



Cuban Art in the 20th Century

CULTURAL IDENTITY AND THE INTERNATIONAL AVANT GARDE





CUBA

SCALES.
Stature Miles, 69.16 - 1 Degree.
Kilometres, 111.307 - 1 Degree.



An impressionistic painting of a coastal town, likely Havana, Cuba, featuring a large red 'C' overlaid on the left side. The painting shows buildings, a church spire, and a body of water under a cloudy sky.

Cuban Art in the 20th Century

CULTURAL IDENTITY AND THE INTERNATIONAL AVANT GARDE

CURATOR
SEGUNDO J. FERNANDEZ

ESSAYS BY
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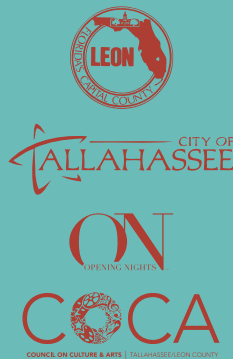
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The exhibition *Cuban Art in the Twentieth Century: Cultural Identity and the International Avant Garde* was organized by the Florida State University Museum of Fine Arts in concert with Guest Curator Segundo J. Fernandez and *Cernuda Arte* of Coral Gables, Florida. Project Staff: Allys Palladino-Craig, Editor and Grant Writer; Jean D. Young, Registrar and Book Designer; Teri R. Abstein, Curator of Education; Wayne T. Vonada, Jr., Chief Preparator and Elizabeth McLendon, Archivist and Special Projects Coordinator.

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■ [cover top row, left to right] R.C. Bears, *Viandas (Staples)*, 1879, oil on canvas, 14½ x 12 inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon; José A. Bencomo Mena, *La Ceiba (The Ceiba Tree)*, 1949, oil on board, 15¾ x 12 inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon; Amelia Peláez, *Interior con Balcón (Interior with Balcony)*, 1947, mixed media on heavy paper laid down on board, 22 x 30. Courtesy of the Amelia Peláez Foundation. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte; Leopoldo Romañach, *Muchacha (Young Lady)*, c. 1930, oil on canvas, 25½ x 18½ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

■ [cover bottom row, left to right] Antonio Gattorno, *Frutas del Trópico (Fruits of the Tropics)*, c. 1930, oil on canvas, 21½ x 17 inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte; René Portocarrero, *Ciudad (City)*, 1954, mixed media on board laid down on canvas, 13¾ x 17¼ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte; [top left] Juan Roberto Diago, *Bodegón (Still Life)*, 1946, oil on canvas, 25¼ x 20 inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon; Angel Acosta León, *Bottles*, 1958, oil on canvas, 17½ x 14 inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.

■ [title page] Leopoldo Romañach, detail of *Pueblo (Townscape)*, c. 1920s, oil on canvas, 11 x 9½ inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Peter Weishar.....4

MODERN CUBAN ART: AN INTRODUCTION

Juan A. Martínez.....7

**THE CUBAN ACADEMY OF SAN ALEJANDRO
AND THE ATLANTIC WORLD**

Paul Niell.....17

**NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE INTERNATIONAL
AVANT GARDE**

Segundo J. Fernandez.....33

PLATES.....55

ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

Mary Margaret Fernandez.....97

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY.....104

◀Lilian Garcia-Roig, detail of *St. Marks Inlet (FL)*, 2007, oil on canvas, 40 x 30 inches. Courtesy of the Artist.



Photo credit: Jon Nalon

Acknowledgements for *Cuban Art in the Twentieth Century* must begin and end with Segundo J. Fernandez. Segundo, whose idea this constellation of events has been, has garnered the faith of supporters, collectors, the Museum of Fine Arts, and scholars of Cuban art. The College of Fine Arts and our friends in the College of Law could not have undertaken the many aspects of this historical project without the goodwill of a number of benefactors and the blessing of peer reviewers on panels in more than one competitive arena. Producing a complicated project requires strategy and planning; it is gratifying that so many recognize the merit in this exceptional project created by Segundo Fernandez.

It therefore gives me great pleasure to acknowledge grants won in 2014 and in 2015 from the Tallahassee / Leon County Council of Culture and Arts with additional Cultural Tourism underwriting. Substantial support makes an ambitious project such as this — timed to coincide with the University's cultural arts festival Opening Nights and with the Spring Legislative session — a joy to orchestrate. Curator Fernandez's team has been able to schedule a full programme of events

▲ *Map of Cuba*, 1898, paper page from atlas, 16½ x 21½ inches. Private Collection.

Peter Weishar

with promotion by Chris Heacox's *Opening Nights*, with the Arts & Humanities Program Enhancement initiative of the Council on Research and Creativity at the University, and with grants awarded to the Museum of Fine Arts.

Segundo Fernandez has friends everywhere. As a collector of art from many eras and parts of the world, he treasures his interaction with equally keen collectors, among them Ramón Cernuda, the man who went to court in Florida to champion cultural heritage. The Cuban Museum of Arts and Culture in Miami in the 1990s was directed by Mr. Cernuda; he is now the CEO and Director of Cernuda Arte in Coral Gables and it is thanks to him that brilliant works of Cuban art were shown in the United States at a time when the US government had a most limited definition of art based entirely on commercial value due as proscribed by the embargo on Cuban goods. Director Cernuda's dedication to the transcendent value of a work of art changed the legal groundrules and his unique story will be discussed during the Colloquium at the College of Law.

Because the College of Fine Arts is a family, it pleases me to congratulate our art historians who are working with the Curator. In the catalogue published by the Museum of Fine Arts, Juan Martínez, Professor Emeritus of Florida International University, introduces the era of Modern Cuban Art; we are proud to note that Professor Martínez earned his doctorate from the Florida State University Department of Art History in 1991 with his dissertation "Cuban Art and National Identity: The Vanguardia Painters, 1920s-1940s." Dr. Paul Niell, currently of the Department of Art History, whose own dissertation addressed early nineteenth-century Havana, has contributed an essay on "The Cuban Academy of San Alejandro and the Atlantic World" while Segundo Fernandez addresses "Cultural Identity and the International Avant Garde."

Along with Segundo Fernandez — attorney, art collector and doctoral candidate — I welcome Michael Carrasco, as head of the Museum Studies area in the Department of Art History, and Preston McLane, attorney and art historian who is equally at home teaching at the College of Law or in the Department of Art History. Carrasco and McLane will provide additional venues in the schedule: Dr. Carrasco will host a symposium that examines topics of cultural patrimony in global contexts and Dr. McLane will moderate the Colloquium at the College of Law with Guest Speaker Ramón Cernuda.

