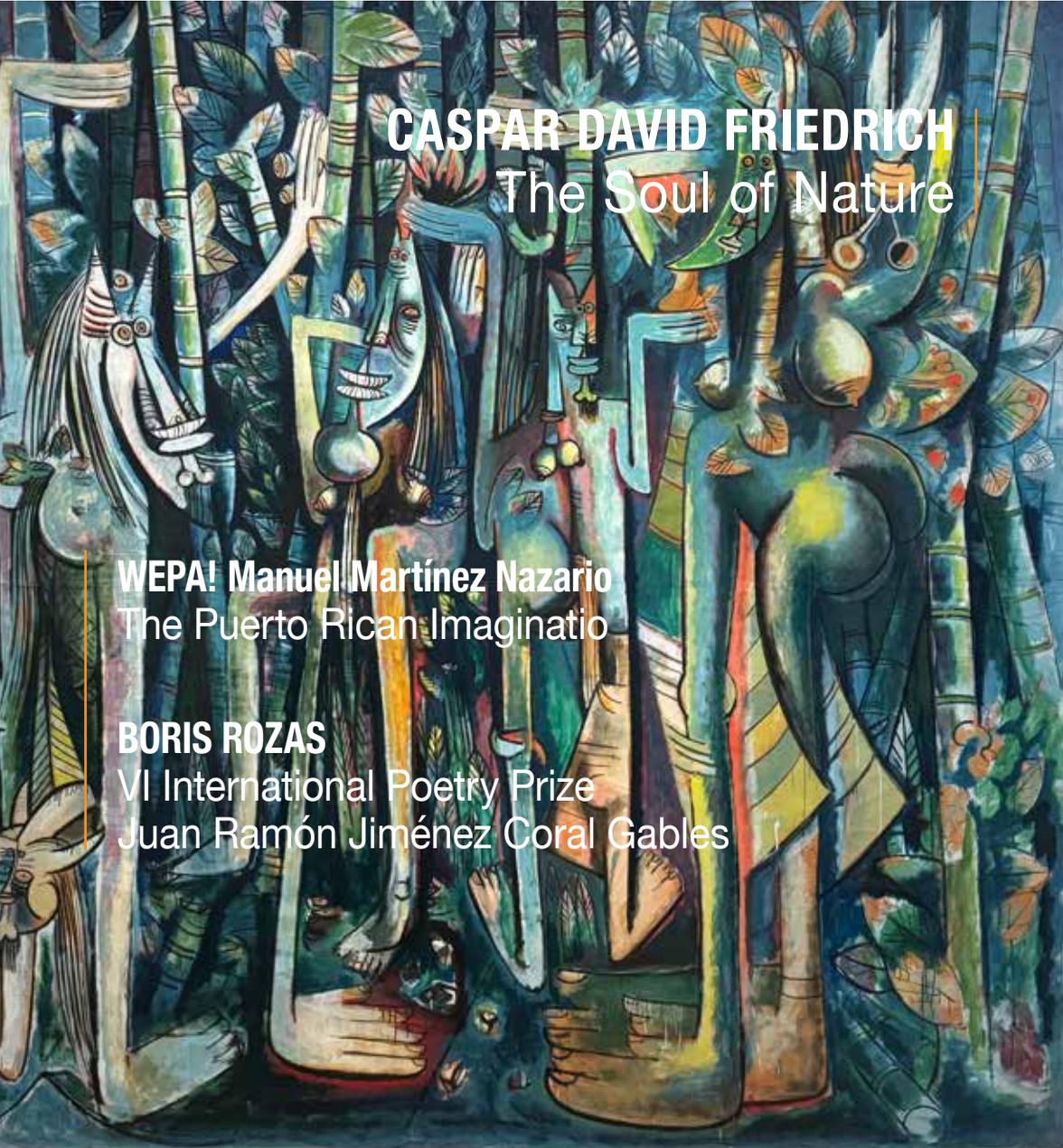


No.1 | 2025

# ART-SÓLIDO

ACADEMIC MAGAZINE OF LITERATURE AND ART



## CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH The Soul of Nature

**WEPA! Manuel Martínez Nazario**  
The Puerto Rican Imaginatio

**BORIS ROZAS**  
VI International Poetry Prize  
Juan Ramón Jiménez Coral Gables

**WIFREDO LAM: Dreamed with Eyes Wide Open** |





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# The New



# Yorker

## Collected, Preserved, and Celebrated at NYPL

### Art-Sólido | New York



So here we are, stepping through the grand doors of the New York Public Library, where ghosts of words past drift in the air like the last traces of frost clinging to the benches in Bryant Park. And what do we find? A celebration, an excavation, a wry, knowing nod to a magazine that, for a century now, has been the city's most observant flâneur, its most critical darling, its funniest and most fastidious friend.

“A Century of The New Yorker” is an exhibition that unfurls like a well-thumbed issue—artfully composed, revealing in its juxtapositions, filled with wit, insight, and just enough ennui to make it feel perfectly at home in the stacks. The New Yorker has never been just a magazine. It’s a voice, a sensibility, a winking presence in the room.

One can almost see Harold Ross hovering in the wings—shaggy, exasperated, demanding an even more ruthless edit. Back in 1925, he and Jane Grant set out to create something unlike the other periodicals of their day, something urbane but never crass, sophisticated but not soulless, something that captured, as Ross put it, “metropolitan life.” What a thing to attempt. What a thing to actually pull off.

Since then, The New Yorker has been a city unto itself, populated by the sharpest minds, the driest wits, the most exacting critics, the most evocative storytellers. Over the years, its pages have housed James Baldwin’s thunder, Dorothy Parker’s bite, E.B. White’s luminous clarity. The exhibition, much like the magazine, doesn’t just dwell on the legends





but traces the invisible architecture of its making—the editors scribbling in margins, the typists hammering out letters, the fact-checkers meticulously untangling exaggerations from truth.

And oh, the covers. Those miniature windows into a parallel world—Peter Arno’s smug, cocktail-clinking elites; Saul Steinberg’s playful distortions of space and time; Roz Chast’s neurotic, New Yorky brilliance. It all started with Rea Irvin’s Eustace Tilley, monocled and bemused, peering at a butterfly as if appraising the very essence of fleeting elegance. From then on, each week has brought a new visual haiku, an image that distills the moment, or sidesteps it entirely, because *The New Yorker* is nothing if not a little aloof, a little ahead of the game.

The exhibition reminds us that for all its highbrow elegance, *The New Yorker* is a magazine of contradictions: it is at once deadly serious and riotously funny, meticulously reported and wildly imaginative. It has shaped our understanding of the wars we fight, the injustices we endure, the culture we consume. Its cartoons alone—those masterclasses in brevity and wit—are enough to justify its place in the pantheon.

And yet, as the years have passed, *The New Yorker* has done the one thing you least expect from a century-old institution: it has adapted. It has folded itself into the digital age without losing its paper-and-ink soul. Its archives are now at our fingertips, a bottomless trove of voices and visions,

meticulously preserved and endlessly reinterpreted.

In the end, this exhibition is more than a retrospective; it is a love letter to the peculiar alchemy of language, humor, and observation that turns mere reportage into art. As you wander through, pausing before the crisp typography of a vintage cover or the penciled scribbles of an editor’s note, you feel the pulse of something both timeless and timely. A century on, *The New Yorker* remains what it has always been: a mirror, a magnifying glass, a raised eyebrow, a perfectly timed punchline.

So take a moment. Stand still in the hush of the library and let it all wash over you. The voices, the wit, the meticulous brilliance of it all. Because if there’s one thing *The New Yorker* has taught us, it’s that paying attention—really, truly paying attention—is its own kind of art.

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*This exhibition is organized by The New York Public Library and curated by Julie Golia, Associate Director, Rayner Wing, and the Charles J. Liebman Senior Curator of Manuscripts, and Julie Carlsen, Assistant Curator, Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature.*





A. JUAN R. JIMÉNEZ

J. SORULLI B.

VI

Juan Ramón Jiménez  
International Poetry Prize  
Coral Gables

2025



BORIS ROZAS

*Wes Borland  
aprende a tocar de oído*



VI

PREMIO INTERNACIONAL DE POESÍA  
JUAN RAMÓN JIMÉNEZ  
Coral Gables

# Boris Rozas

## VI Juan Ramón Jiménez International Poetry Prize Coral Gables 2025

Art-Sólido | **Coral Gables**



Poet Boris Rozas has been awarded the 6th Juan Ramón Jiménez International Poetry Prize of Coral Gables 2025, one of the most respected poetry awards in the Spanish-speaking world. After a rigorous deliberation process, the jury unanimously selected his book *Wes Borland aprende a tocar de oído*, a work distinguished by its lyrical intensity, structural coherence, and singular ability to weave music, memory, and lived experience into poetry.

Organized by the Juan Ramón Jiménez Foundation of Coral Gables and Art-Sólido Publishing, the prize is awarded annually in conjunction with the anniversary of the birth of Spanish poet Juan Ramón Jiménez. Coral Gables holds particular significance in his legacy, as it was here that he wrote some of his most emblematic works, including

*Romances of Coral Gables*. This sixth edition of the prize received more than 500 poetry manuscripts from over 40 countries, reaffirming its growing international reach.

### ***A Book Meant to Be Heard***

*Wes Borland aprende a tocar de oído* is a work of genuinely classical spirit, written from a place of intimacy and restraint. Its poems unfold with a measured cadence, where silence and darkness serve as essential companions to the word. The language is precise and economical, attentive to the fleeting nature of life and to the fragile power of the image that endures.

During the jury's deliberations, held at Yale University, Henry Ballate, President of the Juan Ramón Jiménez Foundation and Art Director of Art-Sólido, emphasized the book's distinctive

character: “*There are books that are not read, but listened to. This is one of them. Wes Borland Learns to Play by Ear does not move forward like a narrative, but like a record of confessions, where each poem functions as a separate track within the same album of resonances. To learn by ear is to learn without method, without a score, guided solely by intuition and tremor.*”

The collection is structured as a suite in three movements—*Detrás de nosotros todo está gris, Paralaje y Auge y amparo de las bestias*—each representing a stage in a shared sensory education: awakening and loss, a shift in perspective, and finally a return to the body and the elemental. Throughout the book, the poetic voice converses with a constellation of literary and musical presences—not as citations, but as living frequencies—among them Ingeborg Bachmann, Wallace Stevens, Alejandra Pizarnik, Janis Joplin, and Adonis.

### ***A Distinguished Career***

Boris Rozas, a Valladolid native of Buenos Aires, is the author of nineteen poetry collections. Among his most notable titles are *Ragtime* (2012), *Invertebrados* (2014), *Las mujeres que paseaban perros imaginarios* (2017), *Annie Hall ya no vive aquí* (2018), *Lugares a los que volver con el buen tiempo* (Valparaíso, 2022), and *Rave* (Olifante, 2024). His work has earned numerous national and international awards, including the León Felipe de Tábara Prize, the Francisco de Aldana Prize, the Gonzalo Rojas Prize, the

Luis Chamizo Prize, the Umbral Prize, and the America Best Books Awards 2025, among many others.

Rozas’s poetry is marked by a powerful everyday realism, written in a sober yet accessible style that deliberately forgoes traditional meter and rhyme in favor of direct emotional connection. Over more than two decades, his work has explored the human condition, nostalgia, urban solitude, and the complexities of personal relationships, developing a voice that is empathetic, unadorned, and quietly profound.

### ***A Prize in Expansion***

Juan Ramón Jiménez Foundation and Art-Sólido Publishing expressed their deep satisfaction with the outcome of this sixth edition of the prize and highlighted the exceptional quality of the finalist manuscripts. The finalists were Julián Bejarano, María del Mar Busquets, Rainer Castellá, Iván Hernández Montero, Jeremías Marquines, Ramón Martínez López, Rosangela Messias, Ángel Poli, and Mónica Velasco.

The organizing committee extends its sincere gratitude to all participating poets, to the members of the jury, and to Yale University, the Consulate General of Spain, and the City of Coral Gables for their continued support of this initiative, which has become an important international meeting point for contemporary poetry and a living tribute to the legacy of Juan Ramón Jiménez.

*The following excerpt from **Wes Borland aprende a tocar de oído** invites the reader to listen rather than to read, to enter the book through rhythm, image, and silence. Presented here in English translation, the poem offers a first approach to the tonal landscape of the work that earned **Boris Rozas** the **VI Juan Ramón Jiménez International Poetry Prize of Coral Gables**.*

I have imagined the eyelids that dress the days longer  
over empty bowls that distill roads  
to nowhere,  
nameless states through which life passes,  
just risen,  
without even combing the monsters that reign on the  
shore.  
Morning is a cave that looks sideways  
while it tears out by the root  
the petals of another calendar,  
while it brushes the cheek of the child  
who runs to hide from the wind,  
the wind that is us,  
embarked in the night,  
the night that condemns the one who serves it  
without wrapping himself in another body.  
Everything—animals in a herd  
tearing up midday shoots,  
collapsing on broken sidewalks  
that release songs from the corners.  
Love ballads for little more than Eskimos,  
wandering poets  
who rummage among so many knives in the back.  
As if it were an ambush,  
another categorical yes to the one who waits,  
and I give him another life  
as an advantage.

# Norman

Illustrators of Light:  
Rockwell, Wyeth, Parrish  
and the Edison Mazda Collection



Norman Rockwell  
The Artist at Work  
1943

# Rockwell

## Is at Home for Christmas

Henry Ballate | **Massachusetts**

*“The commonplaces of America are to me  
the richest subjects in art.”*

Norman Rockwell



Visiting the Norman Rockwell Museum is not simply a museum experience. It is a threshold, a return, a kind of quiet homecoming. The moment I stepped into “Norman Rockwell: Home for the Holidays,” I felt the familiar warmth of Rockwell’s world, that mixture of humor, tenderness, and careful observation that has shaped the visual imagination of generations.

But for me, the visit was also deeply personal. It carried me back to my years as an art student, those long days of illustration and design classes when my professors insisted on looking beyond the surface, into the gesture, the glimmer in a character’s eye, the tiny detail that sustains a whole narrative. It carried me back to Manhattan, to my own neighborhood on Broadway and 103rd Street, where Rockwell once lived. He has always felt like a quiet

companion on my daily path, not physically present anymore, but still there in the streets that hold his name.

The curators of Home for the Holidays center the exhibition on a truth that defined Rockwell’s practice: he understood ritual. He understood that holidays are more than dates. They are stories, small domestic theaters in which families rehearse belonging, humor, chaos, and tenderness.

The exhibition draws from decades of his work for The Saturday Evening Post, which trusted him with the most cherished covers of the year, Christmas, Thanksgiving, and New Year’s. Even before that, at fifteen, Rockwell was already designing Christmas cards for a parishioner at his family’s church. Later, Hallmark would immortalize his midcentury images as part of the nation’s holiday vocabulary.



Seen together here, the paintings regain their original power:

snowy New England evenings, returning veterans embraced on the doorstep, intergenerational families crowded around a table, children plotting winter adventures. Rockwell's humor is gentle and

never naïve. His technique is exact. His empathy is unmistakable.

He often said, "the story concept was the first and the last thing," and this exhibition proves it. Each painting is a crystallized narrative, a quiet drama illuminated by his unsentimental yet deeply humane



eye. His holiday scenes are not idealized fantasies. They are aspirational mirrors, reflections of what Americans hoped, or still hope, to see in themselves.

Another show on view, “Illustrators of Light: Rockwell, Wyeth, and Parrish from the Edison Mazda Collection,” added an unexpected brilliance to my visit.

These early twentieth century advertisements, created for Edison Mazda Lamps, a division of General Electric, bring together some of the greatest illustrators of the Golden Age: Maxfield Parrish, N.C. Wyeth, Dean Cornwell, Stanley Arthurs, Worth Brehm, Charles Chambers, and a young Norman Rockwell.



Commissioned to promote the new tungsten filament bulbs, the images are luminous, exquisitely painted, and steeped in the optimism of modern electric light. Rockwell collaborated with advertising legend Bruce Barton of BBDO, whose poetic copy merged seamlessly with the evocative imagery produced by these artists. The campaign, designed to celebrate the “miracle” of electric illumination, became a visual hymn

to progress and a resounding commercial success.

To see these works reunited, many on loan for the first time thanks to GE Aerospace, is to witness another chapter of American visual culture. It is the moment when light itself became modern.

Walking out of the museum felt like leaving an old conversation, one that had been waiting patiently for me to return. Rockwell reminded me of something we often forget in today’s art world: that technique can be a gesture of love, that sincerity is not weakness, and that a simple family ritual can be a work of art.

He reminded me of my own Christmases, the old magazine covers,

and the roots of my first artistic training. And he reminded me that every time I walk through my neighborhood, past Broadway and 103rd, I am walking with a neighbor who, even in absence, still illuminates my path.

*Norman Rockwell  
is at home for Christmas.  
And in a way,  
so am I.*

# Women



Mary Beale, An Unknown Woman (c. 1675)

# Artists

## Underrepresentation at YCBA and Historical Context

Anna Levin | **New Haven**



Mary Beale, *An Unknown Woman* (c. 1675) – one of the relatively few works by a female artist on display in *In a New Light: Five Centuries of British Art*. Mary Beale was a rare successful woman painter in 17th-century Britain, and her portrait of an unknown woman (a recent YCBA acquisition) is prominently featured in the new installation. The *In a New Light* exhibition is a comprehensive rehang of the Yale Center for British Art’s permanent collection, spanning 500 years with 374 works from the early 1500s to today. Yet, despite this breadth, only a handful of the artists represented are women. Curators openly acknowledge this imbalance – “we all know that there were so few women artists through history,” notes YCBA curator Lucinda Lax when discussing Beale’s exceptional career. Indeed, in *In a New Light* the inclusion of women artists is

notable precisely because it is uncommon: alongside Beale, viewers encounter works by 18th-century pioneer Angelica Kauffman, 19th–20th century painter Gwen John, and contemporary figures like Cecily Brown and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, among only a small number of female artists highlighted.

This underrepresentation in the exhibit mirrors the makeup of the YCBA’s overall holdings. The YCBA (which holds the largest collection of British art outside the UK) has around 2,000 paintings and hundreds of sculptures and prints, but historically very few of these works have been by women. This reflects a broader pattern in art museums. A large 2019 study found that just 12% of artists in major U.S. museum collections were women. UK institutions have fared similarly: as of 2014 only 15% of artists in Tate’s collection were female, and



Sir Joshua Reynolds, Frances Abington, 1771

shockingly women artists make up just 1% of the National Gallery in London's collection. The Yale Center for British Art's collection, built initially on Paul Mellon's British art donations (largely canonical male artists like Constable, Turner, Reynolds, etc.), has likewise been overwhelmingly male. It is only in recent years that the YCBA has begun actively acquiring and spotlighting works by women to begin to correct this imbalance. The proportion of female artists in the YCBA's permanent collection remains very low – likely well under 10% – in line with the historical demographics of British art. In short, both the New Light exhibition and the overall collection statistics underscore the legacy of women artists being a marginal presence.