I join Curator Segundo Fernandez in expressing gratitude to all the members of the project team including the many generous lenders to this exhibition and the Staff of the Museum of Fine Arts.

— Peter Weishar
Dean, College of Fine Arts, Florida State University



Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte

Juan A. Martínez

Modern Cuban art is a complex movement, which emerged in Havana in 1927 and matured during the next two decades. Its inception is mainly defined by a rupture with academic art, the appropriation of European avant-garde formal inventions, and the subjective symbolization of national ethos. In the 1940s a new generation of artists expanded their artistic sources to include popular art and explored new symbols of collective identity. By the 1950s a third generation of modernist artists abandoned figuration, the representation of Cuban themes, and turned to abstraction and introspection.

The Cuban modern art movement consists of a loose group of artists, divided into generations, who counted on the moral support of an intellectual elite and with minimal economic help from the private and public sectors. In spite of a fragile infrastructure, this art movement, along with similar movements in literature and music, played a major role in defining Cuban culture in the 20th century.

The first generation of modernist artists studied in Cuba's art academy, *Academia de San Alejandro* (founded in 1818), rebelled against it upon graduation, and completed their studies in Europe, mostly in Paris. There they found their way to Montparnasse, joined bohemian café life, studied in ateliers, visited galleries and museums, and participated in exhibitions. Two of them, Eduardo Abela and Amelia Peláez closed their Parisian stay with solo shows at the prestigious Galérie Zak. That generation's direct contact with modern and pre-modern European art and with artists from diverse countries had a profound impact on its artistic development. However, the Cuban artists' approach to the art they saw in ateliers, museums, and galleries was active and selective, rather than imitative. Upon their return to Havana in the late 1920s and early 1930s, they developed their signature visual languages and launched the modernist movement. Cuban modern art emerged in 1927 with the landmark *Exposición de Arte Nuevo* (Exhibition of New Art), sponsored by the vanguard cultural magazine *Revista de Avance*. The paintings in that exhibition signaled a new direction in Cuban art, away from academism, yet the modernist movement did not mature until the next decade.

The leading members of the first generation — Abela (1889-1965), Víctor Manuel (1897-1969), Antonio Gattorno (1904-1980), Peláez (1896-1968), Carlos Enríquez (1900-1957), Arístides Fernández (1904-1934), Fidelio Ponce (1895-1949), and Jorge Arche (1905-1956) — came into their own artistic vision at a time of political turmoil and economic depression, in spite of which they ushered in a new chapter in Cuban art.¹ These artists received moral support from writers who had been fellow travelers, exhibition opportunities from two non-profit institutions — the

¹ For a study of this generation of artists, see the author, *Cuban Art and National Identity: The Vanguardia Painters 1927-1950* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994). For monographs on some of these artists, see Giulio V. Blanc, *Amelia Peláez 1896-1968* (Miami: Museo Cubano de Arte y Cultura, 1988); Sean M. Poole, *Gattorno, A Cuban Painter for the World* (Miami: Arte al Día Internacional, 2004); Ramón Vázquez Díaz, *Víctor Manuel* (Sevilla: Edición Vanguardia Cubana, 2010); Juan Martínez, *Carlos Enríquez, The Painter of Cuban Ballads* (Miami: Editorial Cernuda Arte, 2010).

◀ Carlos Enríquez, *Bandolero Criollo (Criollo Bandit)*, 1943, oil on canvas, 47¾ x 34¾ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida.



Photo credit: Jon Nalon



Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte



Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte

▲ Víctor Manuel García, *City Park*, c. 1940, oil on canvas, 10½ x 12½ inches. Private Collection.

▲ Antonio Gattorno, *Fruitas del Trópico (Fruits of the Tropics)*, c. 1930, oil on canvas, 17 x 21½ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida.

▲ Fidelio Ponce de León, *Nostalgia*, c. 1940, oil on wood, 18 x 24 inches. Private Collection.

Lyceum (founded in 1929) and less so *Círculo de Bellas Artes* (founded in 1930) — and very limited backing from the Ministry of Education. The writers, such as the novelist Alejo Carpentier, the essayist Jorge Mañach, and the journalist Rafael Suárez Solís, wrote reviews of their shows and encouraged their artistic journey at the beginning of their careers. Another writer of that generation, the poet, essayist and leftist political activist, Juan Marinello urged them to view the indigenous with the eyes of foreigners and the foreign with Cuban eyes, which notion the modernist artists took to heart.² The idea was to avoid merely imitating the art of the metropolis and furthermore to encourage an exploration of the universal qualities in Cuban culture.

The *Lyceum*, a progressive women's organization, sponsored a variety of cultural activities, including lectures on modern art and art exhibitions. Many of the first generation modernists had their first solo show and also participated in collective exhibitions there. The Ministry of Education organized two national exhibitions of fine arts during that decade (1935, 1938), and gave purchase awards for the incipient *Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes* (National Museum of Fine Arts).³ The artists received a measure of support from members of the professional class, mostly lawyers and doctors, who collected their art at moderate prices and cheered them on. In general, the artists in question lived a hand to mouth existence.

The *vanguardia* painters, as the first generation is also known, were born about the time that Cuba became a republic in 1902 and were part of an intellectual elite that sought reform, in some cases revolutionary change, in all aspects of Cuban life: political, economic, educational and cultural. Inspired by the ideals of European modernism (scientific and industrial development, representative democracy, universal literacy, artistic license, etc.), they aimed to change their post-colonial society. In the visual arts these desires translated into developing an independent movement, informed of avant-garde artistic languages and committed to the personal symbolization of Cuban ethos. In the process of imagining and visualizing their young nation they favored the most humble sectors of society: the peasant and the Afro-Cuban. They also leaned towards landscape and urban scenes to express a sense of place. Some, like Víctor Manuel and Gattorno, used a synthesis of Post-Impressionism and Early Italian Renaissance art to represent the peasant as simple, languid, and sensual—living in a timeless tropical paradise. Others, like Enríquez and Fernández, using highly individual Expressionist languages, took a critical view of the countryside showing the dire economic and social situation of the peasant. In both cases they saw peasants as the most authentic of Cubans because of their closeness to the land and their culture's remoteness from contemporary foreign influences as characterized by the life of Havana. Abela and Enríquez, among others, depicted Afro-Cubans as energetic, indulgent, and inclined to magic and ritual. Primitivist stereotypes

² Juan Marinello, "Nuestro arte y las circunstancias nacionales," *Cuba Contemporanea* 37 (April 1925): 304.

³ For information on Cuba's National Museum of Fine Art, see Jorge Rigol, *The National Museum of Cuba: Painting* (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1978).

aside, their representations of Afro-Cubans and their culture affirmed for the first time in high art a long repressed, yet essential part of that which is Cuban. Arche is known for his simplified naturalistic portraits of the Cuban intelligentsia. Ponce developed a unique Expressionism, using only white with touches of ochre, to paint highly subjective versions of Catholic subjects and pitiful children and women.

This first generation of modernist artists produced some of the most iconic paintings in Cuban art: Abela, *Triunfo de la rumba*, 1928 and *Guajiros*, 1938 (National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana); Víctor Manuel, *Gitana Tropical*, 1929 (National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana); Gattorno, *Quieres más café Don Nicolas?*, 1936 (National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana), and *La siesta*, 1940 (Private Collection, Miami); Peláez, *Still life in Red*, 1938 (The Museum of Modern Art, New York); Enríquez, *El rey de los campos de Cuba*, 1934, and *Rapto de las mulatas*, 1938 (National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana); Fernández, *La familia se retrata*, 1933 (National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana); and Ponce, *Tuberculosis*, 1934 (National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana), and *Two Women*, 1934 (The Museum of Modern Art, New York).

In Cuba, the critical 1930s gave way to the hopeful 1940s. The decade began with a new constitution, free elections, and better economic conditions. While World War II was ravaging large parts of the globe, Cuba was living a period of relative stability and economic prosperity due to an increased demand for sugar in the United States. The visual arts in the 1940s benefited from the acceptance of modern art gained by the previous generation, the emergence of professional art critics, an increase in private and state sponsored local and international exhibitions, and an uptick in art collecting by Cubans and foreigners. Their strongest support continued to come from the Cuban intelligentsia and professional middle class. Artists and writers still walked side-by-side. The poet José Lezama Lima, director of the cultural magazine *Origenes*, was one of the major ideologists of that generation. A friend and collaborator, Guy Pérez Cisneros, an art historian, became a leading champion of the second modernist generation. The art critic and later museum director José Gómez Sicre was an important curator who organized many exhibitions of Cuban modern art in Havana and abroad.

At the state level, the National Institute of Fine Arts, founded in 1939, sponsored major exhibitions of historical and contemporary art. Of these exhibitions, *300 Years of Art in Cuba* (1940) stands out for offering the first survey of Cuban art, opening the eyes of contemporary artists to the fact that they had an artistic past dating back to the early 19th century. On the private side, the *Lyceum* continued to be the main venue for the exhibition and discussion of modern art. In 1942 this institution exhibited for the first time in Cuba the works of Pablo Picasso, Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, Joan Miro, and Raul Dufy. The 1940s also witnessed the opening of the first professional private art gallery, *Galería del Prado* (1942-44), specializing in Cuban modern art. Its owner, María Luisa Gómez Mena and its director, Gómez Sicre were instrumental in the organization of the renowned *Modern Cuban Painters* exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, curated by Alfred H. Barr. They were also responsible for publishing the first book on Cuban modern art, *Cuban Painting Today* (1944).



Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte



Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte



Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte

▲Amelia Peláez, *Interior con Balcón* (*Interior with Balcony*), 1947, mixed media on heavy paper laid down on board, 22 x 30 inches. Courtesy of the Amelia Peláez Foundation Private Collection, Miami, Florida.

▲Mario Carreño, *Seamstress*, 1943. Private Collection, Miami, Florida.

▲Cundo Bermúdez, *Dos Figuras con Florero* (*Two Figures with Flower Vase*), c. 1959, mixed media on board laid down on canvas, 28 x 22¼ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida.



Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte

The second generation of modernist painters — Mario Carreño (1913-2000), René Portocarrero (1912-1985), Mariano Rodríguez (1912-1990), Cundo Bermúdez (1914-2008), Roberto Diago (1920-1955), Peláez, and Wifredo Lam (1902-1982) — the last two artists bridged the first and second generations — built on the art of their immediate predecessors, while developing a more mundane, Dionysian, and symbolic (as opposed to narrative) view of self and nation.⁴ They developed a monumental and volumetric approach to form and brightened their palettes considerably, giving their figures a more tangible and sensual quality. While most of the artists of the *vanguardia* generation visited Paris in their formative years, those of the second generation visited Mexico City or stayed home during their apprenticeships. Overall, these painters developed personal versions of figurative expressionism with an accent on strongly saturated hues. It was their approach to color that led Barr, then Director and Chief Curator of the Museum of Modern Art, to declare: “We may be grateful for that reckless exuberance, gaiety, candor, and love of life which the Cuban painters show perhaps more than the artists of any school.”⁵

Like their predecessors, these artists continued to favor the signification of personal and collective identity. The previous generation’s interest in the peasant and Afro-Cuban themes, often loaded with social and political implications, lost their critical edge and new themes were invented. A number of these artists showed a preference for urban motifs, inspired by the city of Havana. Peláez looked at Havana’s colonial architectural ornamentation with Cubist eyes and vice versa, making the traditional homestead of an elite white *criollo* class a signifier of national ethos, related to the Spanish shard of Cuban culture. Portocarrero and Bermúdez, using a Neo-baroque Expressionism, followed suit. So did Carreño in a Neo-classical artistic language. Their paintings of Havana’s colonial interiors did not represent a celebration of colonialism, but an affirmation of their Spanish heritage, which at the time was being contested by a growing recognition of Afro-Cuban culture and by North American cultural imports and way of life.

The second-generation modernist painters expanded the exploration of Afro-Cuban themes. Lam developed a new and assertive vision of the African presence in the Caribbean, using a personal synthesis of Cubism and Surrealism. In his paintings of that time, monumental hybrid figures, masks, and attributes referring to Afro-Cuban deities aggressively suggest the persistence of African traditions in Cuba. Diago’s Expressionist representation of Afro-Cuban themes also has a strong mysterious element. In a more playful manner, Carreño and Portocarrero painted Afro-Cuban subjects as well.