### **Historical Barriers and Gender Disparity**

The scarcity of women artists in British art museums is not a

coincidence of taste, but the result of historical and structural barriers that long excluded women from professional art training, patronage, and recognition. Art institutions in Britain (as elsewhere in Europe) developed within a patriarchal social order that constrained women's roles. For centuries, formal artistic education and academies were essentially off-limits to women. The Royal Academy of Arts in London – Britain's premier art institution founded in 1768 – did include two women (Angelica Kauffman and Mary Moser) among its 36 founding members, but this token inclusion only highlights the broader exclusion. A famous 1771 group portrait of the Academy by Johan Zoffany pointedly depicts Kauffman and Moser not in person but as portraits on the wall, because women were barred from the live nude drawing sessions that were central to academic training. In fact, the RA did not admit women to its training schools until

the 1860s, and after Kauffman and Moser, no other woman was elected a full Academician until 1922. This meant generations of women were denied the rigorous study of anatomy and life drawing deemed essential for history painting – the most prestigious genre. As art historian Linda Nochlin famously argued in her 1971 essay “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”, it was institutional barriers like these – not any lack of talent – that kept women from excelling in the arts. Simply put, if an artist was not born male (and usually white and middle-class), she had little access to the formal systems of art education and mentorship that produced “great masters.”

Beyond the academy, gender norms and class constraints severely limited women’s opportunities to

develop artistic careers. In early modern Britain, painting and sculpture were professional trades dominated by male guilds and workshops. Respectable women of the gentry or aristocracy might learn sketching or watercolors as an accomplishment, but pursuing art as a full-time vocation was often deemed socially improper. Those women who did persist were often from artistic families or had unusual encouragement. For example, Mary Beale’s success in the 1600s owed much to her artist husband’s support and her network of progressive patrons. Similarly, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many women artists were daughters or wives of male artists (e.g. painter Elizabeth Thompson was the daughter of an art tutor, and sculptor Anne Damer was from an aristocratic milieu that tolerated

Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, Any Number of Preoccupations, 2010





Frederic Leighton, *The Sluggard*, ca. 1895, bronze

her craft). Even so, women were expected to focus on “feminine” subject matter – portraiture, domestic scenes, flowers – rather than grand historical or allegorical compositions. They also had fewer avenues to exhibit or sell work. The Royal Academy’s annual exhibitions did include women contributors (over 700 women exhibited some 3,600 works in RA shows between 1769–1830), but these works were a minority and often categorized as amateur accomplishments. Meanwhile, commercial galleries and patrons showed a strong bias for established male painters. Class played a role as well: professional art training or the leisure to pursue art generally required financial means. Working-class women had virtually no chance to become artists, and upper-class women faced the paradox that being a “professional” artist was not a fitting role for a lady. Thus, the pool of potential women artists was winnowed by both socioeconomic and gender prejudices.

Patronage systems and institutional collecting further reinforced the marginalization of women’s art. Major art patrons – from royal monarchs to wealthy collectors like Paul Mellon – tended to commission and buy works by men, largely because those men had the public reputations and academy credentials that women were denied. In British royal patronage history, we see that queens and princesses usually patronized male artists for their official portraits and court art. For instance, Queen Elizabeth I’s many iconic portraits were painted by men (Nicholas Hilliard, Marcus Gheeraerts, etc.),

and Queen Victoria similarly favored male painters (she knighted Sir Edwin Landseer and regularly commissioned male academicians). Museums and national collections then canonized what the market and patrons had elevated – which was overwhelmingly the work of men. By the 20th century, when museums like the National Gallery or Tate began amassing historic British art, they were drawing from an art history that had already largely written women out. As a result, the baseline representation of women in these collections was minuscule (only 1% of the National Gallery’s collection is by women). The Yale Center for British Art, founded in the 1970s on a core collection of British classics, inherited this same imbalance. Only in recent decades have museums started re-evaluating their holdings and consciously seeking out works by women artists to fill gaps. The YCBA’s recent exhibitions (such as *Art in Focus: Women From the Center* in 2021) and acquisitions (like paintings by Mary Beale, or contemporary works by Tracey Emin and others) are part of this corrective effort. But reversing centuries of neglect is a slow process, and the numbers remain starkly uneven.

### **The Paradox of Female Monarchs and Marginalized Women Artists**

It may seem ironic that Britain, a nation that produced some of history’s most powerful women rulers, did not translate those examples of female authority into a broader empowerment of women in the arts. England (and later Britain) had three long-reigning

queens – Elizabeth I (1558–1603), Victoria (1837–1901), and Elizabeth II (1952–2022) – whose combined rule spans some of the heights of British cultural history. Yet during their reigns, women artists remained on the margins. This paradox highlights how having a female head of state did not equate to dismantling patriarchal structures in society or its cultural institutions. Each of these queens was an exception in a male-dominated world, and rather than heralding a new era of gender equality, they often were seen as singular

anomalies that left prevailing gender norms unchanged.

Under Elizabeth I, for example, the notion of a woman ruler was so unprecedented that the queen cultivated an image of herself as essentially gender-transcendent (“I have the heart and stomach of a king,” she famously declared). Far from promoting women’s advancement generally, Elizabeth’s court still operated on strict gender hierarchies. Notably, one of the only recorded female painters of the Tudor period, Levina Teerlinck,

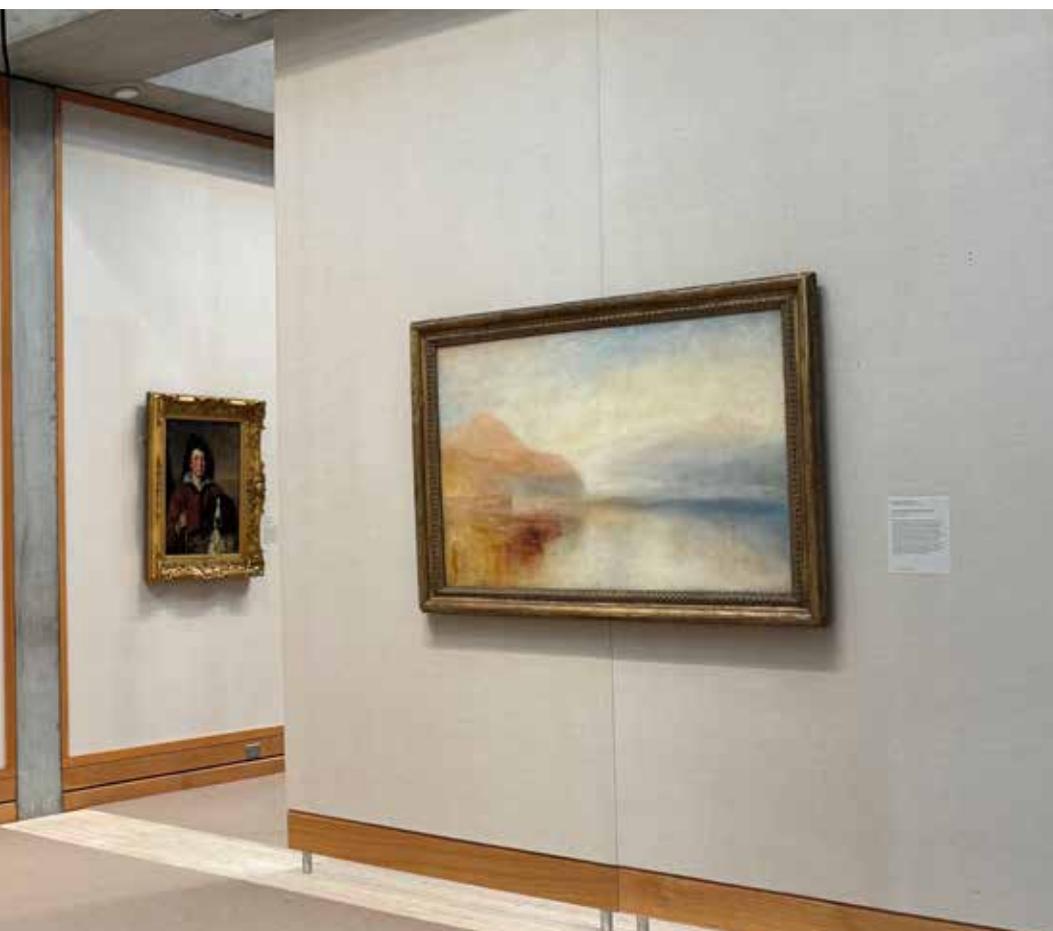
William Turner, *The Dort Packet-Boat from Rotterdam Becalmed*, 1818



did serve as a court miniaturist for Elizabeth (having earlier worked for Elizabeth's half-sister Mary I). Teerlinc's presence was a rarity – she was Flemish-born and likely hired due to her extraordinary skill – and she left no broader legacy of female artists in England. The artistic glories of Elizabeth's reign (the "Elizabethan Golden Age") were in literature, music, and portrait painting, all domains dominated by men. Elizabeth herself, as a patron, commissioned portraits from distinguished male artists and did not use her power to institute

any formal support for women in the arts. The status of women in Elizabethan society remained circumscribed by law and custom – women could not join guilds or attend the few art academies that existed on the continent, and they were largely excluded from the professional artistic networks of the time. In short, Elizabeth I's reign, while symbolically placing a woman at the apex of power, did not materially change the fact that art and learning were "for men" in the 16th century.

William Turner, Inverary Pier, Loch Fyne: Morning, 1845





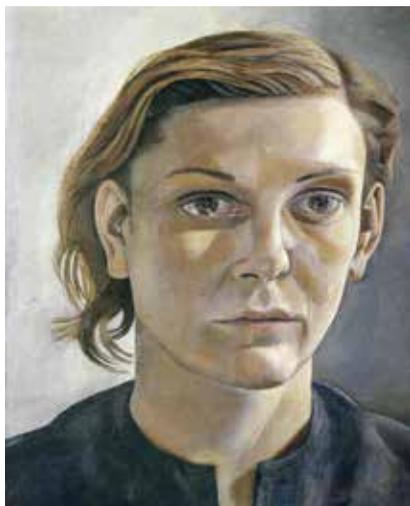
Francis Bacon, Study of a Head, 1952

Moving forward to the Victorian era, the disjunct becomes even more pointed. Queen Victoria presided over an age of industrial progress and cultural flourishing – yet Victorian social norms idealized women as wives and mothers, not as public creators. In fact, the term “Victorian” is often synonymous with conservative gender roles: the ideal of the “angel in the house” who is virtuous, domestic, and devoted to family. Victoria herself embodied traditional femininity in many ways (she celebrated domestic life and was a prolific mother of nine), and she was not an advocate for women’s rights – she opposed women’s suffrage as “a wicked folly,” reflecting how even a queen could reinforce patriarchal attitudes. In the art world, Victorian Britain saw burgeoning art institutions (museums, academies, professional societies), but women struggled to gain a foothold within them. The Royal Academy School finally admitted women students in 1860, during Victoria’s reign, yet those

women had to sketch from plaster casts rather than nude models and were effectively segregated within the program. No woman gained full membership in the Academy during Victoria’s lifetime. Some women artists did achieve a measure of fame in this period – for instance, Elizabeth Thompson (Lady Butler) earned acclaim in 1874 for her military painting *The Roll Call*, which Queen Victoria herself admired. But even this celebrated female painter was narrowly defeated when up for election to the Royal Academy, losing by just two votes in 1879 (and it would be another half-century before a woman, Dame Laura Knight, became a full RA member in 1936).



The Victorian art scene remained a male preserve: the leading Pre-Raphaelite and Academic painters were men, major public commissions (like history murals or royal portraits) went to men, and women were generally confined to lesser genres or informal art circles. Class restrictions compounded this – upper-class women could dabble in art but not pursue it as a serious profession without social censure, while working-class women had little access to artistic training at all. Thus, despite a reigning queen who was the nominal patron of the Royal Academy and other institutions, the Victorian system of art education and patronage largely excluded women. The long female reign did not translate into female



Lucian Freud, *Girl in a Dark Dress*, 1951

artists' visibility; instead, the era entrenched the notion that serious art was a man's realm, even as women made incremental gains in access.

In the modern era of Elizabeth II, one might expect more progress – and indeed, by the late 20th century, many legal and educational barriers for women had lifted. Women could attend art school (by the 1950s and 60s, they were present in large numbers at the Slade, Royal College of Art, etc.), and the feminist movement of the 1970s onward actively challenged museums and galleries to represent women artists. However, even during Elizabeth II's 70-year reign, change was slow in coming to institutions. The monarch's role by this time was largely ceremonial; Queen Elizabeth II served as patron of the Royal Academy and other arts organizations, but these institutions only gradually diversified their collections and leadership. Well into the 21st century, the



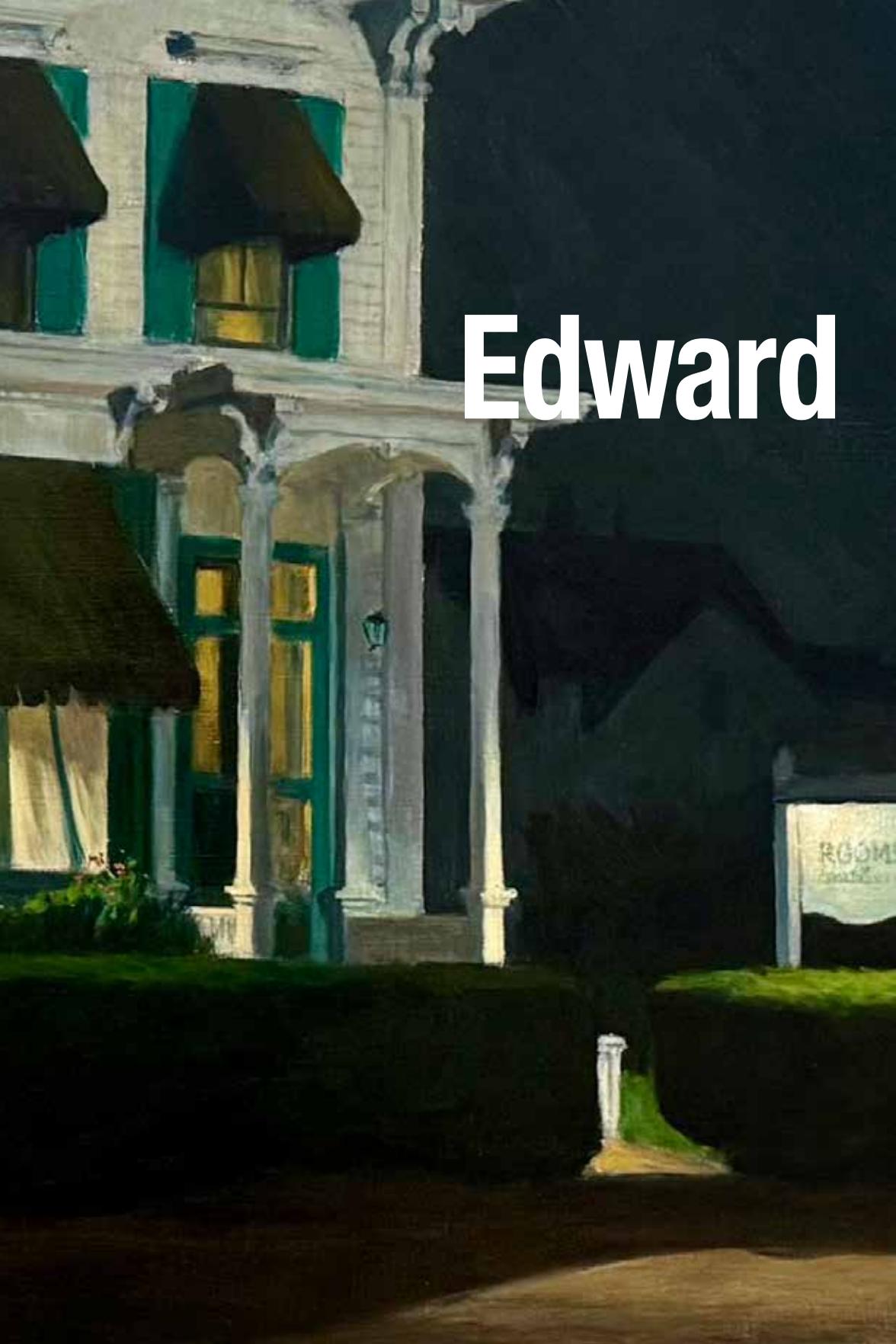
statistics remained bleak: as noted, the National Gallery in London only staged its first-ever solo exhibition by a historical female artist (Artemisia Gentileschi) in 2020. – near the end of Elizabeth II’s rule. And it took until 2023 for the National Gallery to acquire a painting by Artemisia for its collection. Similarly, the Tate galleries only in recent decades have begun to approach parity in their contemporary acquisitions, but their historic British art holdings remain dominated by men. In short, the presence of a woman on the throne from 1952–2022 did not automatically foster institutional gender equity in art museums. What it did coincide with – thanks to broader social change, not the monarch – was the rise of many prominent women artists in Britain (from sculptors like Barbara Hepworth and Elisabeth Frink to contemporary stars like Tracey Emin, Rachel Whiteread, Cornelia Parker, and Cecily Brown). These artists finally had opportunities that their predecessors lacked, but they still faced the legacy of bias in critical reception and collecting. Only in recent years have museums begun actively rebalancing the narrative, as seen in exhibitions like “Now You See Us” at Tate Britain in 2023 which spotlighted women artists long overlooked. As historian Katy Hessel noted, the surrounding structures of the art world – from gallery representation to museum boards – continue to reflect male-dominated biases, even if overt barriers have fallen.