Some of these artists also turned their attention to the Cuban countryside. Mariano’s paintings of roosters, Carreño’s odes in duco to Cuba’s land and surrounding

⁴ For a study of this generation of artists, see Aimée Labarrere de Servitje, *Orígenes y la vanguardia cubana* (Mexico City: Museo de Arte Moderno, 2000). For monographs on some of these artists, see Michel Leiris, *Wifredo Lam* (Paris: Fratelli Fabri, 1970); Vicente Báez, ed., *Cundo Bermúdez* (Miami: Cuban-American Endowment for the Arts, 2000); José Veigas Zamora, *Mariano* (Sevilla: Edición Vanguardia Cubana, 2008); Ramón Vazquez Diaz, José Veigas, and Axelli, eds., *Todo sobre Portocarrero* (Sevilla: Edición Vanguardia Cuba, 2014).

⁵ Alfred H. Barr, “Modern Cuban Painters,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 11(April 1944): 5.

◀René Portocarrero, *Cerro Interior*, 1943, oil on canvas. Private Collection, Miami, Florida.



Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte

▲Mariano Rodríguez, *Woman with Rooster*, 1941, oil on canvas. Private Collection, Miami, Florida.

sea, Portocarrero's series of landscapes inspired by the Viñales valley, and Lam's sugar cane fields turned into jungles are major contributions to the perennial representation of the Cuban landscape, a genre since colonial times. These artists brought a sense of monumentality and a strong subjectivity to this traditional subject.

Some of the iconic paintings of that generation are Lam's *The Jungle* 1943 (The Museum of Modern Art, New York), Peláez's *Hibiscus*, 1943 (Art Museum of the Americas, Washington, DC), Portocarrero's *Interior del Cerro*, 1943 (National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana), Mariano's *The Rooster*, 1941 (The Museum of Modern Art, New York), Bermúdez's *Barber Shop*, 1942 (The Museum of Modern Art, New York), Carreño's *Áfro-Cuban Dance*, 1943 (Private Collection, Miami), and Diago's *Woman at Piano*, 1940s (Private Collection, Miami).

The end of the 1940s closed a chapter in Cuba in art. In the following decade, the most progressive emerging artists took a turn towards abstraction, in tune with international artistic trends and their own personal and national circumstances. They reacted against the figurative and symbolic art of their pre-

decessors, aiming for a more "universal" expression in art. The trend towards abstraction in Cuba was part of the international shift to non-objective art at mid-century and a reaction to the cultural and political situation in the island. Twenty years of a nationalist rhetoric in art was wearing thin and political turbulence, which began with a military coup of the right in 1952 and ended with a full-fledged leftist revolution in 1959, seems to have encouraged artists to look within rather than at the nation.

Institutional support for the visual arts gradually increased in the 1950s. The Ministry of Education sponsored four national exhibitions of art (1950, 1951, 1953, 1955) with purchase awards and the *Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes*, which had existed on paper and in temporary locations since 1913, finally opened its doors in 1954 in a new and suitable building. A new non-profit cultural organization with exhibition space was founded in 1950: *Sociedad Cultural Nuestro Tiempo*. It had a permanent salon dedicated to Cuban modern art, held

temporary exhibitions of the same, and organized conferences on the visual, literary, and performing arts. A few commercial galleries — *La Habana*, *La Rampa*, and *Color Azul* — also emerged in Havana, and the first journal dedicated exclusively to the arts, *Noticias de arte*, began monthly circulation in 1952. New art critics emerged, most notably Joaquín Texidor, Luis Dulzaides Noda and Loló de la Torriente. Still, writing on art was mostly done by literary figures, among them the novelist Edmundo Desnoes, the poet José Baragaño, and the writer Oscar Hurtado.

The 1950s generation of modernist artists explored various approaches to abstraction. Some adapted the vocabulary of Cubism, many that of Abstract Expressionism and Informalism, and still others that of Concrete Art. The most important artistic group of that decade was *Los Once* (The Eleven, 1953-54). Its leading members—the painters Guido Llinás (1923-2005), Hugo Consuegra (1929-2003), Raúl Martínez (1927-1995), Antonio Vidal (1928-2013), Fayad Jamis (1930-1988), and the sculptors Tomás Oliva (1930-1996) and Agustín Cárdenas (1927-2001)—were mostly responsible for introducing in Cuba the concept of art as an autonomous aesthetic object, beyond narration and symbolism. The purpose of their art was to instill a strong emotion in the viewer. In the words of Llinás, “In the philosophy of *Los Once*, a painting does not represent anything. It is a direct expression. Something that must be felt through its color and form.”⁶

Their approximation to Abstract Expressionism came at a time when North American influence in Latin America was reaching beyond economics and politics into the cultural arena. As in the case of their predecessors, the members of *Los Once* selectively appropriated elements of their artistic models to construct highly personal visions. Llinás, Vidal, Jamis, and Martínez adapted the New York School’s practice of action painting, while using a smaller format, less aggressive application of paint, and a more colorful palette. Consuegra’s paintings were



Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte

⁶ Guido Llinás, letter to the Author, May 18, 1996.

▲ Wilfredo Lam, *For Want of Day*, 1945, oil on canvas. Private Collection, Miami, Florida.



Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte



Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte

consciously constructed and carried evocative titles. Oliva's sculptures were free-form assemblages, while Cárdenas preferred carving organic abstractions. Llinás, Vidal, Martínez, Consuegra, and Oliva continued to exhibit together after the dissolution of *Los Once*, producing their best work of that decade in the late 1950s, such as Llinás' *Composition*, 1958 (Museum of Arts and Sciences, Daytona Beach, Florida), Consuegra's *Entrada en la tierra*, 1958 (Lowe Art Museum, Coral Gables, Florida), Martínez's *Abstracción no.5*, 1957 (National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana), Vidal's *Pintura*, 1956 (National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana), and Jamis' *Desde la tierra*, 1959 (National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana).⁷

Later another abstract group emerged in Havana following the tenants of Concrete Art, *Diez Pintores Concretos Cubanos* (Ten Concrete Cuban Painters, 1958-1961). As with the case of *Los Once*, they aimed for an autonomous art, away from any reference to nature, narrative or symbolism. The leading members of DPCC — Sandú Darié (1908-1991), Dolores "Loló" Soldevilla (1901-1971), Luis Martínez Pedro (1910-1989), Pedro de Oráa (1931), José Mijares (1921- 2004), Salvador Corratgé (1928) and Rafael Soriano (1920-2015) — were concerned with using geometric abstraction to arrive at an art of pure forms and a rational, rather than emotional content.⁸ The root of their art dates back to Kasimir Malevich's Suprematism, Piet Mondrian and Theo van Doesberg's De Stijl, and Wassily Kandinsky's Bauhaus period.

Darié favored kinetic compositions made of simple geometric shapes, often painted on a three dimensional support, such as *Construcción visual*, 1952 (National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana). Soldevilla painted minimal compositions privileging circles, half circles, and squares against flat backgrounds, like *Composición*, 1958 (National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana). Martínez Pedro's most recognized work from that period is the series of paintings entitled *Aguas territoriales* (Territorial Waters) from the early 1960s. The series is characterized by bold circular forms, painted in cobalt and ultramarine hues, and set against expansive empty backgrounds. Mijares' paintings from that period of his long career ranged from highly stylized figurative compositions to sober rectilinear ones, such as *Estabilidad*, 1959 (National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana). Soriano, who reached the peak of his artistic trajectory in the 1980s and 1990s with luminous organic abstractions, painted during his concrete period complex multiform compositions of muted colors, like *Puente*, 1954 (National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana). After decades of neglect, these artists and their geometric

▲ Guido Llinás, *Sin Título (Untitled)*, 1958, oil on canvas, 39½ x 32 inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida.

▲ Hugo Consuegra, *La Venganza (The Vengeance)*, 1956, oil on canvas, 50 x 80 inches. Private Collection.

7 For introductory essays on *Los Once*, see Juan Martínez, *Guido Llinás and Los Onces After Cuba* (Miami: The Art Museum at Florida International University, 1997), and Elsa Vega Dopico, *Uno, dos, tres.. ONCE!* (Havana: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 2003). For monographs on some of these artists, see: Lissete Martínez Herryman and Gustavo Valdes, *Hugo Consuegra* (Miami, Edicion Universal, 2006); Corina Matamoros, *Raúl Martínez, la gran familia* (Sevilla: Edicion Vanguardia, 2012); Christoph Singler, *Guido Llinás, Génesis de la Pintura Negra* (Valenci: Aduana Vieja Editorial, 2013).

8 For an introductory essay on *Diez Pintores Concretos Cubanos*, see Elsa Vega Dopico, *Diez Pintores Concretos Cubanos* (Havana, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 2002). For monographs on some of these artists, see: Ricardo Pau Llosa, *Rafael Soriano* (Coral Gables: Gary Nader Fine Arts, 1995); Iran O. Rey, *José Mijares* (Miami: Palette Publication, 1997); Elsa Vega, *Sandú Darié* (Havana: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 2009).

abstractions are undergoing a renaissance with exhibitions in museums and galleries and inclusion in Sotheby's and Christie's auctions of Latin American art.

Since 1959 the modernist movement has evolved under a revolutionary turned totalitarian government, which increased support and control over the visual arts and culture in general. Two constants in the modernist movement, set during the discussed period, were synchronicity with international artistic developments and engagement with Cuban issues. Modernist artists continued to look to New York for artistic cues, reacting to Pop Art and Minimalism in the 1960s (also New Figuration coming from Latin America), Photo-Realism in the 1970s, and Neo-Expressionism, Conceptual, Performance, and Installation Art since 1980. Following the lead of their predecessors, progressive artists of the last fifty years have imaginatively adapted vanguard forms and practices to discourse on Cuban realities.

Cuban modern art of the 1930s and 1940s is recognized today, from global modernism art history texts to international auction houses, as one of the leading artistic movements of early twentieth century Latin American art. Similarly, contemporary Cuban art is undergoing a boom and it is prevalent in every biennial around the world and in major museums and galleries in the Americas and Europe. Today Cuban modern art is a salient chapter in the history of global modernism and it is the foundation for internationally recognized contemporary Cuban art.

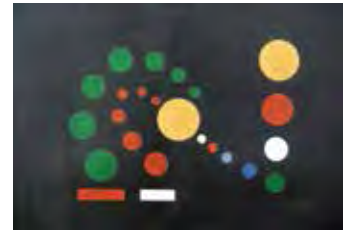


Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte



Photo credit: Jon Nalon

▲ Loló Soldevilla, *Sin Título, Mundo Celestial (Untitled, Celestial Rain)*, 1956, 27¼ x 39¼ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida.

▲ José Mijarries, *Composición Geométrica (Geometric Composition)*, 1957, gouache on paper, 12 x 17¾ inches. Private Collection.

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Paul Niell

A portrait made in Cuba of musician Jackes Quiroga, painted c. 1800 by the artist Vicente Escobar (1757-1834), presents an image of a man of apparent means wearing a fine suit and lace cravat. The subject regards the viewer in a three-quarter-turn characteristic of early modern Spanish American portraiture [Figure 1]. Escobar depicts Quiroga accompanied by items that allude to the man's trade, including a musical score, resting ink quill, wind instrument, and perhaps a conductor's baton. The glimpse of fine furniture in tandem with the man's clothing, suggests the material wealth that Quiroga's success at music has availed him. Yet, no less important in its construction of the man's social identity is his reddish-brown skin tone that would seem to imply his African descent. The musician Quiroga, like the painter Escobar, had likely risen to some level of prominence by the late eighteenth century as a *liberto* (a free man classified racially in the Spanish Colonial Caribbean as being of at least a partial African bloodline as registered in his official family pedigree). He may well have been a member of the relatively large Cuban free black communities in the cities of Matanzas and Havana.¹

Perhaps the painting discloses some relationship between these men that went beyond artist and patron, as Escobar, himself a man of African descent, would likely have felt solidarity with Quiroga. The painter includes his signature on a slightly unfurled piece of paper that the musician holds in his left hand, close to his torso. Situated in an atypical position relative to much Spanish American portraiture, the paper reads "Escobar fecit" (Escobar made it). While this placement is not the most common, the painted signature itself was a customary means of identifying the artist in early modern European and American portraiture and could even have served to advance an artist's status.²

The founding of the Royal Academy of San Fernando in 1752 in Madrid, Spain, was a significant event that prompted shifts in the conception of the visual arts in the Spanish Americas in certain urban centers like Mexico City. Modeled on the French royal academy, San Fernando in Spain promoted drawing as the foundation for artistic instruction in *las tres nobles artes* (the three noble arts) of painting,

¹ For the *liberto* community of Havana in this period, see Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Culture of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004) and Matt Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle against Atlantic Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 61-77. For sources on Vicente Escobar, see Guy Pérez Cisneros, *Características de la evolución de la pintura en Cuba* (Havana: Dirección General de Cultura, Ministerio de Educación, 1959), 28-32; Jorge Rigol, *Apuntes sobre la pintura y el grabado en Cuba: De los orígenes a 1927* (Havana: Editorial Pueblo y Educación, 1971), 71-85; Adelaide de Juan, *Pintura y grabado coloniales cubanos* (Havana: Instituto Cubano del Libro, 1974), 15-17; Adelaide de Juan, *Pintura cubana: Temas y variaciones* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1980), 15-17; and Jorge Bermúdez Rodríguez, "Vicente Escobar, nuestro pintor preliminar," *Revista de la Biblioteca Nacional José Martí* (January-March, 1984): 141-151.