The underrepresentation of women artists at the Yale Center for British Art – whether in the new Five Centuries exhibition or the

wider collection – is a microcosm of a longstanding gender disparity in art. Women artists are present, but vastly outnumbered, constituting only a small fraction of the artists on view. This imbalance stems from deep-rooted historical factors: for centuries, women in Britain (as elsewhere) were denied equal access to artistic training, professional networks, and patronage due to prevailing gender norms, class limitations, and institutional biases. The fact that Britain was governed at times by powerful women did little to trickle down to the art world’s structure – a female monarch could reign over a flourishing artistic culture in which nearly all the creators were men. Gendered expectations, restrictive academies, and patronage systems built by and for men ensured that women’s artistic contributions remained sidelined. It is only in recent generations that these structures have begun to be challenged. Today, museums like the YCBA are critically re-examining their collections, celebrating female artists in special exhibitions, and acquiring more works by women in an effort to rebalance the scales. These initiatives, coupled with scholarly research shedding light on forgotten women artists, are gradually illuminating the rich but long-neglected heritage of women’s art in Britain. The reigns of Elizabeth I, Victoria, and Elizabeth II remind us that individual women can make history, but systemic change requires sustained societal shifts. In the arts, those shifts are finally underway – casting new light on women artists, past and present, and ensuring their inclusion in Britain’s artistic narrative.



Sir Thomas Lawrence, Lord Granville Leveson-Gower, 1809

A photograph of a two-story house at night. The house has a white facade with teal shutters and a porch supported by white columns. A sign on the right side of the house reads "ROOM". The word "Edward" is overlaid in large white text on the right side of the image.

# Edward

# Hopper

at Yale University Art Gallery

Art-Sólido | **New Haven**



The Yale University Art Gallery, founded in 1832, is the oldest university art museum in the United States. Nestled at the heart of the New Haven campus, its galleries weave together centuries of global art: African sculpture, Italian painting, American decorative arts, modern and contemporary works. Designed partly by Louis Kahn, the museum has long served as both a public cultural anchor for New Haven and a living classroom for Yale students. Its mission feels clear the moment you enter; art here is not only preserved, it is lived with.

Among the museum's many strengths, the third-floor galleries of Modern and Contemporary Art

and Design offer one of the most quietly powerful encounters in the building: a focused selection of four paintings by Edward Hopper, displayed with a restraint that lets each canvas breathe. Seeing Hopper in this setting, without fanfare, without crowds, and within an academic environment, creates the ideal atmosphere for contemplating his signature themes of solitude, stillness, and suspended narrative.

## **Hopper at Yale: Four Windows into Silence**

The paintings on view form a compact yet remarkably complete constellation of Hopper's concerns. They speak to one another across the gallery, each carrying a different shade of quiet.



Edward Hopper, Sunlight in a Cafeteria (1958)

### Sunlight in a Cafeteria (1958)

A man and a woman share a public space yet remain emotionally unreachable. The room is filled with bright, almost surgical light, Hopper's way of exposing the fissures

in human connection. The viewer senses the tension between presence and non-presence, between the possibility of contact and the resignation of silence. It is a painting about people together, yet alone.

Edward Hopper, Western Motel (1957)



### **Western Motel (1957)**

Here, the transient architecture of American travel becomes a stage for introspection. A woman sits in a sparsely furnished motel room, her suitcase packed, a car waiting outside. The composition is so stripped down that the emptiness becomes psychological: a moment of waiting, departure, or internal pause. The motel, a symbol of mobility, feels paradoxically still, even claustrophobic. Hopper captures the loneliness of spaces meant to be temporary.

### **Rooms by the Sea (1951)**

Perhaps the most enigmatic of the group, this image shows a door opening directly onto an expanse of blue ocean. Bright light pours across the bare floor, creating an atmosphere that is both serene and uncanny. Although inspired by Hopper's studio in Cape Cod,

the painting moves quickly beyond realism into metaphor. It becomes a meditation on threshold moments: between isolation and the world, interior and exterior, self and possibility.

### **Rooms for Tourists (1945)**

A nocturnal house in Provincetown glows from within. We see no figures, but we feel them. The contrast between the warm artificial light and the deep darkness outside evokes the stillness of American nights, motels, inns, temporary shelters, places full of strangers whose stories we will never know. Hopper transforms architecture into emotional landscape.

Together, these works create an unexpectedly intimate mini-retrospective. They are not loud masterpieces; they are whispers that linger. In the Yale gallery, their

Edward Hopper, Rooms by the Sea (1951)



quiet becomes a kind of presence, almost a pulse.

### **The Meaning of Hopper in New Haven and at Yale**

For New Haven, having these paintings permanently on view is a cultural privilege. In a city of modest size, their presence elevates the local arts scene and gives residents, students, and visitors access to one of the defining voices of American painting without the need to travel to a major metropolis. Hopper's world, urban interiors, coastal houses, half-empty rooms, resonates strongly here. New Haven, with its mix of academic intensity and New England melancholy, feels like a natural home for Hopper's introspective vision.

For students at Yale, these paintings function as more than artworks on a wall. They are study

partners. They spark conversations about narrative ambiguity, lighting, composition, and the psychology of space. Many students encounter Hopper here for the first time not as a famous American painter, but as a personal discovery, a moment of recognition in a silent gallery. The museum's pedagogical mission enriches this: students of art, architecture, literature, psychology, and film often return to these works again and again, finding new meanings in their stillness.

Having Hopper on campus shapes sensibilities. It teaches a way of looking: slowly, attentively, openly. It invites contemplation rather than spectacle.

Edward Hopper, *Rooms for Tourists* (1945)





Edward Hopper, Sunlight in a Cafeteria (Detail)





# Wifredo



# Lam

## Dreamed with Eyes Wide Open

Henry Ballate | **New York**



It's Friday, November 7, 2025. Member Preview day for Wifredo Lam: *When I Don't Sleep, I Dream* at MoMA. I arrived very early, and without thinking I walked straight up the stairs to the third floor, where I was immediately greeted by an old friend: Lam. *The Jungle*. Wifredo Lam's iconic 1943 painting first appeared at MoMA on June 20, 1945, barely two years after it was created.

I still remember the first time I saw *La Jungla* in the early '90s, tucked into a collection show beside Pollock's *One: Number 31*. I was a young Cuban artist then, seeing Lam's masterpiece hanging next to Pollock's, suddenly overwhelmed with pride. It gave me energy, conviction, hope. I used to joke with my Cuban friends that you had to escape the island and come to the Concrete Jungle to see

the real Cuban Jungle. And now, thirty-two years later, I feel that same excitement rise in me again. Lam's masterpiece hasn't lost its mystique; if anything, it feels more radiant than ever, surrounded by an entire army of the artist's finest works, reclaiming the pride of place it has always held at MoMA.

### **A Lyrical Journey Through Lam's World**

Moving through the galleries feels like drifting through a series of dreams, each room its own distinct atmosphere, yet part of a larger, seamless conversation. The exhibition spans more than 150 works from the 1920s through the 1970s, a sweeping trajectory that positions Lam as a truly transnational modernist, bridging the European avant-garde and the Afro-Caribbean imagination.



In one gallery, early canvases from his years in Spain appear, including the 1937 *La Guerra Civil*, bristling with the angst of war. Step into another, and I'm surrounded by the lush symbolic imagery he developed upon returning to Cuba, Santería-inflected figures with mask-like faces and limbs morphing into jungle flora. Lam's shape-shifting forms seem to oscillate between human, animal, and spirit, always in flux; there's a fluency in his work that makes it feel alive and profoundly relevant today.

It becomes clear that Lam expanded modern art's horizons not by imitating Europe, but by introducing lo afro cubano on its own terms. He famously called his art "an act of decolonization," a way to disrupt colonial aesthetics. Indeed, he insisted on placing Black diasporic culture at the heart of modernism, not as a footnote or exotic influence, but as a foundational force in 20th-century art.

What's remarkable is how intimate and approachable the show feels even as it tackles these grand

themes. The curators, Christophe Cherix and Beverly Adams, have done a magnificent job making each section flow like a chapter in a novel or a long whispered poem. We see Lam in Paris trading ideas with Picasso and Breton, absorbing Surrealism's liberating chaos. We see him back in Havana channeling the orishas, painting *La Jungla* as a spiritual retort to both colonialism and Cubism. We follow him to postwar Europe, where his style evolves yet again, into tangled, abstracted line drawings, visionary ceramics, and brooding later paintings that speak of exile and reinvention.

Walking through, I feel as if I'm having a personal conversation with Lam across time. The walls hum with his collaborations, illustrated poems, exquisite-corpse drawings, evidence of a life lived at the confluence of cultures and friendships. There's a universal quality to Lam's vision: he bridged continents effortlessly, speaking the language of modern art with a Cuban accent that is unmistakable. As I wander, I overhear visitor chatter in Spanish,

English, French, Cantonese, a fitting polyglot chorus for an artist who embodied the global before globalization had a name.

This retrospective doesn't unfold in a straight line so much as it invites you to hopscotch through Lam's imagination. Each room feels like a self-contained exhibition, with its own mood, color, and tempo. I find myself doubling back often: Did I fully absorb those ghostly figures in the dark burgundy room? Have I spent enough time with the massive *Grande Composition* (1949), its sepia-toned deities stretching across an entire wall?

The installation encourages this wandering. You loop around and discover unexpected connections, like reading a Julio Cortázar novel out of sequence and finding a new story each time. I walked through the show once, then found myself retracing my steps from the end back to the beginning, and it felt entirely new. In one gallery, a 1960s canvas echoes the curves of a 1940s ceramic nearby, a dialogue I missed on the first pass.

The pacing is so engaging that hours slip by without fatigue. It's rare to find a retrospective you want to re-read immediately, but this is one. You can follow Lam chronologically, or jump freely, letting your mind make its own connections. Either way, the narrative holds. As in *Rayuela*, there is no single path, you build your own route through Lam's world, and the reward is an ever-deepening sense of his genius.

Crucially, this non-linear delight doesn't sacrifice coherence. Each section illuminates a facet of Lam's evolution, forming a vivid portrait of an artist in perpetual reinvention. One moment you face *Mother and Child* (1939), a tender, almost monochromatic elegy painted after Lam lost his wife and son, the first Lam ever acquired by MoMA. The next moment you're confronted with the explosive colors of the late 1940s, where figures stretch and dissolve into sweeping diagonals, "celebrations of liberation," as the curators write. Then come the 1960s works like *Les Abalochas...* (1970), where earlier jungle spirits







resurface in new guises, dancing for a vodou god of unity.

By the final gallery, filled with collaborations with poets like Aimé Césaire and contemporary reflections on Lam's legacy, you realize the show has quietly woven politics, poetry, and painting into one continuous narrative. It's an odyssey and an art-historical banquet at once. And yet, it always feels personal. Lam poured his mixed heritage (Afro-Cuban, Chinese, European), his contradictions, and his convictions into his art. This exhibition lets that authenticity rise to the surface.

There's a wonderful irony in the show's title. When I don't sleep, I dream. After wandering these galleries, it becomes clear that Lam dreamed with his eyes wide open. He had to. His life spanned wars, revolutions, exile, pilgrimages, returns, and burials; nightmares he transformed into visionary art. And here in MoMA's halls, those visions feel awake, alert, electric.

The retrospective, the first of its kind in the U.S. invites us to see the world anew, just as Lam intended. "I knew I was running the risk of not being understood... but a true picture has the power to set the imagination to work, even if it takes time," he once said. Standing before *La Jungla*, I can almost hear him whisper it. Back in 1945, MoMA took a leap of faith by acquiring this wild, magical painting, recognizing a true work of art when it saw one.

Now, in 2025, *La Jungla* is surrounded by an entire rainforest of

Lam's creations, and the effect is simply sublime.

Stepping out of the exhibition, reluctantly, after a third lap through the clamor of Midtown rushes back in: honking cabs, a burst of salsa from a passing pedicab, skyscrapers rising like giant bamboo stalks. New York, our own concrete jungle, feels different now: a little more enchanting, a little less monolithic.

Wifredo Lam expands our field of vision, slipping the depth and beauty of Cuban culture into the very core of modern art's story. This MoMA show, with its lyrical curation and sweeping scope, doesn't just honor Lam's legacy, it makes you feel as if you've shared a dream, as if you've been part of an intimate conversation between a Cuban painter and the city that embraced him. I leave MoMA wide awake, yet dreaming still.

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*Organized by Christophe Cherix, The David Rockefeller Director, and Beverly Adams, The Estrellita Brodsky Curator of Latin American Art, with Damasia Lacroze, Curatorial Associate, Department of Painting and Sculpture, and Eva Caston, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Drawings and Prints.*



# Caspar



# David Friedrich

## The Soul of Nature at MET

### Art-Sólido | New York



I walk into The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and there's Caspar David Friedrich, waiting for me with his fog-draped cliffs and moonlit reveries, his silhouettes standing like thoughts against the sky. I should have stopped for a coffee, but no, I'm pulled straight in, because Friedrich does that—he's a tide, a hush, a voice inside your chest that tells you to be quiet and look.

And then there are the people—standing, shuffling, pausing before each canvas as if waiting for something to be revealed. The room breathes with them, their silhouettes becoming part of Friedrich's landscapes, their murmured observations dissolving into the hush of snow-laden branches and moonlit waters. The curators have left space, enough space to feel alone with each piece, but not so much that you forget you are part of a quiet congregation, gathered

in reverence. The lighting is soft, deliberate—shadows pooling in the corners, light catching on the ridges of oil paint like the last glow of dusk before night swallows it whole. In a way, the gallery itself becomes a Friedrich painting, a moment of contemplation framed by walls, by movement, by time slowing just enough to be felt.

It's called "The Soul of Nature," but really, it's the soul of Friedrich, or maybe our own, refracted back at us through a sky smeared with god-light. The first gallery feels like an overture, soft notes of ink and wash, sketches that whisper before the symphony swells. Here's Friedrich as a young artist in Dresden, tracing the edges of his own sensibility—lines that waver but don't hesitate. There's a longing already, a reaching. He's learning how the land breathes, how a horizon can be more than a line—it can be an invitation, a dare.



Then we move into the 1800s, and Friedrich begins to play his chords in full force. “Monk by the Sea” hangs in its own silence, vast and weightless, a prayer swallowed by the wind. The monk is just a smudge, really, a punctuation mark between the fathomless blue above and the earth below, but

you feel his presence like you feel your own breath when everything is still. Friedrich called it “the unknowable hereafter,” and maybe that’s what this whole show is about—what’s out there, just beyond reach, just beyond words. It’s a landscape and it’s a question, and maybe it’s an answer



too, but Friedrich won't say. He only paints the feeling of it.

Romanticism, they tell us, was about nature, about emotion, about the sublime—but in Friedrich's hands, it's also about solitude, that specific human ache of standing small before something infinite. And yet, he's not alone. Look at "Two Men Contemplating the Moon." Side by side, wrapped in cloaks, they're staring into that silver glow, lost in the pull of it. You can almost hear them breathe, hear the quiet between their words. Friedrich's companionship isn't the loud kind; it's the kind that lets you be alone together, which is maybe the most intimate thing of all.

He paints time like it's something you can touch. "The Stages of Life"—a shoreline, ships at sea, a family scattered across the sand,

childhood to old age in a single sweep of canvas. You see it, and something inside you stirs—nostalgia for something you haven't lost yet, an ache for the inevitability of departure. Friedrich knew how time moves, how it circles back in the rhythm of waves, how it slips through your hands no matter how tightly you hold.

And then there's winter, that hush of white, of trees frozen in their reaching. "Dolmen in Autumn" speaks in the language of seasons, of endings. And "Wanderer above the Sea of Fog"—you've seen it a hundred times, on postcards, in textbooks, but here, in this moment, it's new again. He stands there, the wanderer, looking out, and you stand behind him, looking too. You're both caught in the vastness, both leaning into the unknown.



By the final galleries, Friedrich is older, quieter. His work has fallen out of favor, his strokes have grown unsteady, but the vision—the vision is still burning. There are graveyards now, tombs, empty shores. He's thinking about death, and so are we. But there's no fear in it, only the soft murmur of something beyond the frame.

I step back into the city, and it's different now. The light slants in a way I hadn't noticed before, the clouds drift slower. Friedrich has a way of following you out. You think you've left him in the museum, but no—he's out here too, in the spaces between buildings, in the hush before the crosswalk light changes. And isn't that the whole point? That nature, that time, that endless horizon—it's not just in the paintings. It's in us, in the way we look, in the way we feel the weight of sky on our skin.

Caspar David Friedrich: The Soul of Nature. Go see it. Go stand inside it. And when you walk out, don't be surprised if the world looks a little different, a little wider, like the trees of Central Park stretching their bare arms into the winter air, the lake holding the sky in its rippling hands, the paths winding like brushstrokes through golden leaves. You'll look up at the buildings beyond the park's edge, softened by mist, and wonder if Friedrich might have painted them too, had he stood here, watching the city dissolve into the horizon.

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*Caspar David Friedrich: The Soul of Nature is co-curated by Alison Hokanson (Curator, Department of European Paintings, The Met) and Joanna Sheers Seidenstein (Assistant Curator, Department of Drawings and Prints, The Met).*







# Coco Fusco

## Tomorrow, I Will Become an Island

*Tomorrow, I Will Become an Island* is the first U.S. survey dedicated to the multidisciplinary practice of influential Cuban-American artist and writer Coco Fusco. Born in New York in 1960, Fusco is internationally recognized for her delectably provocative and critical explorations of the dynamics of politics and power. Through her work, which spans video, performance, installation, photography, and writing, Fusco is today recognized as one of the foremost artists shaping the contemporary art field.

Organized thematically by gallery, this exhibition features more than twenty works that focus on several key concerns that recur across Fusco's practice. Relating to issues of representation, surveillance, and institutional critique, several of the works on view are presented to U.S. audiences here for the first time. Together, they trace more than three decades of production, extending from Fusco's iconic performances from the early 1990s to her most recent photographic suite addressing the perception of immigrants in New York.

Borrowed from Fusco's recent monograph of the same name, the title *Tomorrow, I Will Become an Island* derives from Cuban poet Virgilio Piñera's 1979 "Island." This reference reflects her literature, poetry, and the archive inform Fusco's artistic perspective. At El Museo del Barrio, this aspect of Fusco's practice is exemplified in the videos presented in the show's culminating gallery, which consider the history of artists' challenges to the Cuban revolutionary project—a central subject in Fusco's oeuvre.

Presented at a moment of profound uncertainty in Cuba, the United States, and globally, *Tomorrow, I Will Become an Island* offers a timely opportunity to experience the work of Fusco, an artist whose activist stance and local pedagogical commitment has consistently addressed some of our most urgent social and political issues.

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*Tomorrow, I Will Become an Island* (Mañana, me convertiré en una isla) es la primera muestra panorámica en Estados Unidos dedicada a la práctica multidisciplinaria de la influyente artista y escritora cubano-estadounidense Coco Fusco. Nacida en Nueva York en 1960, Fusco es reconocida internacionalmente por sus exploraciones agudas y críticas de las dinámicas de la política y el poder. A través de su obra —que abarca video, performance, instalación, fotografía y escritura— Fusco se ha consolidado como una de las artistas más destacadas en la configuración del campo del arte contemporáneo.