² Historian Susan Deans-Smith makes this point about the painter's signature in the context of eighteenth-century Mexico City as a means of advancing the artist's status. See her essay, "Dishonor at the Hands of Indians, Spaniards, and Blacks: The (Racial) Politics of Painting in Early Modern Mexico," in *Race and Classification: The Case of Mexican America*, edited by Ilona Katzew and Susan Deans-Smith, 43-71 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 52-53.

◆Figure 1. Vicente Escobar, *Portrait of Jackes Quiroga*, c. 1800, oil on canvas. Courtesy of the Museo Óscar María de Rojas. Cárdenas City, Cuba.

sculpture, and architecture.³ The reception of the Spanish royal academy amongst particular Spanish American painters and members of the public was informed by widespread perceptions of Madrid and other Spanish cities as the culturally authoritative centers of empire. Desires existed in the Americas among royal officials and other colonial personnel, in such places as Mexico City and Havana, to elevate colonial cities to the cultural standards of Europe, invoking center-periphery ideas constructed by colonialism itself. The Royal Academy of San Carlos would open in Mexico City in 1783 and San Alejandro in Havana in 1818. The French Bourbon dynasty that took the Spanish throne from the Austrian Habsburgs by 1700 viewed such institutions throughout the eighteenth century as vehicles for cultural renovation, believing that academies would lead to the dissemination of uniform high standards for culture, frequently couched as *buen gusto* (good taste). Yet, in the colonial theater overseas, as historian Susan Deans-Smith has shown with the Mexican academy, negotiations over what comprised fine art and *buen gusto* in the Americas were “refracted through a colonial relationship” and translated within the complexities of local social settings.⁴ The complicated racial politics of American urban societies, for example, came to the fore in efforts to assimilate uniform academic aesthetics and in decisions over the functioning of the art academy abroad.

Returning to the portrait of Jackes Quiroga in the light of academies as engaged with state and imperial power, the painting becomes indicative of the convergence of race, institutions, and modernity in the late colonial art production of various Spanish American cities. Vicente Escobar rose to prominence as an artist during a time of rapid commercial growth in the Atlantic World and growing prosperity in Havana, a situation that he used to advance himself, predominantly as a portraitist. He grew so reputable, in fact, that he was invited to Madrid and made Royal Painter of the Chamber to Charles IV.⁵ Yet, in 1818, when the Spanish intendante Alejandro Ramírez (1777-1821), then director of the Royal Economic Society of

3 The establishment of a royal art academy in San Fernando in Madrid in 1752 was followed by San Carlos in Valencia in 1768 and San Luis in Zaragoza in 1793. These academies were accompanied by a series of drawing schools. See Claude Bédât, *Los académicos y las juntas, 1752-1808* (Madrid: Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, 1982); Claude Bédât, *La Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando (1744-1808): contribución al estudio de las influencias estilísticas y de la mentalidad artística en la España del siglo XVIII* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, 1989); and Soledad Lorenzo Forniés and María Luisa Moro Pajuelo, *Renovación, crisis, continuismo: la Real Academia de San Fernando en 1792* (Madrid: La Academia, 1992).

4 For the responsiveness of the Royal Academy of San Carlos to the social structure of Mexico City, see Susan Deans-Smith, “‘A Natural and Voluntary Dependence’: The Royal Academy of San Carlos and the Cultural Politics of Art Education in Mexico City, 1786-1797,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 29, no. 3 (July 2010): 278-295; Fischer, in *Modernity Disavowed* discusses the context in Havana, where San Alejandro can be situated within the context of race in Cuba after the Haitian Revolution and the ascendancy of a Liberal elite composed of royal officials, senior clergy, planters, merchants, and professionals (lawyers, doctors, professors, etc.), 57-76. Thus the opening of the academy in Havana and the issue of fine or high art was constituted within and contributed to certain types of class formations and projects for managing the lower social echelons. For the issue of the art academy’s responsiveness to local settings from a global perspective, see Rafael Cardoso Denis and Colin Trodd, eds., *Art and the Academy in the Nineteenth Century* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

5 Escobar’s receiving this prestigious honor is given in Francisco Calcagno, *Diccionario biográfico cubano* (New York: Imprenta y Librería de N. Ponce de León, 1878), 258.

the Friends of the Country of Havana,⁶ founded a drawing school for the city that would eventually bear his name, Escobar was not invited to be its director in spite of his prolific work and his renown at the Spanish court. Instead, the position was given to a European, French expatriate artist, Jean-Baptiste Vermay (1786-1833, s. 1818-1833), who had recently arrived in Havana by way of New Orleans after the collapse of the Napoleonic state in France. Vermay's association with the legendary painter Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825) and his having exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1808 surely supplied him with a substantial measure of cultural authority for the Havana elite.⁷ This bias for a European director of the new academy (indeed Vermay's presence may even have prompted its founding) suggests early nineteenth-century perceptions in the Cuban capital of the superiority of Europeans as conveyers of *buen gusto*. Furthermore, it served to disenfranchise what literary scholar Sibylle Fischer has referred to as the "popular painters," like Escobar, who by the late eighteenth century were largely people of African descent.⁸ The selection of Vermay could be seen, in essence, as the denial of Escobar, each artist metonymic of larger populations and their ability to supply culture that was acceptable to the Liberal elite. Hence, the Academy of San Alejandro came into being within the context of the racialized cultural reforms of a post-Haitian Revolutionary Hispanic Caribbean and Atlantic World, as Fischer has persuasively argued. This institution would admit only *blancos* (people of the white population) for drawing instruction and was thereby thoroughly situated in and responsive to a late colonial Spanish Caribbean setting.⁹