Organizada temáticamente por galería, esta exposición reúne más de veinte obras que giran en torno a preocupaciones recurrentes en la práctica de Fusco. Vinculadas a temas de representación, vigilancia y crítica institucional, varias de las piezas se presentan por primera vez al público estadounidense. Juntas trazan más de tres décadas de producción, desde las icónicas performances de Fusco de principios de la década de 1990 hasta su más reciente serie fotográfica sobre la percepción de los inmigrantes en Nueva York.

El título *Tomorrow, I Will Become an Island* proviene del reciente monográfico de Fusco del mismo nombre y deriva del poema "Island" (1979) del escritor cubano Virgilio Piñera. Esta referencia refleja cómo la literatura, la poesía y el archivo informan la perspectiva artística de Fusco. En El Museo del Barrio, este aspecto de su práctica se ejemplifica en los videos que se exhiben en la galería final, los cuales abordan la historia de los desafíos de los artistas al proyecto revolucionario cubano —un tema central en la obra de Fusco—.

Presentada en un momento de profunda incertidumbre en Cuba, Estados Unidos y el mundo, *Tomorrow, I Will Become an Island* ofrece la oportunidad de adentrarse en la obra de Fusco, una artista cuya postura activista y firme compromiso pedagógico han respondido de manera constante a algunas de las cuestiones sociales y políticas más urgentes de nuestro tiempo.

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**Coco**

# FUSCO

## Become an Island

Art-Sólido | New York



The early autumn light fades into a soft evening glow over Fifth Avenue, where El Museo del Barrio stands like a quiet promise at the edge of Central Park. It's opening night for “Coco Fusco: Tomorrow, I Will Become an Island“, and a warm crowd hums inside. I feel as though I'm arriving at a poetic rendezvous—a meeting of minds between Coco and the City, between the island and the world.

### The Island Beckons at Dusk

I recall Piñera's words: “Se me ha anunciado que mañana, a las siete y seis minutos de la tarde, me convertiré en una isla...” By some serendipity, it's just past seven now. In the exhibition's title—borrowed from that very poem—Fusco signals a transformation. Inside the gallery, those lines seem to whisper from the walls. Virgilio Piñera, one of Cuba's great writers who

knew the island as both confinement and *la maldita circunstancia*, offers an enigmatic key to understanding Fusco's journey. To become an island is a bold, difficult decision—“*isla como suelen ser las islas*”—is to accept a kind of rebirth entwined with solitude. As I wander deeper, I sense Fusco inviting us to witness her own rebirths across the decades, each artwork unfurling like a new shore in an archipelago of ideas.

The gallery unfolds like a quiet conversation. Videos flicker in darkened rooms; photographs and artifacts draw my eye in closer. Fusco's voice – “perceptive, acerbic, and piercing” as it's often described – comes through in each piece, yet the tone shifts from work to work. It's like walking around an island and finding different climates on each side. There's humor and there's severity; there's play and polemic. Through it all, Fusco

maintains a clarity of purpose: addressing those deep-down themes we carry but struggle to articulate – identity, power, exile, memory. She presents them with a frankness that feels like someone finally putting into words what the wind howling inside us means.

### **A Lyrical Walk Through Three Decades**

Moving further in, I stumble upon a golden cage installed in the gallery – an echo of Fusco’s *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West* (1992). In that infamous performance, Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña donned pseudo-Indigenous costumes and sat inside a cage, as if “undiscovered” specimens on display. Visitors back then didn’t know whether to laugh or recoil; some even tried to feed the performers bananas. Here, the cage sits like a haunting remnant and a punchline at once. I catch myself half expecting ghosts of that satirical duo to appear, whispering witty retorts to the bemused onlookers in my imagination. The piece’s spirit lingers as a foundation of Fusco’s career – her blend of confrontation and dark humor established early on.

From that point, the exhibition fans out into a survey of Fusco’s work spanning more than three adventurous decades. It’s hard to believe this is her first major U.S. survey, given how influential she’s been. As I meander through videos, photographs, and installation works, I feel I’m leafing through a living diary of political and cultural truths. One moment I’m watching a video of an empty plaza in Havana at dawn, the

sky big and silent – Fusco’s way of probing post-revolutionary Cuban reality. In another room, I’m met by the stern gaze of “a U.S. military interrogator” – actually Fusco herself in performance, clad in Army fatigues, delivering a deadpan lecture that slyly morphs Virginia Woolf’s words into a chilling commentary on women’s roles in the War on Terror. The range is staggering, yet the voice is consistently hers.

Fusco has a penchant for personae in her performances. In *A Room of One’s Own: Women and Power in the New America* (2006–2008), she dons a U.S. Army uniform and addresses the audience with ironic civility, highlighting the unsettling realities of gender and power in the military. The exhibition features such performative works through video and photography, pulling the viewer into Fusco’s sharp social commentary.

Every work feels personal and political in equal measure. Fusco doesn’t shy away from the injustices that compel her art – “the denial of dignity to workers and immigrants; the twisted misuses of feminine sexuality; and the state’s abuses of power” are all confronted here. Yet, walking through the show is far from a grim march; it’s more like an absorbing poem with shifting tones. One installation makes me chuckle at its audacity, another makes me pause in quiet horror. Her video piece *La Plaza Vacía*, for instance, quietly mourns the emptiness of public life under oppressive regimes, while her satirical Dr. Zira lecture (performed in full *Planet of the Apes* prosthetics) skewers the excesses of Wall





Street with absurdist wit. These contrasts shouldn't blend, but in Fusco's island they somehow do — unified by her incisive, truth-seeking vision.

### **Intimate City, Expansive Conversations**

Despite the exhibition's global political sweep, it remains a very New York experience too. Fusco herself is a New Yorker, and perhaps that's why I sense an urban sharpness in her work — a kind of streetwise observation amid the poetry. At the opening, clusters of visitors switch seamlessly between English and Spanish, much like the bilingual text on the walls. I overhear an older man explaining one piece to a teen, the way you might explain a tough bit of city history to a newcomer. The vibe is intimate and conversational, true to Fusco's style as both artist and writer. This “multifaceted practice” of hers, fearless and uncompromising, has always challenged dominant narratives,

yet here it invites dialogue rather than didactic preaching. We're all islanders in this space, each bringing our own context, connecting through the art.

As I move between the galleries, it strikes me that Manhattan itself is an island—crowded, restless, buzzing with unrest—while inside El Museo, Fusco has carved out a quieter, more reflective shore of her own. In one corner, a pair of students lean together over the meaning of a photograph; in another, someone sits on a bench, eyes closed, letting the sound from a video installation wash over them. The atmosphere feels like a small community gathered on this island of art, momentarily “far removed from all unrest,” as Piñera wrote, gazing toward new horizons.

There's a Piñera-like quality to this moment—the sense that the city itself is preparing to sprout branches and roses, to become an island in its own right. His

fantastical imagery—“árboles en los brazos, rosas en los ojos y arena en el pecho”—echoes in Fusco’s work as ideas bloom unexpectedly in the concrete jungle of New York. Walking through the galleries, I almost hear the invisible Chopin nocturne he imagined, playing softly between the works, carrying us from one island-room to another “igual que un andante chopiniano“. In this reverie, poetry and art are no longer separate—they fold into each other, as natural as the wind taking over when words fall silent.

### **So, It Was True?**

By the time I leave the exhibition, the moon has risen over Central Park. I feel both challenged and oddly comforted. “Tomorrow, I will become an island,” Fusco declared, and in doing so, she has shown us what that means: to stand apart and speak clearly, to transform one’s isolation into a beacon. El Museo del Barrio has given us one of those New York art events not to

be missed – an expansive survey that is at once an education in history and a lyrical journey through an artist’s soul. Fusco’s work offers the kind of insight that makes you stop on the museum steps afterward, looking at the city anew, replaying certain images in your mind with fresh understanding.

In the final lines of Piñera’s poem, after the speaker has turned into an island – “tendido como suelen hacer las islas, miraré fijamente al horizonte, veré salir el sol, la luna, y lejos ya de la inquietud, diré muy bajito: ¿así que era verdad?”

Standing there on Fifth Avenue, I find myself whispering the same. So it was true? Yes, it was true: art really can transform you, even if only for an evening. And as I walk down the block, back into the urban tide, I carry a bit of that island with me – a gentle, persistent voice in the city’s roaring wind, reminding me of all I learned and felt on this extraordinary night.



# POETAS EN NEW YORK

200 AÑOS DE POESÍA HISPANA



TREET



## POETAS EN NEW YORK

# 200 Years of Hispanic Poetry in New York City

Spanish-language poetry in New York is as old as the city itself. It did not arrive late; it arrived walking.

As the grid of streets was drawn in 1811, another map began to form—one made of voices, accents, and borrowed light. From the first Spanish-language newspaper published in the city in 1823, New York became not only a destination, but a language.

That same year, José María Heredia went into exile in New York. Considered by many the first Romantic poet of the Americas and the initiator of Hispanic American Romanticism, Heredia published his poems regularly in the newspaper. In 1825, the Gray and Buye printing press, located at 129 Broadway, published his book *Poesías*, quietly inaugurating a Hispanic poetic tradition that continues to this day.

Here, poetry in Spanish has always lived in motion: crossing oceans and borders, arriving by ship, by train, by plane, by foot. It has been written by exiles and visionaries,

by those who stayed briefly and those who never left. From José Martí's luminous gaze on the modern city to the thunder and shadow of Lorca, from the quiet intimacy of Juan Ramón Jiménez to the countless voices that followed, Spanish found in New York a place to test itself, to fracture, to expand.

The city offered no comfort, only presence. Its streets remained. Each poet walked them anew, hearing echoes of those who came before, adding their own rhythm to the noise. Broadway, the Hudson, the corner café where the order is placed in Spanish—language turned geography, and geography turned poem.

The poems that follow belong to *Poetas en New York: 200 años de Poesía Hispana*, a book that continues this story beyond these pages.



## Rubén Darío

### THE LAND OF THE SUN

Beside the black palace of the king of the Isle of Iron—  
(Oh, cruel, horrible exile!)—  
how is it that you, harmonious sister,  
make the gray sky sing with your aviary of nightingales,  
your formidable music box?  
Does it not sadden you to recall the spring  
when you once heard a divine and iridescent bird

in the land of the sun?

In the garden of the king of the Isle of Gold—  
(Oh, my dream, my adored!)—  
would it not be better, harmonious sister,  
to train your winged flutes, your sounding harps,  
you who were born where the blood-red carnation blooms  
and the blushing rose is loveliest of all,

in the land of the sun?

Or in the palace of the queen of the Isle of Silver—  
(Schubert weeps in his Serenade...)—  
you too, harmonious sister,  
could make the mystic birds of your soul  
sing gently, oh so gently, of moonlight,  
of virginal lilies, of the dove-nun,  
and the marquis-swan.  
The finest silver is melted in a burning crucible,

in the land of the sun!

Return, then, to your boat, the sail is already raised—  
(resound, lyre! Zephyr, fly!)—  
and depart, harmonious sister,  
to where a handsome prince by the shore  
asks for lyres, and verses, and roses,  
and strokes his golden curls  
beneath a regal and azure parasol,

in the land of the sun!

# POETAS EN NEW YORK

*José Juan Tablada*

## ALTERNATE NOCTURNE

Golden New York night  
Chill Moorish lime-washed walls  
Rector's—champagne—foxtrot  
Mute houses, barred and still  
And turning back the gaze  
to the silent rooftop tiles—  
A soul turned into stone  
White cats of the moon—  
Like Lot's wife

And yet—  
it is the  
same  
one  
in New York  
and in Bogotá  
The Moon...!

## Juan Ramón Jiménez

### SMOKE AND GOLD

So much sea in the yellowing moonlight  
lying between us, Spain! And so much sea to-morrow  
in early morning sunshine...

...Sailing

in the wan light of daybreak, dim-seen ships  
sounding their mournful sirens, naked visions;  
sleepless, I hear them take farewell.

-In solitary splendor

the moon, oh, shade of Poe! dies over Broadway-  
Sleepless, I hear them, my forehead pressing  
against the rigid panes; I bear them

take farewell, once and again, amid their dreams...

-and now the daybreak is nothing but an empty space  
in the frigid light only yesterday

the jet-black mole was glowing-

dreams in the dream of all of those now sleeping

in that part of their life that is still living

side by side

with that part of their life already dead.

How far off, oh! how far off

from you and from me they are, and from all things

-oh! olive-groves that once I saw at daybreak!

When I hear the alert given-Death!-

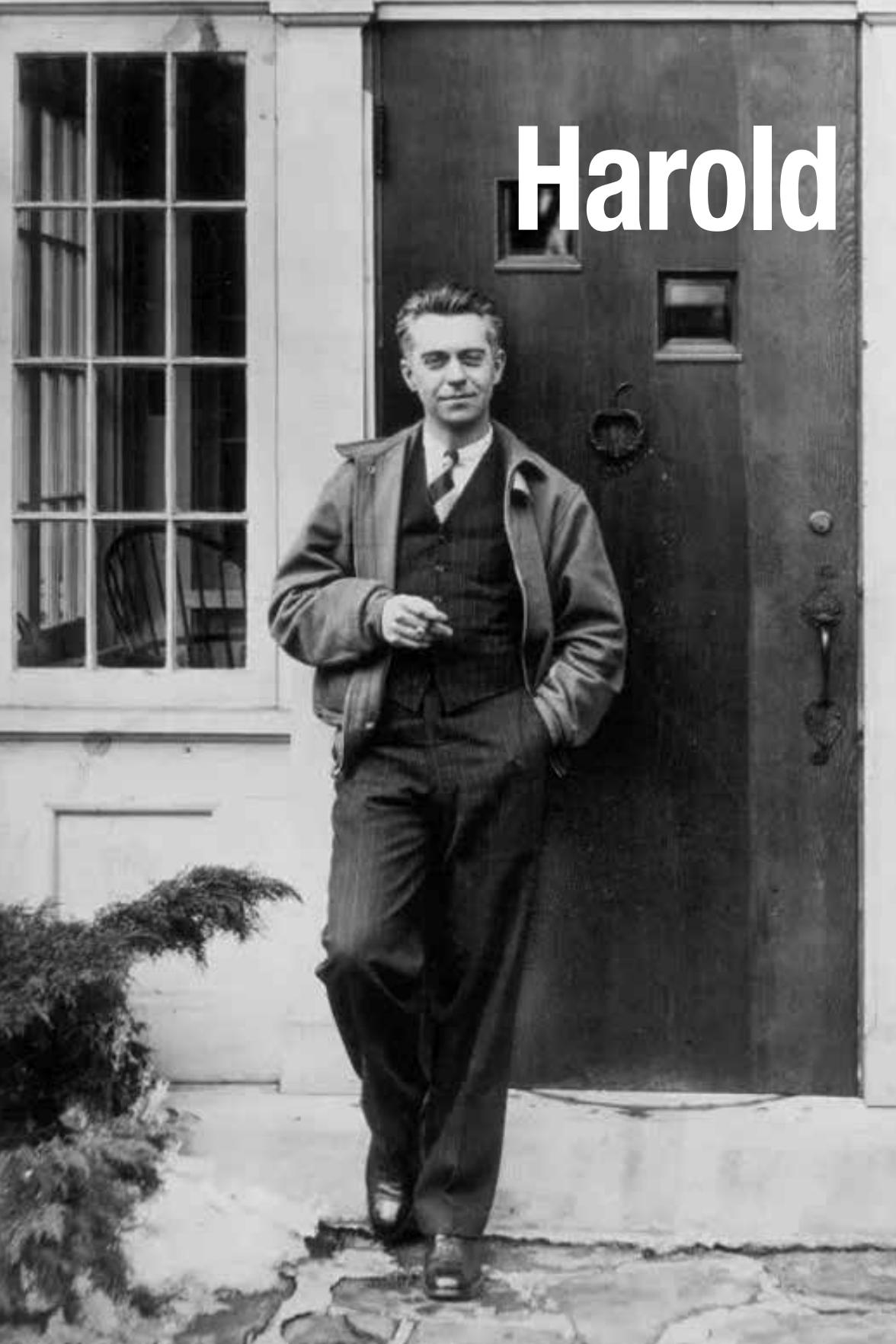
breaking into the harmony of my spirit

-immeasurable sea of joy and sorrow-

in the yellowing moonlight

of that pale orb that is setting lonely in Spain too!

# Harold



# Hart Crane

## Last Seen Alive in Havana

Henry Ballate | **New York**

*(A narrative evocation of the last days of Harold Hart Crane, April 1932)*



The port of Veracruz seemed suspended between fever and silence. April breathed with a heavy heat, and the sea, a sheet of silver reflected the ships and the shirtless, sweating men working on the docks. Hart Crane had been there for days, restless, with a damp notebook of verses and a waiting he dared not name. The Poet had arrived with Peggy Cowley, his companion, who watched him with the distant understanding of someone who knows that love, at times, is only a harbor between two shipwrecks.

He was waiting for the Orizaba, or for William Cramp Jr., the ship's officer from Philadelphia with whom he had shared a desire the world would not forgive. William did not know he was being awaited in that tropical port, among the shouts of the dockworkers and

the smell of salt and fermented mango. He did not know or did not want to know that his silence was also a kind of promise.

The ship appeared one afternoon as the sun was about to set. From the deck, William recognized a figure in the crowd: white hat, wrinkled linen shirt, and the expression of a child waiting for forgiveness. The encounter was brief, almost awkward. But one look was enough, that look that holds the memory of the impossible.

That night, as the Orizaba slowly moved away from Mexico, leaving a trail of white smoke in the starry night, the cabin became heaven. The hum of the engines covered their words, and the air, heavy with desire, wrapped around them as if the sea itself wanted to erase their names. They spoke little; what was left to say



their bodies already knew. In the ship's shadows, he felt everything stop: fear, poetry, or the end of the world. For a few hours, life made sense again.

By dawn, the ship was already nearing the coast of Cuba. In Havana awaited an open, luminous city where there was no Prohibition, and where love between men was not shame but the murmur of harbors and the complicity of corners. They walked through bars and under lamplight, drinking rum from thick glasses, laughing with that joy that always announces the end.

At night, Havana embraced them without judgment. On the balconies, fans turned slowly, and the streets smelled of tobacco and sea. It was one night, one sufficient night to believe in the possibility of a shared destiny. An eternal night.

William, however, knew that desire and passion would have to end once they returned to the strict laws of the North. In New York, love like this was silence; in Philadelphia, shame. And there, between the heat of the Caribbean and the breeze of dawn, he said what the poet did not want to hear: *You cannot come back with me.*

He understood everything. And in that understanding, he began to say goodbye to the world.

*How many dawns, chill from his rippling rest / The seagull's wings shall dip and pivot him, / Shedding white rings of tumult, building high / Over the chained bay waters Liberty...*

The poem echoed in his mind like a voice returning from the depths. The sea, love, the abyss all had become the same.

*O harp and altar, of the fury fused,  
(How could mere toil align thy cho-  
iring strings!) / Terrific threshold  
of the prophet's pledge, / Prayer of  
pariah, and the lover's cry...*

The Orizaba set sail again. Havana was left behind as always, and as only Havana can be left behind. William avoided his gaze; the ship was now a floating prison. He drank without measure, speaking to the ghost of his father, to the verses, to the echo of the names he could never say aloud.

*Under thy shadow by the piers  
I waited; / Only in darkness is  
thy shadow clear. / The City's fi-  
ery parcels all undone, / Already  
snow submerges an iron year...*

Just before noon on April 27, 1932, the sea was calm, almost indifferent. Some passengers saw him at the back of the ship, his eyes lost in the distant Havana. "Goodbye, everybody," he murmured no one knows whether with irony or gratitude and stepped into the void.

William did not cry out his name, said nothing. He remained motionless, staring at the point where the body vanished among the waves, where the white hat drifted away, like a silver moon  
*lost at sea.*



# Siena



Lando Di Pietro, Italian, ca. 1280-1340, Head of Christ (Fragment of a crucifix.)

# at MET

## The Rise of Painting

### Art-Sólido | New York



Oh, Siena. A place caught between the jagged edge of Florence's rising supremacy and the crumbling uncertainty of the plague. A city where, for a few extraordinary decades, paint—glorious, unruly, temperamental paint—became not just a medium but a language, a prayer, and a way of seeing. The Met's exhibition, *Siena: The Rise of Painting, 1300-1350*, feels like a forgotten letter from the past, an intimate conversation with artists who understood the very human business of beauty. And, my god, isn't that the real allure of this exhibition? Not just the art, but the intimacy. The way the artists of Siena – Duccio, Simone Martini, the Lorenzetti brothers – painted grief, triumph, and devotion with the urgency of a lover's first confession.

It's curious how often history forgets those who came before the flood. Florence, with its river, its money, its flourishing banking industry, always gets the credit for nurturing the Renaissance. But Siena—ah, Siena is the one we tend

to overlook. Maybe it's the stubbornness of its isolation or the tragic irony of its eventual downfall in the wake of the Black Death. For centuries, Sienese art has been considered a kind of introduction to something grander, a necessary prelude to the full-bodied realism that would burst forth from Florence. But if you take a moment, slow down, let the weight of the gold leaf and the shimmer of tempera sink in, you'll realize that Siena wasn't just the warm-up act. It was the rehearsal for the full, blazing orchestra of Western art.

The exhibition at The Met, with its staggering collection of over 100 works, lets you feel that. For the first time in America, you can witness the works that made Siena Siena—a city where angels did not flutter but flamed in their ineffable majesty, where the Virgin Mary was always, somehow, both a mother and a goddess, vulnerable and omnipotent all at once. The Sienese knew the power of paradox like no one else. And this show—painterly and intricate in ways that



Duccio di Buoninsegna, Italian, active 1278-1318, *The Crucifixion with Saints Nicholas*.

don't let you look away—teaches you to know it too.

And yet, the most astonishing thing is not just what's in the show, but how it feels. Duccio di Buoninsegna, with his *maestà* panels and sculptural altarpieces, wields a subtlety of touch that sneaks up on you. In his *Crucifixion* (ca. 1311-18), there's a tangible weight to the figures, as if their very blood is sinking into the earth along with Christ's. Duccio's genius is that he paints gravity with such delicate force that you feel the pull in your bones. These figures are heavy, rooted, stuck in the mire of human emotion, yet they hover with a quiet grace. A woman to the left of the scene, holding the staggered Virgin Mary, seems poised on the edge of an impossible sorrow, smiling as though she could just as easily break into tears. That almost

smile—almost standing—could be the signature of an entire city. The Sienese had a way of touching the ordinary that left you reeling, seeing emotions in the smallest, most exquisite gestures.

But there's more to Siena than just melancholy, isn't there? A brief, fleeting moment of triumph preceded the plague. The city was alive, absorbing the finest influences from all over—Islamic rugs, Scholastic philosophy, French metalwork—and turning them into something uniquely its own. Duccio's *Maestà* altarpiece, painted for the cathedral, would set the stage for centuries of sacred art. And even as Florence rose, Siena's painters took their place as prodigies in a rapidly shifting world, sending out their brushstrokes to places like Assisi, Avignon, and beyond. Pietro Lorenzetti swept

through Italy, his paintings layering architecture and space in ways that seemed downright cinematic for their time. You see it in works like *The Temptation of Christ on the Mountain*, where the tiny, toy-like buildings beneath Christ's feet seem to tremble with the knowledge that they might be crushed at any moment by the gargantuan presence of the Devil looming above. Siena had a taste for the dramatic, and the world had better watch out.

But then, disaster. The plague came, a great black curtain that fell over Europe, tearing cities apart. The world seemed to hold its breath—and half of Siena did not survive. The artists who had captured the sacred, the human, the miraculous—all of them perished in that foul year. Duccio was gone long before, but the Lorenzetti brothers died, and with them, an era of

exquisite, highly stylized art, full of both tension and grace.

And it's that very tension that the Siennese mastered, which, even in their quieter works, catches you off guard. Simone Martini, who once dazzled at the papal court in Avignon, could create something so strange and delicate that you couldn't quite place it. Take *Madonna del Latte* (ca. 1325)—the baby Jesus, an odd contradiction, heavy yet weightless, poised in the most improbable of ways. The child sucks greedily at the Virgin's breast while his eye holds yours in a glance so commanding it feels more like a verdict. Are we witnessing purity or sin? The Holy or the human? Both. The Siennese never felt the need to smooth out the paradoxes of life and faith, instead luxuriating in them, finding sophistication in their chaos. Vernon Lee, a critic of the late 19th

Duccio di Buoninsegna, Italian, active 1278-1318, *The Virgin and child*.



century, would later call Sienese painting “the charm of the backward,” but I think that’s a misreading. It wasn’t childishness; it was something much more dangerous: the full complexity of being human, unwrapped and unflinching.

But, as with any true love, there are quirks. Faces. The Sienese didn’t quite get faces the way later artists would. There’s a certain stylization to them, an archetypal calm that doesn’t always translate into real emotion. And yet, there’s something endearing about it, something that allows you to read the body language, the hands, the folds of cloth. In fact, you read these paintings—savoring the way a hand curls, the way an expression hovers just on the edge of something bigger. You’re invited to decode them, to wrestle with the questions they pose.

The last work in the exhibition, Simone Martini’s *Christ Discovered in the Temple* (1342), feels like an

elegy. It marks the end of the era. There’s something about the intensity of those three faces—Mary’s pain, Joseph’s frustration, Christ’s defiance—that signals a shift, a new age in Western art. Gone are the tender contradictions, the awkward and subtle interplay of the sacred and the earthly. But, for me, I can’t help but miss the weirdness of it all, the way the Sienese never quite bothered to make things neat. The earthiness, the childlike wonder—it’s all so necessary.

So, if you’re in New York, take an afternoon, step into the Met, and surrender to the peculiar beauty of Siena’s rise and fall. You’ll find that the Sienese painters, who for too long have lingered in the shadows, are no longer the warm-up act to something greater. They are the thing itself—bold, strange, and more human than you might ever have expected. And who knows? You might just leave a little bit in love with them, too.

Simone Martini (Italian, active 1315–44) *The Palazzo Pubblico Altarpiece*.





Pietro Lorenzetti, Italian active 1320-48, The Piave Altarpiece.

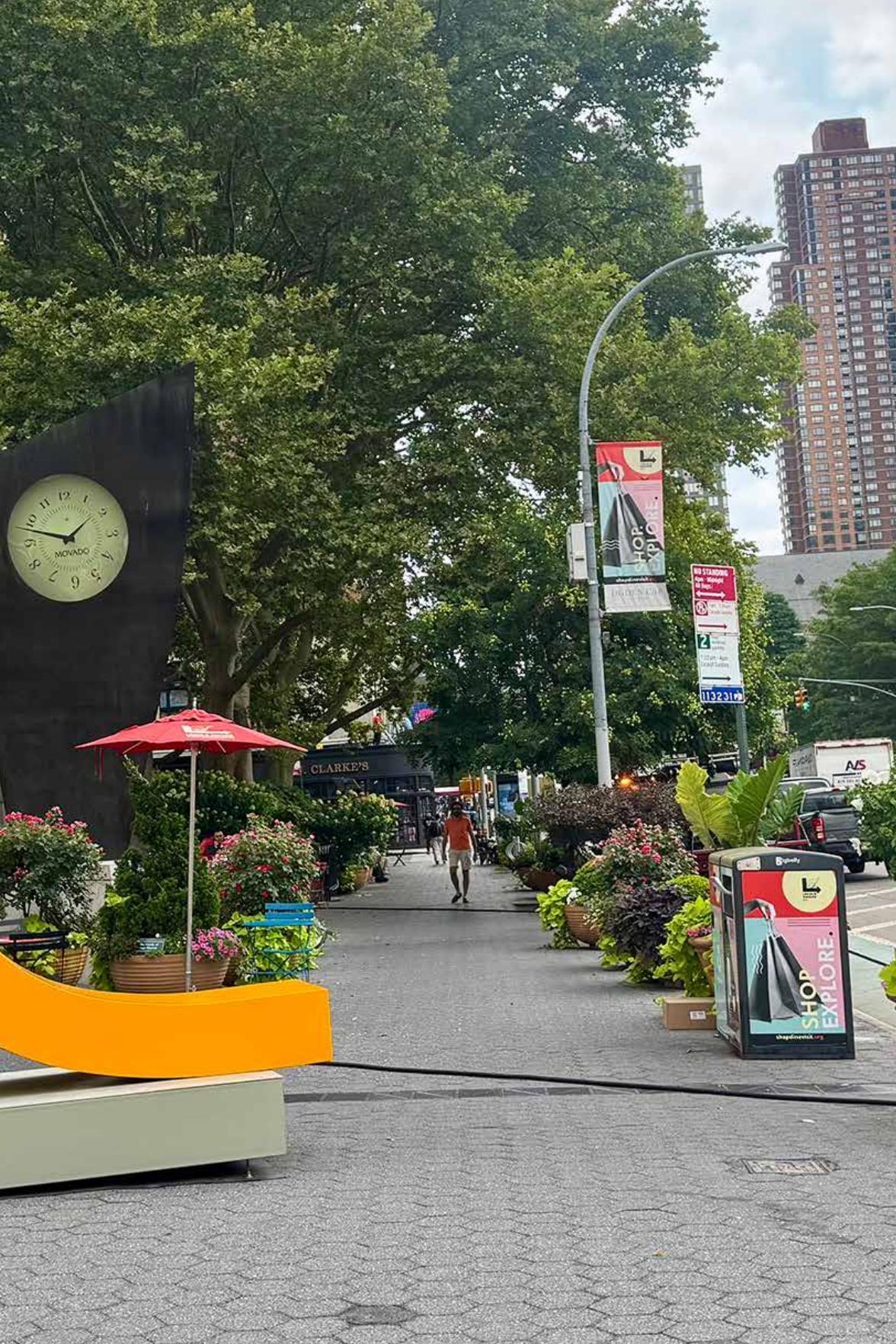


CITY SPEED LIMIT  
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Broadway & 84 St  
Cosmic Splendor

THE WORLD'S SAUCE



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Carl

# D'Alvia

## A Whimsical March of Monoliths on Broadway

Art-Sólido | New York



There's only one Broadway. That much is true. And right now, it's not just the rhythm of taxis, footsteps, and sirens composing its usual urban symphony. This summer, a different kind of beat punctuates the Broadway Malls—a sculptural hum, a visual murmur, a colorful hubbub that stretches from 64th Street to 117th like a surreal parade. The artist behind this playful intervention is Carl D'Alvia, a master of contradictions who invites us to laugh, reflect, and reimagine the role of sculpture in our public life.

Born in Sleepy Hollow, New York, in 1965, D'Alvia is no stranger to the uncanny or the mythical. He lives and works between West Cornwall, Connecticut and New

York City, and his artistic trajectory—over three decades—has consistently danced between the monumental and the intimate, the heavy and the hilarious. From marble to bronze, resin to aluminum, his work refuses to settle into one category or material logic. Instead, it transforms: breathing life into stone, giving softness to metal, and injecting humor into histories we thought were fixed.

In Broadway Hubbub, presented by the Broadway Mall Association in collaboration with NYC Parks and HESSE FLATOW, D'Alvia places five towering sculptures from his Liths series into the heart of Manhattan's kinetic artery. These are not passive monuments. They bend, slouch, lean, and loiter

with us. They shimmer in gleaming auto paint—electric orange, bright pink, radiant blue—emitting a joy that feels both alien and oddly familiar. They seem to have walked out of a dream of Calder, gotten lost in a Tony Smith blueprint, and stumbled into the 21st century with new questions about form, presence, and humor.

The names—Hot Rod, Tandem—tell us something: these are characters, not just objects. And D’Alvia sees them as such. “Itinerant characters who slouch, bend and wander through the world alongside us while holding a sort of sculptural mirror up to us,” he says. There’s something disarmingly human about these hunks of aluminum. They feel like friends from another dimension—monoliths with attitude, ancestors who got bored with standing still.

D’Alvia’s genius lies in this: he makes the monumental feel light, both physically and emotionally. His Liths may nod to ancient stones, but they flirt with us like cartoons. They play with the very idea of public sculpture: instead of

asserting power, they provoke delight; instead of dominating space, they join it, mingle in it, react to it. In a city that rarely pauses, they force us to do just that—not out of reverence, but out of curiosity, affection, surprise.

It’s easy to imagine children hugging these sculptures, lovers using them as meeting points, or tired

passers by leaning on them without realizing they’re part of an art installation. That’s the beauty of it. Broadway Hubhub collapses the space between the art world and the everyday world. D’Alvia doesn’t pedestal his work—he embeds it in the mess, the

madness of Broadway. And in doing so, he honors the lineage of artists who have reimagined public space: from the abstraction of the 1970s to the dynamic experiments of contemporary urban sculpture.

But perhaps more profoundly, he restores a sense of wonder to the street. In a city that often trains us to look down or look past, Carl D’Alvia makes us look up—and smile.





László

Satanango

László  
Krasznahorkai

# Krasznahorkai

The Nobel Prize 2025

Henry Ballate | New York



I was sipping an espresso in a West Village café when the news flashed on my phone: Hungarian novelist László Krasznahorkai had won the 2025 Nobel Prize in Literature. The Swedish Academy praised his “compelling and visionary oeuvre that, in the midst of apocalyptic terror, reaffirms the power of art.” In that moment—amid the clatter of dishes and the honking taxis outside—I felt the distance between New York and Havana collapse. A voice that had once reached me from behind the Iron Curtain was now being honored on the world stage.

## **A Voice from Communist Shadows**

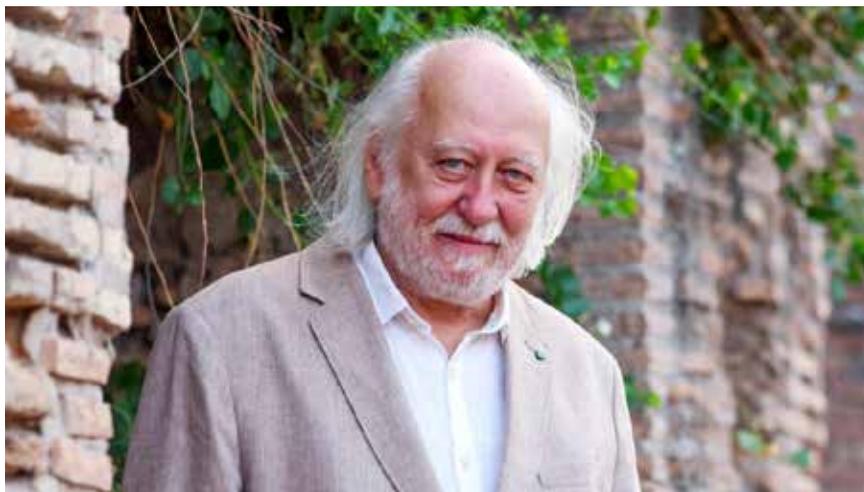
Growing up in Aguada de Pasajeros, a small town in Cuba under a communist regime, I learned early the power of forbidden literature. Books were whispers of freedom, passed hand-to-hand under flickering bulbs. Those of us who lived under communism found writers like Krasznahorkai hidden in the shadows of censorship, and we

read them with a mix of fear and reverence. His pages carried truths our officials preferred to silence. Reading Krasznahorkai gave us certainty – a sense that someone, somewhere understood the despair and absurdity we lived.

For young people who never experienced communism yet sometimes romanticize it, I have a simple suggestion: read *Sátántangó* (1985). His debut novel—bleak, mesmerizing—predicted the regime’s downfall a few years before it happened – a story of destitute villagers lured into ruin by a false messiah. Terrifying, liberating, unforgettable. We turned its pages in secret, heart pounding, as if the very act of reading were an act of rebellion. Today, I smile knowing that this once-forbidden fruit is celebrated by the Nobel Committee as a masterpiece.

## **Master of the Apocalypse**

Who is this Hungarian voice that spoke so powerfully to those of us so far away?



The Nobel Committee calls Krasznahorkai “a great epic writer in the Central European tradition that extends through Kafka to Thomas Bernhard, characterized by absurdism and grotesque excess.” Heir to Kafka’s dark vision, Krasznahorkai transmutes madness into art. Susan Sontag once called him “the contemporary Hungarian master of apocalypse who inspires comparison with Gogol and Melville.” Grand words, but apt ones. His work has a hypnotic pull. “He is a hypnotic writer,” says his translator George Szirtes, “He draws you in until the world he conjures echoes and echoes inside you, until it’s your own vision of order and chaos.”