This essay provides an overview of the Academy of San Alejandro from its early nineteenth-century founding to the time of the Cuban *vanguardia* (vanguard or avant-garde) from the 1920s onward and attempts to draw the academy's history, personnel, and associated imagery out into Atlantic perspective. Here, I refer to modern Atlantic World studies that account for events and historical dynamics on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean as interconnected phenomena and consider the Atlantic as an arena of complex traffic in people, ideas, and things.¹⁰ By thinking of colonial relationships between American and European cities, the locus of artistic

6 The Real Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País de la Habana was founded in 1791 and derived from an empire-wide effort by the Spanish state to cultivate civil associations that would attend to economic development in various regions in Spain and abroad. See Robert J. Shafer, *The Economic Societies in the Spanish World (1763-1821)* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1958), 178-198.

7 For sources on Jean-Baptiste Vermay, see J. de la Luz de León, *Jean-Baptiste Vermay, peintre français, fondateur de l'Académie de Saint-Alexandre de La Havane, 1786-1833* (Paris: Editions de la Revue de l'Amérique Latine, 1927); Sabine Faivre d'Arquier, *Vermay, mensajero de las Luces* (Havana: Imagen Contemporánea, 2004); Rigol, *Apuntes*, 90-107.

8 See Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 57-76.

9 The Eurocentric orientation of San Alejandro resembled that of many academies across the Hispanic Americas, even in the national period. However, its anti-African, racist orientation underscores what Cardoso Denis and Trodd have noted as the porosity of global academies of art, in their existence not as closed bastions of fixed principles (in Spanish contexts, exemplars of *buen gusto*—good taste) but responsive to immediate concerns by which *buen gusto* became localized. Cardoso Denis and Trodd, eds. *Art and the Academy*, 1-11.

10 For just a few significant sources in Atlantic World studies, see Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Matt D. Childs, eds., *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

practices in various geographies, and the agency of artists in Cuba and Europe, my essay foregrounds the larger international theme of this exhibition on twentieth-century Cuban art. In the early academy, artists originating in Europe came into contact with Cuba's rich cultural and natural environments as those artists starting in Cuba sometimes found a center to produce their work on the island after travels abroad. The identities of such artists, Cuban and European, however informed by their point of origin, should not be viewed as static, but rather flexible, changing, and persuaded by the opportunities of the Atlantic World and European urban centers that they encountered, lived, and worked in during what we could consider the long nineteenth century. Finally, I contend that the entrance of the academy of San Alejandro into Cuban art production should not automatically be viewed as a rupture from preceding practices, nor a cultural development ending with the rise of the Cuban *vanguardia*. Rather, we need to consider the co-existence and sometimes cross-pollination of forms and practices produced in different socio-cultural spaces in the late colonial period, and the early days of the Cuban republic with the 1920s rise of Cuban modernism.

For at least the first decade of its existence, the Academy of San Alejandro in Havana operated as one of the Spanish empire's various drawing schools.¹¹ With Jean-Baptiste Vermay's arrival from France and the Academy's founding in 1818, drawing classes began in the Convent of St. Augustine. The school's pedagogy eventually called for public exhibits or examinations of student work. In 1828, Spanish botanist and sugar planter Ramón de la Sagra (1798-1871) reported on one such proceeding:

On the eighth day of this month [July, 1828], we have observed the progress of the pupils of drawing, under the direction of the industrious Señor Vermay: nothing is left to be desired with respect to the exactitude of the copies, the smoothness in the handling of the pencil, the intelligence in the disposition and in the tone of the shadows; undoubtedly young opportunists will emerge from this academy, qualified to make useful applications of drawing.¹²

Resonant of the late Spanish empire's promotion of drawing as a means of spreading *buen gusto* in society, thereby making it "useful" to the state, de la Sagra's account is a rare glimpse into early artistic practices at San Alejandro. The promotion of naturalism through chiaroscuro leading to exactitude in the rendering of models represents the early Cuban academy's assimilation of practices authorized by Madrid. Yet, these values were not always socially disengaged and confined

¹¹ For schools of drawing in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Spain, see Bédard, *La Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando*; Lorenzo Forniés, Moro Pajuelo, and Navarrete Martínez, *Renovación, crisis, continuismo*.

¹² From the original Spanish: "El día 8 de este mes, hemos observado los progresos de los alumnos de dibujo, bajo la dirección del laborioso M. Vermay: nada se puede desear con respecto á la exactitud de las copias, á la suavidad en el manejo del lápiz, a la inteligencia en la disposición y en el tono de las sombras; indudablemente que de esta academia saldrán jóvenes aprovechados, capaces de hacer útiles aplicaciones del dibujo..." Ramón de la Sagra, "Exámenes de dibujo de la academia establecida por la Real Sociedad patriótica," in *Anales de ciencias, agricultura, comercio, y artes* (Havana: Oficina del Gobierno y Capitanía general, por S.M. Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, Havana, Cuba, 1828).

to merely aesthetic and intellectual conjecture. A document associated with the founding of San Alejandro affirms a social association for the academy as it reassured its readers that students would be drawn from certain sectors of Cuban society, “they must all be white, of known parents, and they must have a good education.”¹³

This relation between academic aesthetics and colonial social structures in early nineteenth-century Havana is an open terrain for research, in particular its relation to the ascendancy of a bourgeoisie or Liberal elite who sought to co-opt academic art to distance themselves culturally from populations of African descent.¹⁴ The production of history through painting is a case in point. In March of 1828, Havana inaugurated a civic monument on the Plaza de Armas to commemorate the founding of the city in 1519. The small structure, the product of Havana’s growing interest in a more sober and serious Greco-Roman classicism (or Neoclassicism), was built to house three history paintings executed by Vermay. Through history painting, considered the pinnacle in the academy’s hierarchy of genres, Vermay visually narrated an episode given earlier in text by the Cuban-born historian José Martín Félix de Arrate (1701-1765) who authored the first history of Havana in the late eighteenth century.¹⁵

According to Arrate, the Spanish conquistadors founded the city under a ceiba tree that allegedly stood on the site at which they conducted the first Christian mass and meeting of the *cabildo* (city council) under the tree’s generous shade. In *The First Cabildo*, Vermay depicts conquistador Diego Velázquez and a group of Spaniards conducting the first town council meeting beneath the great canopy of the ceiba, as a native American woman and child kneel at the bottom left of the canvas [Figure 2]. The work displays the painter’s mastery of academic naturalism through techniques such as foreshortening, naturalistic proportions, and chiaroscuro. In terms of its imagery and narrative,



Photo credit: Paul Niell

¹³ Fischer includes the quotation from this document in *Modernity Disavowed*, 74.