Krasznahorkai’s sentences bend language to its breaking point. He called his method “reality examined to the point of madness.” His paragraphs run for pages, his rhythm unbroken. Szirtes likened his prose to “a slow lava-flow of narrative, a vast black river of type.” Reading him is like wading into a flood: at first overwhelming, then eerily

immersive. You surrender to the current or you don’t survive the book. Demanding, obsessive, uncompromising – but for those who crave literature that pushes the boundaries of thought, his novels offer purification. They remind us there can be beauty in hell.

### **Epic of Melancholy and Resistance**

Born in 1954 in Gyula, Hungary, into a middle-class Jewish family, Krasznahorkai lived through the full claustrophobia of communism. When he left for West Berlin in 1987, freedom struck him like oxygen. He wandered through Germany, China, and Japan, gathering the fragments that would become his fiction.

In the 1990s, he lived for a time in Allen Ginsberg’s East Village apartment, not far from where I’m writing this. Krasznahorkai speaks English with a seductive Mitteleuropean inflection, softened by the occasional American accent – a trace of those New York years. I like to imagine that quiet

Hungarian craftsman walking down Second Avenue with a notebook in his pocket, absorbing the chaos and beauty of the city.

All these experiences sharpened his artistic gaze. As Academy member Steve Sem-Sandberg observed, Krasznahorkai's vision is "entirely free of illusion"—he sees through "the fragility of the social order," yet holds an unwavering faith in the power of art. It's this blend of clear-eyed pessimism and artistic devotion that fuels his apocalyptic storytelling.

### **His novels are soaked in dystopian gloom and dark humor.**

Sátántangó, as I've said, unfolds on a rain-soaked collective farm—twelve chapters swinging forward and back like the steps of a doomed tango. Béla Tarr's 1994 film adaptation—seven hours long, austere and hypnotic—remains a monument of cinematic endurance. His next great novel, The Melancholy of Resistance (1989), brings a circus with a stuffed whale and a

disfigured prophet to a provincial town teetering on collapse. Ellen Mattson of the Academy calls it "wonderfully dark and darkly funny." Again Béla Tarr turned it into Werckmeister Harmonies (2000), with images of mobs and muted violence that still haunt me.

Then came War and War (1999): an archivist unravels in New York while trying to upload a sacred manuscript before killing himself. James Wood of The New Yorker called it "one of the most profoundly unsettling experiences I have ever had as a reader." By the final page, I too felt stripped bare, as if I'd lived another man's breakdown and survived.

Despite the darkness, his work contains a fragile thread of hope — the conviction that art itself is redemption. In his 2008 book Seiobo There Below, he follows a white heron waiting motionless in a Kyoto river, a symbol of the artist's stillness amid chaos. Academy member Anders Olsson calls the novel "magnificent," finding in it



“a finely tuned sense of darkness” and the glimmer of transcendence. It’s as if the “master of apocalypse” went searching for serenity in Asia—and, miraculously, found it.

### ***Four Doorways into Krasznahorkai’s World***

#### **Sátántangó (1985):**

A debut novel unlike any other, writes Sem-Sandberg. On the Hungarian plain, con-men Irimiás and Petrina lead villagers into an “apocalyptic dance with infernal consequences.” Forty years on, it remains a virtuoso first step in a visionary career.

#### **The Melancholy of Resistance (1989):**

A small town slides into nightmare as chaos spreads from a traveling circus. “You have to act even if there is no point to your actions,” Mattson notes. A timeless fable of disorder and dark comedy.

#### **Seiobo There Below (2008):**

Seventeen episodes meditating on art and impermanence—from Kyoto to Florence.

A white heron waiting in a river becomes the emblem of the artist: invisible, patient, eternal.

#### **Herscht 07769 (2021):**

In a small German town, paranoia and myth collide. Florian Herscht, a gentle giant, is swept into underground movements as Bach’s music drifts through the pages. Anna-Karin Palm calls it “musically flowing, lively prose.”

Each of these novels is a different portal—from village apocalypse to global meditation on beauty.

Whichever you choose, you won’t leave unchanged.

### **A Nobel for the Unquiet Voices**

The café has emptied; rain streaks the big windows. I catch my reflection—a Cuban-born writer far from home, thinking of how a Hungarian novel about an abandoned farm once kept my spirit alive under censorship.

Literature travels in mysterious ways. Krasznahorkai wrote from behind the Iron Curtain, yet his words crossed the sugarcane curtain to reach me. His Nobel feels personal—it vindicates the faith of all of us who clung to art in dark times, who believed in having a voice even from afar.

Krasznahorkai, now 71, is the second Hungarian Nobel laureate after Imre Kertész. He once thanked Kafka, Jimi Hendrix, and the city of Kyoto for shaping his imagination—an improbable trinity that somehow makes perfect sense.

Today, that voice rings from Stockholm to New York to Havana. In all its bleakness, it still “reaffirms the power of art.” I step back into the drizzle thinking: the world is full of apocalyptic terrors—wars, tyrannies, disinformation—but here is a writer who stared into that abyss and found meaning. Art survives. Voices carry. Even in hell, there is a beauty that can save us.



# Manuel

PUERTORRIQUEÑOS  
EN EL MUNDO  
DE LOS CÓMICS

PUERTO RICANS  
IN THE WORLD  
OF COMICS



# Martínez Nazario

## Puerto Rican Imagination at NYPL

### Art-Sólido | New York



Today marks the opening of ¡WEPA! Puerto Ricans in the World of Comics at The New York Public Library, now officially inaugurated and open to the public.

After more than twenty-five years of dedicated work, in 2022 Manuel Martínez Nazario donated his remarkable archive to The New York Public Library, where it now serves as an invaluable resource for researchers, students, and the general public. What began as a personal project has grown into one of the largest collections of its kind, documenting Puerto Rican presence in the comics industry across both Puerto Rico and the United States.

Now, that legacy takes shape in a vibrant exhibition that celebrates

imagination, identity, and resilience through the lens of Puerto Rican creators. ¡WEPA! Puerto Ricans in the World of Comics, drawn from the Manuel Martínez Nazario Collection, brings together legends of the comics industry alongside independent and emerging artists. Their works narrate stories of displacement and belonging, of creativity and cultural pride—an act of resistance against erasure and, at the same time, a joyful celebration of Puerto Rican life.

With this context in mind, Art-Sólido spoke with Manuel Martínez Nazario about the origins of his collection, the cultural power of comics, and the future of Puerto Rican creators within a global landscape.



Curator Paloma Celis Carbajal, collector and donor Manuel Martínez Nazario, and artist Antonio Rozado Vélez during the opening of the exhibition

## ART-SÓLIDO INTERVIEW

### Manuel Martínez Nazario

*WEPA! Puerto Ricans in the World of Comics — The New York Public Library*

#### 1. Identity and Belonging

***You were born in Brooklyn and raised in Puerto Rico; do you consider yourself more New York Rican or more Boricua?***

It is difficult to answer this question because both societies were decisive in my development as a person. My parents met in New York City; they were part of that migratory group of the fifties that came to work in the factories, and it was in that city that they met. The City of New York allowed the

Martínez Nazario family to be formed. Then, Puerto Rico raised me, provided my education, and ensured my health. It was in Puerto Rico where I raised my family. I have always been clear about my origin, and that is why I also include my Spanish ancestors in this identity equation—specifically those from the Canary Islands and Asturias, Spain.

#### 2. First Encounters

***What is your earliest memory of comics, and what drew you into that universe?***

I started reading comics in the late seventies. Although I don't remember which was the very first comic I read, I do remember my favorites: El Conejo de la Suerte (Bugs Bunny); Archie; Tom & Jerry; La Pequeña Lulú

(Little Lulu); Gasparín (Casper); Periquita (Nancy); Súper Ratón (Mighty Mouse); La Zorra y el Cuervo (Fox & Crow); El Pájaro Loco (Woody Woodpecker); and La Pantera Rosa (Pink Panther), all published by Editorial Novaro in Mexico. I reread them with great enthusiasm and happiness.

### 3. Becoming a Collector

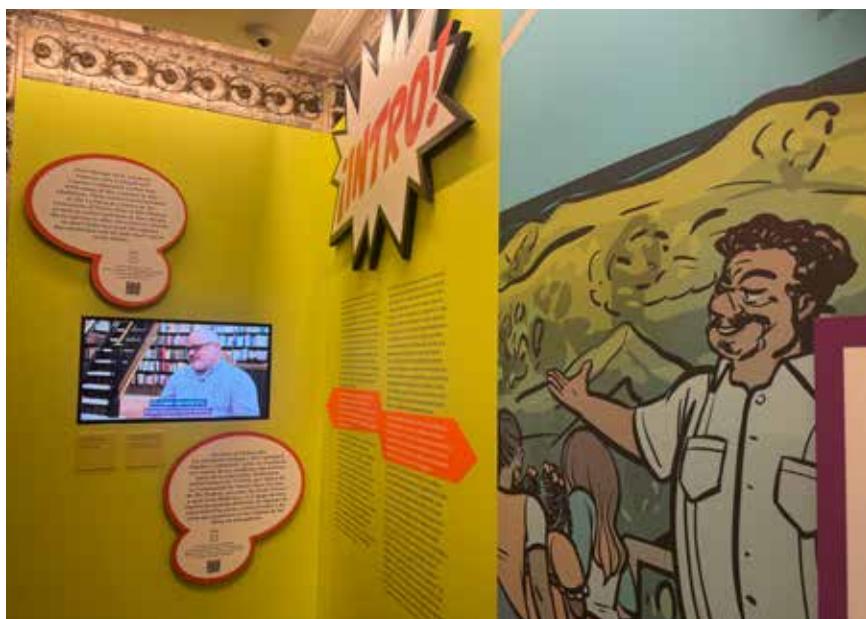
#### *When did you begin collecting comics in a conscious and organized way?*

I began collecting comics in a conscious and organized way in 1990, the year I started working full-time at the University of Puerto Rico. I didn't limit myself to U.S. comics; I also collected comics from Mexico, Argentina, and Spain.

### 4. The Scope of the Collection

#### *How extensive is your collection today? Could you describe its size in terms of numbers, rare pieces, or highlights?*

The collection consists of approximately 1,600 comics and about fifty original artworks. Many of the comics are first editions, and many others are signed by their creators, such as George Pérez, Kenneth Rocafort, Dave Álvarez, Rangy García, Martín Gaudier, Ricardo Álvarez, José Cruz, Jonathan Collazo, and Eliana Falcón, among others. Among the most important pieces are several works by Ismael Rodríguez Báez, the father of Puerto Rican comics, who began publishing in 1953. The collection also includes the most extensive series made in Puerto Rico, Tato & Kenepo, which consists of 50 issues.



## 5. The Decision to Donate

*Why did you choose the New York Public Library as the home for your important donation?*

I selected the New York Public Library as the new home for this collection because it can provide the physical facilities, trained staff to manage a special collection, security, preservation, and the promotion of this resource for researchers.

## 6. The Coquí as a Superhero

*When we see the Coquí portrayed as Superman, are we witnessing a form of cultural appropriation or a creative act of syncretism?*

Beyond seeing it as a creative act of syncretism, I also see it as a way of giving importance to natural resources, particularly wildlife. The coquí, an endemic species of Puerto Rico, is portrayed as a figure who protects our environment. I also see it as a tribute to such an important character in American popular culture, Superman.

## 7. Two Perspectives

*Do Puerto Ricans on the island and in New York interpret Puerto Rican representation in comics in the same way, or do you notice tensions and differences?*

The representation of Puerto Ricans in comics is very diverse and has changed through the decades, both in New York City and in Puerto Rico. I have noticed that for a Puerto Rican comic to succeed in New York City, it must often include elements of identity such as El Morro, the maga flower (*Thespesia grandiflora*), Old San Juan, the Puerto Rican flag, native food, salsa lyrics, and everyday expressions like *wepa*, *acho*, *ay bendito*, *mano*, etc. However, there are also many comics produced in Puerto Rico that do not include these elements and are still 100% Puerto Rican, such as *Dokyo* (by Jonathan Collazo), *Cosmic Fish* (by Eliana Falcón), *NonPack* (by Rangy García), and *Crimson Maiden* (by Javier Cruz).

## 8. Cultural Impact

*What impact have comics had on Puerto Rican culture and its diaspora?*

The most significant impact is that they have served as a mechanism of unity and a way of expressing, in some cases, the issues that affect us on the Island. For example, Hurricane Maria was devastating in every sense of the word: more than 4,300 people died, the government was extremely incompetent, and aid for the most vulnerable never arrived. Another interesting fact is that the number of Puerto Ricans living in the diaspora is now greater than the number residing on the island.

¡ESO!

TRUS  
JUNDO

WEATHER  
MARI





## 9. Island vs. City

*What differences or defining characteristics do you see between comics created in New York and those produced in Puerto Rico?*

Are there different trends or interests? Would you say one tends to be more political than the other? One distinguishing feature is the editorial process. Many of the comics produced in Puerto Rico, though not all, are handmade or short-run editions, while those created in the United States often benefit from a higher editorial level. There are, of course, exceptions. As for political criticism, I perceive it to be present in both contexts.

## 10. Festivals and Gatherings

*What role has the Puerto Rico Comic Con played in giving visibility to local artists and readers?*

There are fewer and fewer local comic creators participating in Puerto Rico Comic Con. The reasons are diverse, but the two most common are the high cost of participation and the lack of strong support from visitors. Although this type of event is supposed to give visibility to creators, these factors carry considerable weight.

## 11. Censorship and Resistance

*How did comics or caricature function during the period of the Gag Law (Ley Mordaza) in Puerto Rico?*

During the period of the Gag Law in Puerto Rico, the production of comics was almost non-existent, and the only person publishing comics at the time was Ismael Rodríguez Báez. In fact, the comics he published were educational and informative. It should also be noted that sequential art critical of

politics was limited to newspaper editorial cartoons, created under the protection of press freedom.

## 12. Golden Eras

*From your perspective, what would you consider the most significant period in Puerto Rican comics, and why?*

The most significant period was between the fifties and seventies, because it marked the formal beginning of comic book production in Puerto Rico, with Ismael Rodríguez Báez as its sole exponent.

## 13. Boricua Icons

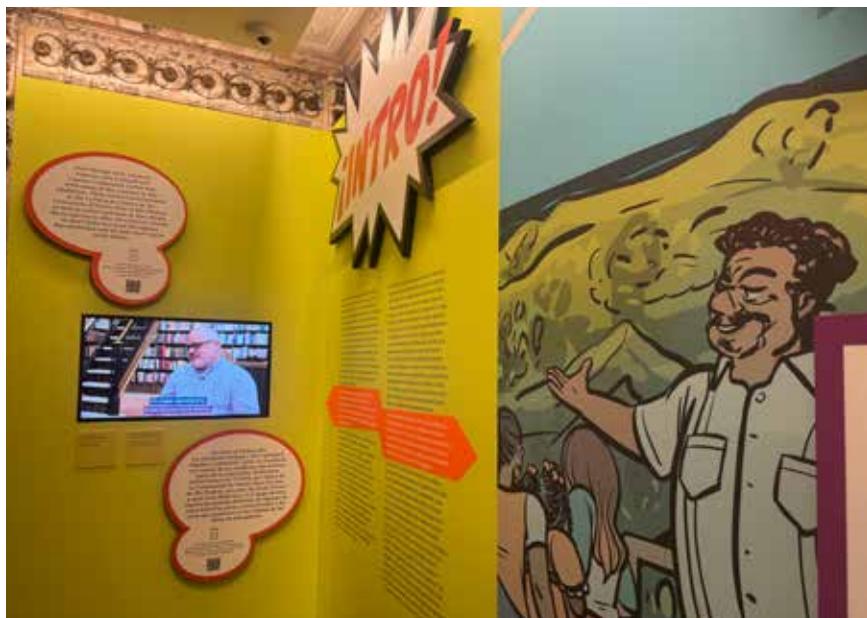
*In your opinion, who is the most popular character in Puerto Rican comics?*

Selecting a single popular character would undoubtedly produce a heated debate. I prefer to mention several very popular figures over the years, such as Turey El Taíno (by Ricardo Álvarez), Tato & Kenepo (by Martín Gaudier), Yenny (by Dave Álvarez), and Pepito (by Harold Jessurun and Aníbal Quiñones).

## 14. Key Creators

*Which artists do you consider the most influential or admired in Puerto Rican comics, both on the island and in the diaspora?*

Undoubtedly, the most influential Puerto Rican artists today include Rubén Moreira, George Pérez, Rangy García, Kenneth Rocafort, and Dave Álvarez.



## 15. The Collection as a Political Act

*You have said that these comics represent an act of resistance against forgetting. In what ways is your collection also a cultural and political statement?*

The collection is also a cultural and political statement because it refuses to fall into oblivion and serves, in some cases, to document the cultural, economic, and political history of Puerto Ricans. It is also a way of telling the world that we have lived under—and survived—the colonial regimes of Spain and the United States for more than five hundred years.

## 16. The Future of Puerto Rican Comics

*Looking ahead, what do you see in the new generation of artists? Where do you think Puerto Rican comics are headed in a global context?*

I see in the next generation of artists a bright and promising future. There are many talented Puerto Ricans with a strong desire to learn and grow—two essential elements in art. On a global level, I believe they have the ability to integrate into other artistic fields and markets, such as those in Mexico, France, Spain, and Italy.

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The conversation with Manuel Martínez Nazario makes clear that comics are more than entertainment—they are archives of memory, imagination, and cultural survival. The only limits to comic book storytelling are the imaginations of the creators. The comics in this exhibition push the boundaries of those limits, venturing into far-flung planets, fantastic dimensions, impossible realities, and sci-fi futures. These other worlds—*otros mundos*—often weave in elements of Puerto Rican culture and convey a powerful sense of *puertorriqueñidad*. Freed from the constraints of reality, they open space for hope and possibility.

This exhibition is organized by The New York Public Library and curated by Paloma Celis Carbajal, Curator for Latin American, Iberian, and U.S. Latino Collections, and Charles Cuykendall Carter, Assistant Curator in the Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle.

Beyond its historical and cultural significance, ¡WEPA! Puerto Ricans in the World of Comics stands out for its exceptional exhibition design and curatorial vision. From the layout and installation to the graphic presentation, every detail invites visitors to step into a magical world—one that feels both intimate and expansive, rooted in memory yet alive with imagination. The thoughtful design reveals the care, respect, and scholarly precision with which this collection has been handled, affirming that it is, indeed, in the best possible hands.

The work of Paloma, Charles, and the entire curatorial team succeeds in giving each piece its rightful importance, creating a space where visitors can fully experience the richness and diversity of Puerto Rican creativity. As a fully bilingual

exhibition, it bridges cultures and audiences, marking what will surely be a defining moment in the presentation of Puerto Rican art and identity at The New York Public Library.





# AMY SHERALD AMERICAN SUBLIME

AMY SHERALD (b. 1974) is a contemporary American painter and sculptor. Her work is characterized by its vibrant colors and intricate details, often depicting figures in various poses and settings. She has exhibited her work in numerous galleries and museums, including the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Her art is known for its emotional depth and technical skill, capturing the essence of the human experience.

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**AMY SHERALD**  
AMERICAN SUBLIME  
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART  
NEW YORK, NY  
OCTOBER 10, 2019 - JANUARY 12, 2020

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EXIT

# Amy



# Sherald

## The Sublime Americana at the Whitney

Anna Levin | **New York**



On a clear New York afternoon, just when the city seems too much like itself, I stepped into the Whitney and found myself somewhere else entirely. Amy Sherald was waiting, or maybe it was a boy in a canary-yellow hoodie, or a woman staring into the horizon with a rainbow on her chest. This is American Sublime — not the anthem, but the pause between notes. Sherald's portraits hum with the quiet weight of history and the electric promise of presence. These are not just paintings, they are propositions: What if dignity were a default? What if beauty didn't ask permission? Somewhere between Hopper's solitude and Rockwell's sweet Americana, Sherald paints a third way — vibrant, calm, Black, and unbothered.

In her largest museum show to date, nearly 50 portraits by Sherald stretch across the gallery like a visual memoir of people we might know — a sister, a neighbor,

a kid you once danced with at a barbecue. Their skin is painted in grayscale, a nod to Renaissance “grisaille,” but more subversive: it refuses to define by color what the eyes should discover through presence. The result is mesmerizing. These figures float between eras and spaces, backdrops stripped to essential blocks of color, like the memory of a summer day distilled into pigment.

Sherald made history painting Michelle Obama's official portrait for the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in 2018, a sensation that drew crowds like pilgrims. But her story begins long before that. Born in Columbus, Georgia, in 1973, and later trained at Clark Atlanta University and the Maryland Institute College of Art, Sherald honed her vision in the halls of HBCUs and under the stern, abstract eye of Grace Hartigan. It was there that she discovered, almost by accident,

the textural splatter that would give her early works their unique surface. A moment of frustration transformed into a new language.

But Sherald has never painted with anger. Even in Breonna Taylor, that now-iconic portrait created for Vanity Fair in 2020, the tone is radiant, solemn, hopeful. Set against a sea of aqua inspired by Taylor's birthstone, the portrait anchors a gallery titled "The Girl Next Door," surrounded by other young women who might be in a college brochure or standing in line at CVS. Taylor is not mythologized but remembered, claimed.

At the center of the exhibition is *Ecclesia (The Meeting of Inheritance and Horizons)*, a monumental triptych that feels part Wes Anderson, part lighthouse dream. Sherald designed the watchtower herself, each canvas featuring a solitary figure whose clothing mirrors a weather pattern: sunrise, storm, rainbow. They are looking out at us, or maybe at their future. Maybe both.

If Norman Rockwell gave us an idealized America of small towns and Saturday evenings, Sherald paints the real and imagined Americana that was always there but rarely seen on museum walls. Her figures are not symbols but selves. There is fashion here, and yes, fabulousness—but also stillness, subtle rebellion, the everyday elevated. Her work insists on visibility without spectacle.

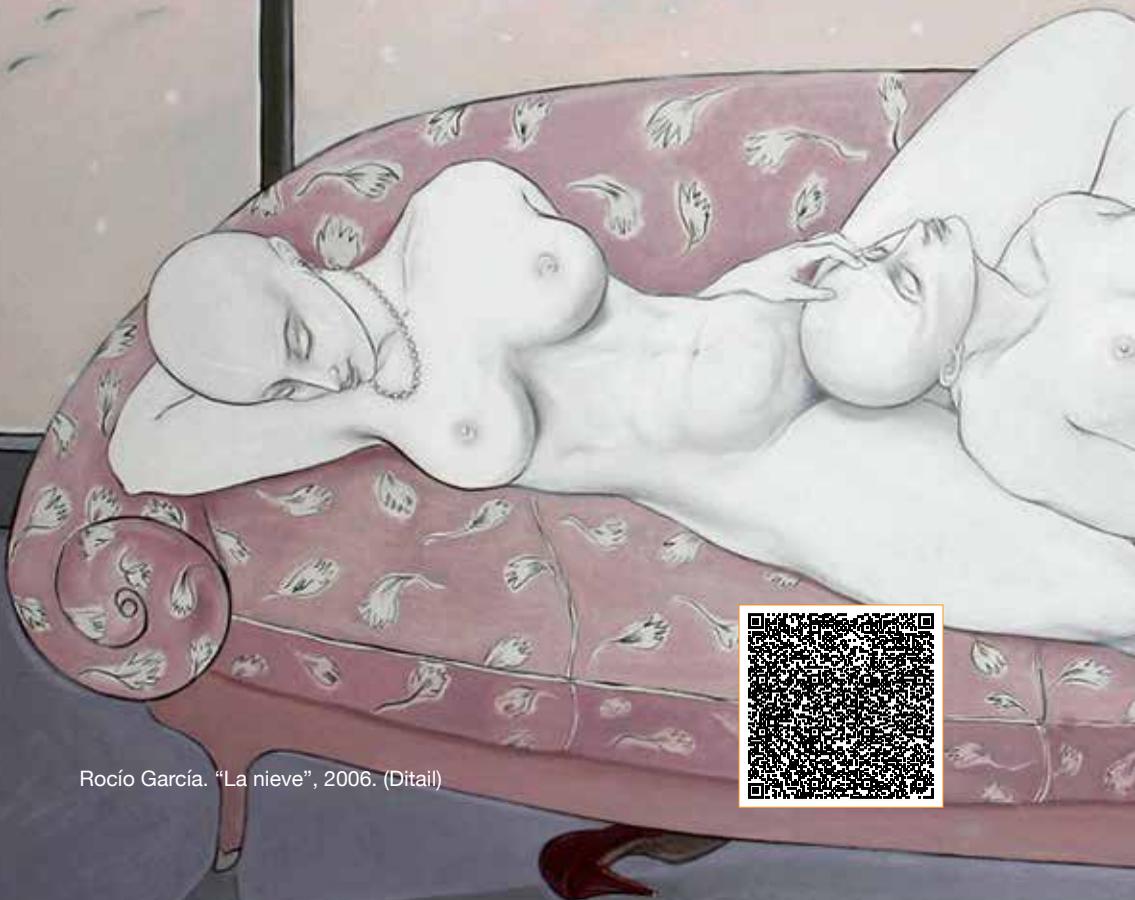
Sherald dresses her sitters from a studio wardrobe, stages scenes with buckets of sand, and constructs her own backdrops. Each canvas is a world she builds from scratch, where Black people are centered not because of trauma, but because of presence, style, thought, ease.

This, in the end, is the real sublimity: not grandeur, but grace. Not noise, but attention. To see Sherald's paintings is to hear a whisper that cuts through the shouting outside: we are here, we have always been here, and look how beautiful ordinary can be.





# Piter



Rocío García. "La nieve", 2006. (Ditail)



# Ortega Núñez

¿Cómo se interpreta una obra de arte?

Art-Sólido | New York



La galería Saphira & Ventura fue el escenario de la presentación oficial del más reciente libro de Piter Ortega Núñez, *¿Cómo se interpreta una obra de arte?: Un viaje emocional, visual y simbólico para aprender a mirar*, publicado por la editorial Art-Sólido. La velada reunió a un público diverso: artistas, curadores, periodistas, médicos, terapeutas y amantes del arte y las humanidades. Y no era casual, porque de eso precisamente trata el libro: del arte como un territorio común donde confluyen la sensibilidad, el pensamiento y la posibilidad de sanar.

En un ambiente cercano y cordial, Ortega compartió con los asistentes las motivaciones detrás de su obra: la necesidad de devolver al arte su dimensión humana, de enseñar a mirar con atención, libertad y curiosidad. “Interpretar no es imponer significados —dijo— sino abrirse a la experiencia de lo visible.” Su intervención, acompañada por

lecturas y conversaciones espontáneas con el público, confirmó lo que el propio texto propone: que el arte puede —y debe— ser un espacio de encuentro.

## Un diálogo entre libro y exposición

El evento coincidió con la exhibición “Upcycled Factory”, la primera muestra individual del artista EZO, reconocido por transformar materiales desechados en poesía visual y comentario social. Curada por Alcinda Saphira y Mariana Bahia, la exposición propone un viaje donde los residuos urbanos cruzan el Atlántico y renacen en las manos de este artista contemporáneo originario de Nilópolis, un suburbio de Río de Janeiro.

Antes de la presentación del libro, Piter Ortega ofreció una lectura e interpretación del trabajo de EZO, estableciendo un puente entre ambos lenguajes: el de la palabra y el de la materia. Fue, sin duda, uno



Cristina Gutiérrez. "PetroGraphos I", 2024. Técnica mixta sobre tela, 180 x 180 cm.

de los momentos más emotivos de la noche —una conjunción entre arte, reciclaje y mirada crítica que subrayó el sentido más profundo de su libro: aprender a ver con otros ojos.

### **Un mapa para mirar con sentido**

El libro, que ya se perfila como una lectura imprescindible tanto para especialistas como para el público general, ofrece una guía clara y poética sobre cómo aproximarse a las obras de arte. Ortega evita el tono académico y se dirige al lector desde la empatía. La primera parte introduce los elementos formales, simbólicos y emocionales que intervienen en la

interpretación; la segunda reúne una serie de lecturas personales de obras que han marcado su vida. En cada página se percibe la pasión del autor por mirar, pensar y sentir con honestidad.

Como él mismo afirma: *“Este libro no busca dar respuestas definitivas, sino hacer preguntas más ricas. Porque interpretar el arte es también interpretarnos a nosotros mismos. Y en tiempos de tanta violencia y confusión, mirar con sentido puede ser una forma de sanar.”*

### **El prólogo de Tomás Sánchez**

El volumen se abre con un prólogo del reconocido artista Tomás

Sánchez, quien define el libro como “un mapa interior”. Desde su práctica meditativa, Sánchez describe la contemplación como un modo de estar en el mundo: “Contemplar no solo el paisaje, sino también la sensación de que somos uno con el todo.” Para él, Ortega propone un recorrido sensible por el arte cubano contemporáneo, leído desde la emoción y la espiritualidad, sin rigideces ni dogmas.

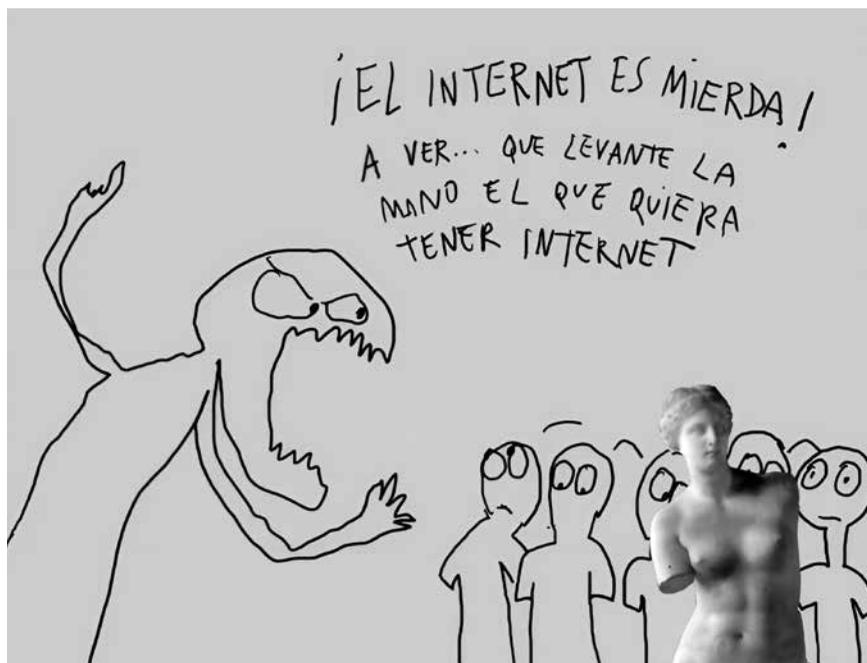
“El mapa no es el territorio”, recuerda Sánchez, pero necesitamos mapas para animarnos a entrar en la experiencia. Así entiende este libro: como una cartografía afectiva del arte y de la isla —con sus heridas, su belleza y su potencia—, un territorio donde las imágenes hablan de memoria, resistencia y esperanza.

### Arte, humanidad y diálogo

Durante la presentación, se respiraba un clima de afecto y complicidad. Entre los presentes se encontraban colegas del ámbito artístico y académico, pero también profesionales de la salud y del bienestar, interesados en la dimensión terapéutica del arte. El intercambio posterior entre el autor y los asistentes reveló el espíritu del libro: un puente entre disciplinas, generaciones y sensibilidades.

¿Cómo se interpreta una obra de arte? no pretende enseñar una fórmula, sino despertar una actitud. En palabras de Sánchez, “el arte no se enseña, se habita”. Y eso fue lo que sucedió aquella noche en Saphira & Ventura: una invitación a habitar las imágenes, a mirarlas sin miedo, con el corazón y la inteligencia abiertos.

Lázaro A. Saavedra González. De la Galería I-MEIL, 2007. Dibujo Collage Digital.



# Henry

The image features a dark green background. On the left, there are two vertical yellow bars of different heights. To the right, there are three dark green arches. A small yellow rectangle is positioned between the first and second arches. The bottom of the image is a dark brown area with a diagonal line separating it from the rest of the composition.

Henry Ballate, Piazza d'Italia after Giorgio de Chirico, 2025, 48 x 28"

# Ballate

Echoes of Absence: Exploring loneliness in urban spaces during a time of uncertainty.

Anthony Bianchi | **New York**

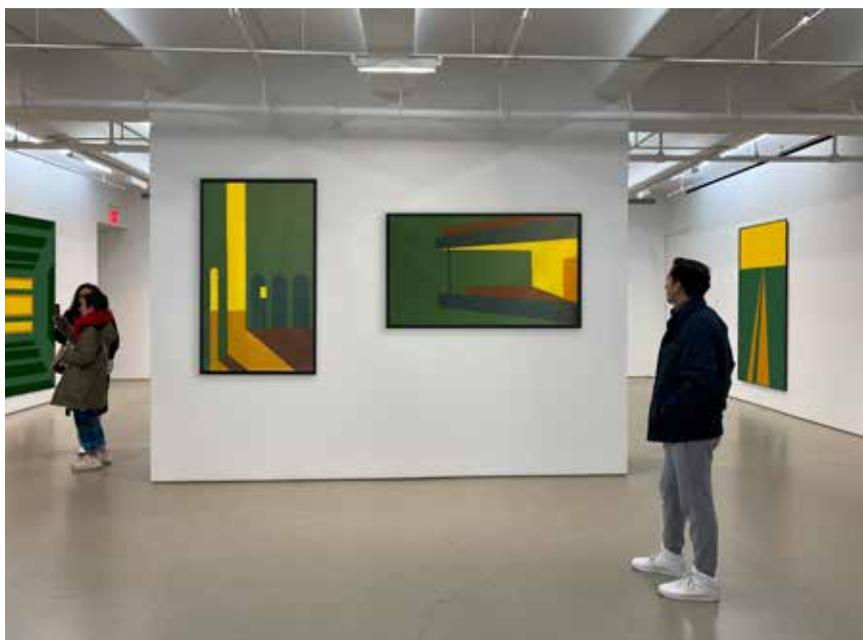


There is something about an empty city that aches. Henry Ballate's *Echoes of Absence* walks into this ache with arms open, embracing its cold edges and its unspoken ghosts. His exhibition isn't simply a nod to urban loneliness—it's a symphony of isolation, played on the strings of art history, where every echo finds a shadow, and every absence holds its breath. This body of work is characterized by a profound engagement with established artistic references, where Ballate reinterprets and transforms classic art pieces to conceptually align them with contemporary themes of desolation.

Ballate's artistic journey is informed by his rigorous training and eclectic influences, which began in Cuba and were further enriched in Italy and the United States. His

academic foundation, including a BFA and MFA in Visual Arts, has equipped him with a unique lens through which he addresses art history, ideas of human identity and societal challenges. Ballate's previous works exhibitions have demonstrated a talent for weaving together history and personal narrative, and this latest work is no exception.

In *Echoes of Absence*, Ballate reimagines iconic masterpieces by Leonardo da Vinci, Caravaggio, Giorgio de Chirico, and others, alongside Edward Hopper's emotionally charged urban landscapes. Those works have always carried a pulse—figures poised in motion, caught between intention and action. But in Ballate's hands, those figures dissolve. What's left? The walls, the windows, the light. The stillness becomes the story.



Hopper's Nighthawks without the diners. Morning Sun without the woman. It's not just subtraction—it's amplification. By removing figures and focusing solely on the architectural elements of these artworks, Ballate amplifies the sense of absence, transforming once-bustling scenes into desolate spaces. By erasing presence, Ballate makes us feel its loss more keenly. Suddenly, these once-busy scenes are deserts of the human spirit, mirroring the emptiness. By stripping these works of their human, Ballate invites viewers to reflect on their own experiences of grief and loss during a global crisis, where the city becomes both a haunting ghost and a poignant canvas for memory. This abstraction mirrors the stark reality of a nearly empty New York City during lockdown, evoking a profound sense of isolation.

The city, he tells us, is not a city without its people. And yet, here it is: abandoned, stark, waiting. Ballate's palette speaks in whispers—green, yellow, ochre. Not the saturated greens of spring or the yellows of joy, but muted tones, heavy with nostalgia. Light enters his paintings like an old friend, carrying both hope and the weight of memory. It stretches thin over empty tables, glows faintly through forgotten windows. Each color holds a quiet duality: hope and grief, presence and absence, the city as it was and as it has become. The simplicity of his minimalist approach accentuates the drama inherent in these urban landscapes, creating a visual language that communicates complex feelings of solitude and longing. Light, as a recurring motif in his work, serves as a sliver of hope within the pervasive shadow and absence—a stark contrast that resonates deeply with viewers.

Ballate's thematic focus on urban loneliness transcends artistic exploration, reflecting a deeply personal narrative. His work blends reinterpretations of iconic pieces with personal visions, creating moments where viewers may mistake instant reality for references or influences. Having endured his own challenges during the pandemic, Ballate channels these experiences into his art, inviting viewers to connect with shared moments of humanity. But this isn't just about cities or their emptiness. It's personal. Ballate's journey carries its own exiles and distances. These works don't just echo his absence—they echo ours. That friend you haven't seen. That voice you can no longer call. Ballate invites us to stand in these empty streets, not just to grieve, but to remember.

Ballate's art has always found unique ways to bridge the past and present, celebrating the

interconnectedness of global narratives, which is even more evident in this body of work. His deliberate curation of references to art history reflects a deep appreciation for the influences that have shaped his artistic identity while also remaining relevant to current societal issues. And memory is where the magic happens. These works hold a mirror to us, but not in the way you'd expect. They take us back, yes but they also push us forward. They make us ask: what happens after the silence? What will we fill these empty streets with, now that we've seen them so bare? The absence, of course, is a heavy thing. But Ballate doesn't leave us there. His light—the same light that lingers in Hopper, that slices through Caravaggio—is a whisper of resilience. A reminder that emptiness is not an ending.

Echoes of Absence highlights not only a skilled artist but also a curator of collective memory. When



confronted with Ballate's works that reinterpret familiar and iconic pieces of art, the viewer is likely to experience a complex emotional response that intertwines nostalgia, longing, and introspection. The simplicity of the compositions and the limited color palette creates an emotional tension that encourages viewers to pause and reflect. The absence of human in these otherwise bustling scenes evokes a sense of desolation that can be both haunting and thought-provoking. The viewer may be reminded of the original contexts of these pieces—moments of communal gathering and warmth. The transformation of these scenes into desolate landscapes invites viewers to reflect on what has been lost, both in art history and in their own lives. This nostalgia can evoke a longing for pre-pandemic times, when the city thrived with energy and human connection.

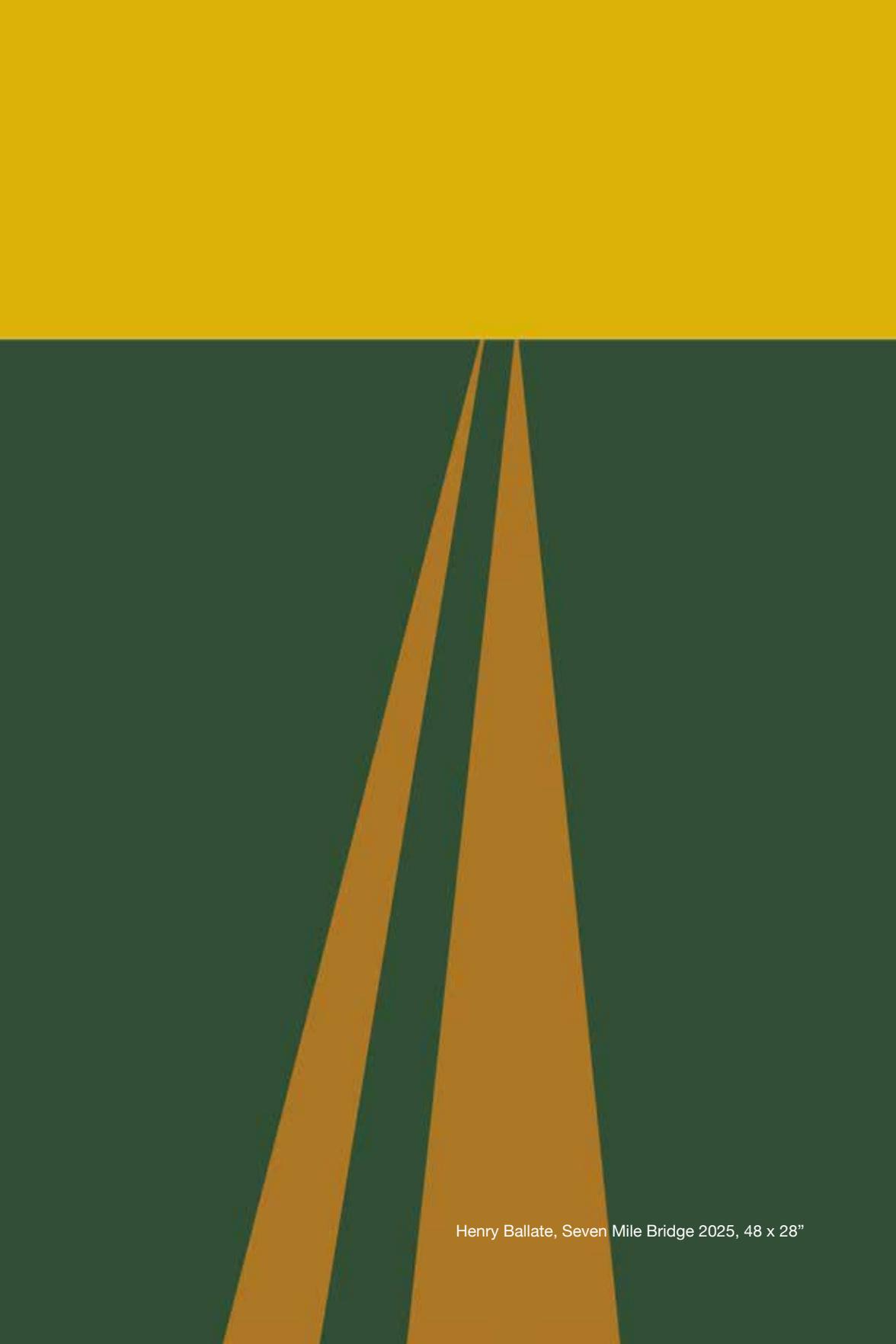
What is a city, if not its echoes? The laughter that once rang out, the footsteps that filled its streets. Ballate takes those echoes and holds them up to the light. He shows us the emptiness so we can remember the fullness. He lets us linger in the shadow so we can crave the return of the sun. And in the end, he doesn't give us answers. He gives us space—space to grieve, to reflect, to hope. Because in that space, in that absence, something begins again.

Henry Ballate's art elicits a rich tapestry of emotions by recontextualizing familiar images into desolate, human-free scenes. This transformative approach enables viewers to engage with deeper themes of memory, absence, and hope,

ultimately fostering a profound connection to both the artwork and their own experiences during a time of uncertainty.

Echoes of Absence serves as a powerful commentary on the loneliness experienced in urban environments, particularly within the context of New York City during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through his innovative interpretations of iconic artworks, the artist confronts viewers with the stark realities of absence and memory while simultaneously offering a glimmer of hope through light and color. This exhibition is a testament to the enduring power of art to articulate and process shared human experiences, inviting deeper reflections on our urban landscapes and the lives we lead within them.

Echoes of Absence isn't just art—it's a map of loneliness, a window into memory, a hand extended toward hope. It tells us: this city, this life, this loneliness—it is ours. And it is beautiful, even in its quiet. Especially in its quiet.



Henry Ballate, Seven Mile Bridge 2025, 48 x 28"

# Juan Luis



# Pérez

## THE ART OF STRENGTH

### A Conversation with Juan Luis Pérez — From Canvas to Culture, and Fitness to Freedom

Piter Ortega Núñez | **Miami**



Born in Havana and based in Miami, Juan Luis Pérez is a self-taught contemporary artist whose work resists categorization. He defines his practice through freedom of choice—changing style “as if changing clothes,” refusing academic dogmas, and working instinctively across materials and techniques. His paintings operate as social portraits of the human condition: urgent, physical, and emotionally charged.

That same intensity fuels another facet of his life: Rock Fitness, a luxury boutique gym concept in South Florida that merges elite performance, intentional design, and a disciplined culture of training. This conversation explores how art and fitness converge into a single philosophy of life—where

creation, repetition, and strength become forms of meaning.

#### **Art and Creative Journey**

*1. Your work is often described as difficult to categorize. Is that intentional?*

Juan Luis Pérez: Absolutely. I don’t believe in fixed categories. I change style as if I were changing clothes because art, for me, is freedom of choice. The moment a style becomes a rule, it stops being honest. I’m not interested in trends or fashions—I’m interested in what feels true at a given moment.

*2. You’ve spoken about staying away from fads and trends. What does that independence protect in your work?*



Juan Luis Pérez: It protects authenticity. Trends can be seductive, but they're also temporary. If you follow them, you end up producing echoes. Independence allows me to work from instinct and necessity, not from expectation. That's the only way I can stay connected to real inspiration.

*3. Being self-taught is central to your identity. Why was resisting academic dogma important to you?*

Juan Luis Pérez: Because dogma can become a cage. I respect academic knowledge, but I don't believe creativity should obey rigid formulas. Being self-taught gave me the freedom to experiment, to fail, to invent my own language without permission.

*4. Your materials are diverse—oils, acrylics, charcoal, resins, newspaper, gesso. What draws you to that mix?*

Juan Luis Pérez: Each material has a temperament. I like the tension that happens when dissimilar elements collide. The spatula, for example, became central in my work because it allows movement, force, and immediacy. I'm also drawn to monochromatic palettes and rough textures—they speak more directly to emotion.

*5. What themes consistently return in your art?*

Juan Luis Pérez: Human beings and their conflicts. My work is essentially social portraiture. I'm interested in the pressure points of

our time—identity, displacement, contradiction, connection. Even when the imagery changes, that concern remains.

*6. You once said, “If I think of something and I feel it, I create it.” How does intuition guide your process?*

Juan Luis Pérez: Intuition is the engine. I don’t start with a strict plan. Feeling and concept arrive together. Rules don’t apply to my world; the work reveals itself through action. Painting is a physical act for me—almost athletic.

*7. Your work often reflects dialogues between cultures. How does that appear visually?*

Juan Luis Pérez: Through tension and coexistence. East and West,

different societies, different symbols—yet one human condition. I’m interested in how cultures differ on the surface but share the same emotional core.

*8. One of your recognized works speaks about unity in a fragmented world. Why is connectedness important to you?*

Juan Luis Pérez: Because we live in a time of separation disguised as communication. I’m interested in what still binds us together. Even conflict can be a form of connection.

### **From the Studio to the Gym: Rock Fitness**

*9. What inspired you to create Rock Fitness?*



Juan Luis Pérez: Rock Fitness was born from discipline. Training has always been part of my life, and I saw fitness as another form of craft. I wanted to create a space where performance is taken seriously—where people train with intention and expect excellence.

*10. Why was design as important as training in Rock Fitness?*

Juan Luis Pérez: Because environment shapes behavior. Design is not decoration—it's structure. A well-designed space reinforces commitment, focus, and respect for the process. That's as true in a gym as it is in a studio.

*11. Do you see parallels between art and fitness?*

Juan Luis Pérez: Completely. Both demand repetition, patience, and discipline. In art, you build a visual language; in fitness, you build a body. Both are about consistency over time.

*12. The phrase "Train Like a Pro. Live the Luxury Grind™" defines Rock Fitness. What does it mean to you?*

Juan Luis Pérez: It means intensity without compromise. You can grind hard and still demand quality—coaching, equipment, experience. Luxury, for me, is precision and standards, not excess.

*13. How do you balance being an artist and leading a fitness brand?*

Juan Luis Pérez: They balance each other. Art keeps me open and experimental; fitness keeps

me grounded and disciplined. One feeds the other.

## Looking Ahead

*14. What do you hope people take away from your paintings and sculptures?*

Juan Luis Pérez: A confrontation with themselves—with what's human, fragile, and unresolved. I don't want comfort; I want recognition.

*15. What do you hope people experience at Rock Fitness?*

Juan Luis Pérez: Respect for the process. A sense that excellence is built daily, through discipline and intention.

*16. Do you see future projects where art and fitness intersect more directly?*

Juan Luis Pérez: Yes. I'm interested in creating experiences where movement, space, and visual language coexist—events, installations, collaborations. The body and the image speak the same language of effort.

## Closing

Juan Luis Pérez's work—on canvas and in the gym—argues for a single truth: discipline is creative, and creativity is physical. Whether through the force of a spatula or the repetition of a lift, his practice insists on intention, freedom, and the courage to build one's own rules.



# Robert



# Motherwell

## A Kind of Poem

### Art-Sólido | New York



You enter the New York Public Library on Fifth Avenue—the lions, as always, pretending not to look at you—and without quite realizing it, you’ve stepped into a studio. The Wachenheim Gallery transforms into Robert Motherwell’s workspace, where books and pigments mix like gin and vermouth—though with decidedly more ink.

Robert Motherwell: At Home and in the Studio, curated with special tenderness by Clare Bell, isn’t one of those hushed, mausoleum-style retrospectives. No. This is something far more intimate: a slow exhale into the space where a man painted, read, scribbled, and underlined his way through modernism. It’s as if we’ve been allowed to sit in his Greenwich home while he’s out for a walk, the coffee still warm.

We’re not just shown his prints—though they are here in their brilliant emotional gravity, aquatints and screenprints pulsing with the hum of subconscious language.

We’re given something even rarer: his books, his annotations, his marginalia. His thoughts-in-process. You get the sense that the brush never really left his hand, even while reading Poe or Mallarmé. That his pen was always ready to turn a sentence into a gesture, a paragraph into a shape.

And these were not decorative books. This wasn’t a library installed for show. No beige spines matching the curtains. No. Over 4,000 volumes, lived-in, marked up, chewed on intellectually. Poetry, philosophy, history—what a man carries through a life. His notebooks and underlinings are like second canvases. The same way a poet might annotate Lorca or Whitman, Motherwell reads to be undone. To be triggered into creation.

In one vitrine, you see a volume of Rimbaud, marked as if the page had to be rescued from drowning. Another corner holds “Dada Painters and Poets”, which he edited himself—back in 1944, when



he was already conjuring bridges between Europe and America, between verse and violence, between war's wreckage and art's response. The Dada anthology, that strange bible of modern chaos, speaks volumes about where he stood: one foot in the literary avant-garde, the other in the paint-splattered studio.

He wasn't just in conversation with visual artists; he was dining nightly with writers, mentally at least. And not just big ones—he let the language in, like light through the window. The reading was never passive. It was generative. Sometimes I think Motherwell painted as if he were trying to translate a poem he couldn't quite finish.

There's a particular melancholy in seeing the overlap of his worlds. The studio becomes a bookshelf, and the books become brushstrokes.

The man is never only painting, never only reading. He's feeling his way into the heart of something—not just aesthetics, but existence. The gesture, always, is a kind of question. What is human? What is remembered? What is forgotten?

The prints on view here—black, white, ochre, blood-red—don't illustrate texts, but they pulse with the same urgency. Some look like torn pages from a dream. Others, like punctuation blown up to the size of protest. But always, there is thinking, deeply embedded in the work. The shapes may be abstract, but the emotion isn't. You don't need to know Hegel or Lorca to feel it. The art breathes on its own.

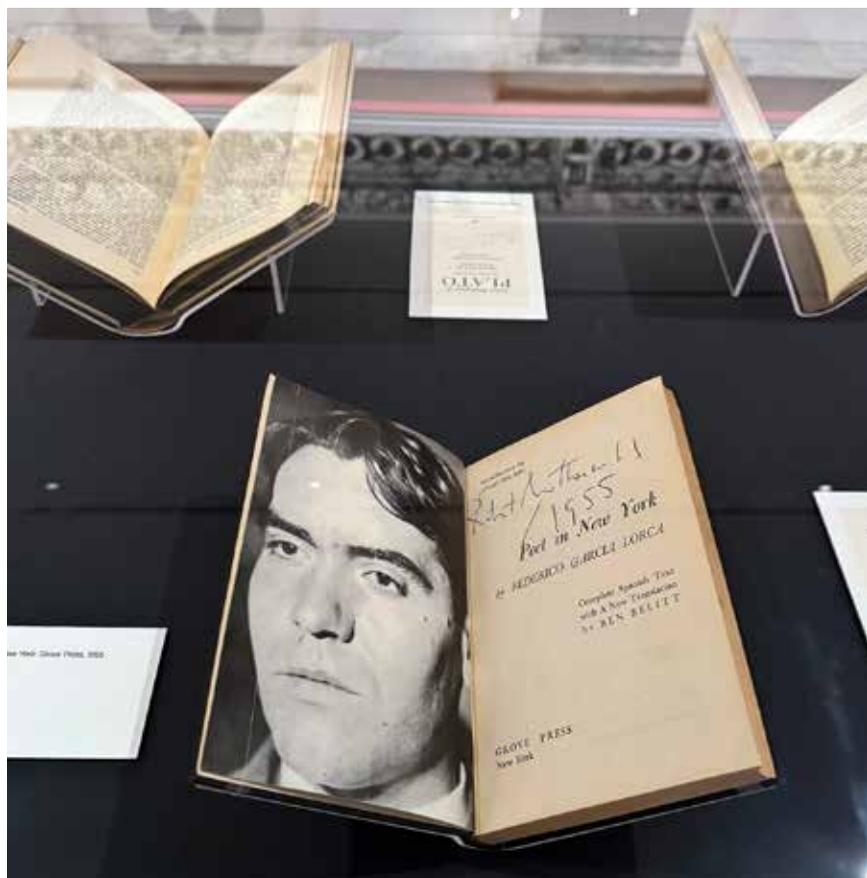
And then there's the paradox of silence. So much of the show is quiet, contemplative. Like reading a letter never meant to be sent. You

wander past the vitrines, read his notes in a looping, elegant hand, and it feels almost intrusive. And yet: he wanted us here. That's the gift. This isn't a museum of mourning—it's a communion.

Standing in the Wachenheim Gallery, just steps from Bryant Park, the city breathing just beyond the marble, you begin to realize this show isn't just about a man who read and painted. It's about the in-between, that space between the page and the canvas, between solitude and expression. It's about the studio of the mind. A life devoted to both line and language.

And so here we are, in the library, looking at an artist's library. We are guests in his intellect, seated in a chair of imagination and critical inquiry. We are inside the room where literature and art made love and left behind something trembling.

Motherwell understood, as all great artists do, that to make something truly modern, you have to look backward with full heart. That Dada mattered. That poetry had blood in it. That printmaking was not a retreat but a sharpening. And that a painter could, in the same breath, be an editor—of ideas, of time, of silence.



This exhibition gives us something rare: not a monument, but a moment. A moment inside a man who read deeply, painted boldly, and lived always between gesture and thought.

Go. Before August 2nd. Go not like a scholar, but like a friend. Go to read his books with your eyes, and his art with your body.

And maybe, if you're lucky, you'll hear his voice in the white space between prints.

Not shouting, but murmuring:  
“This, too, was a kind of poem.”

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*This exhibition is organized by The New York Public Library and curated by Clare Bell, Miriam & Ira D. Wallach Associate Director for Art, Prints and Photographs.*





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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