¹⁴ Albert Boime examined the relationship between academic standards and class formation in “The Cultural Politics of the Art Academy,” *The Eighteenth Century* 35, no. 3 (1994): 203-222.

¹⁵ Arrate, José Martín Félix de. *Llave del Nuevo Mundo: antemural de las Indias Occidentales*. La Habana: Cubana de la UNESCO, 1964, 77-78.

▲Figure 2. Jean-Baptiste Vermay, *The First Cabildo*, c. 1827-1828, oil on canvas, c. 13¾ x 11 feet. El Templete, Plaza de Armas, Havana, Cuba. Reproduced courtesy of the Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de La Habana.



Vermay positions the standing male conquistadors and friar in the presence of an Amerindian mother and child, constructing a primordial encounter between Spaniards and Indians that underpinned the cultural authenticity of the nineteenth-century city. This encounter narrative, seen across the Ibero-Americas, both during the colonial period and after independence, seems to affirm that in the Havana of 1828, members of the Liberal elite could claim an American antiquity like such communities in the independent republics of Mexico and Peru, even if Cuba would remain under Spanish colonial control until 1898.¹⁶

After an interim directorship by Cuban-born Francisco Cuyas (s. 1833-36), the Academy of San Alejandro quickly passed to another European, Francisco Colson (s. 1836-43). This pattern of primarily appointing Europeans as directors would persist for many years and continued upon the arrival of the Parisians

▲ Figure 3. Frédéric Mialhe, *El Día de Reyes* (*The Day of Kings*), lithographic print.

¹⁶ For the complexities of *El Temple* in social context, see Paul Niell, *Urban Space as Heritage in Late Colonial Cuba: Classicism and Dissonance on the Plaza de Armas of Havana, 1754-1828* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015).

Joseph Leclerc de Baumé (s. 1843-52) and Pierre Toussaint Frédéric Mialhe (s. 1852-58). Mialhe's work as an artist in Havana included the lithographic prints that would populate the ambitious *Isla de Cuba Pintoresca* [*Picturesque Island of Cuba*] collection (early 1840s) that consisted of at least forty-nine different views in which the artist depicts a wide range of Cuban scenes, including urban settings and rural landscapes in multiple parts of the island. He would follow this project in 1847 with *Viaje pintoresco al rededor de la Isla de Cuba* (1847) [*Picturesque Travels around the island of Cuba*] that included nine *costumbrista* scenes (genre scenes or images contributing to a discourse on local customs).¹⁷ Mialhe taught at and directed San Alejandro as he likewise popularized Cuba through the authorized media of nineteenth-century lithography to a worldwide audience through his images, often copied and even plagiarized abroad. In the image *El Día de Reyes* [*The Day of Kings*], Mialhe depicts a moment in the annual January 6th procession of the *cabildos de naciones* (African and Afro-Cuban mutual aid societies based, in part, on Spanish *cofradías* or confraternities) [*Figure 3*]. Established in the sixteenth century, the *cabildos* allowed African slaves and their descendants a space for appropriation, a niche for mutual identifying, and a means of raising money to buy their fellow captives out of slavery. Annual processions in the streets and plazas of Havana to express *cabildo* identity and collect *aguinaldo* (gratuities) became picturesque spectacles in the eyes of nineteenth-century travel writers and a visual resource for artists.¹⁸ As Emilio Cueto has argued, Mialhe's prints of such urban practices traveled the world and shaped an image of Cuba for international audiences.¹⁹



Photo credit: Jon Nalon

The emerging depiction of things local in myriad academically-sanctioned genres by artists associated with San Alejandro can also be seen in the work of R.C. Bears whose *Still Life* gathers various fruits and vegetables characteristic of the island since pre-Hispanic times [*Figure 4*]. While Bears' birthplace is unknown, he was appointed professor of drawing at San Alejandro in 1863 under the directorship of Juan Francisco Cisneros Guerrero (s. 1859-1878). When Cisneros died at the end of his tenure, Bears became interim director for a short period. His work is not well preserved, and the still life is among the only paintings attributed to him. Often considered the least important genre in academic circles, still life nevertheless possessed a formidable capacity to convey cultural meaning. The Bears painting includes depictions of the pineapple, plantain, lime, corn, and root vegetables, which can be seen as an important engagement of the island's foodways in images that relate to growing interests in things local exemplified in multiple genres by the second half of the nineteenth century.

¹⁷ *Viaje pintoresco* can be found as *Viaje pintoresco al rededor de la Isla de Cuba dedicado al Señor Conde de Villanueva* (Havana: Litografía de Luis Marquier, 1848). Emilio Cueto deals with Mialhe's imagery from this period, including the plagiarism surrounding his work in Emilio Cueto, *Mialhe's colonial Cuba: The Prints that Shaped the World's View of Cuba* (Miami: Historical Association of Southern Florida, 1994), 3-6.

¹⁸ For a succinct source on travel writing about the *cabildo* processions, see Fernando Ortiz, "The Afro-Cuban Festival 'Day of the Kings,'" in *Cuban Festivals: A Century of Afro-Cuban Culture*, ed. Judith Bettelheim (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle; Princeton, N.J.: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001), 1-40.

¹⁹ Cueto, *Mialhe's Colonial Cuba*.

▲ *Figure 4*. R.C. Bears, *Vianas (Staples)*, 1979, oil on canvas, 14½ x 12 inches. Private Collection.



Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte

A Spanish artist in Havana working outside of San Alejandro, Víctor Patricio de Landaluze (1828-1889; in Cuba, 1850-1889), provides an interesting counterpoint to the officially-sanctioned style and subject matter of the academy. A satirical artist, his depiction of Cuban customs and social types (including Spaniards, Creole whites, and people of African descent) appears more intently critical and ironic than Mialhe's images.²⁰ Art historian Carmen Ramos has meticulously rendered the political context for Landaluze's work, situating his efforts in Cuba within a landscape of pro-Spanish sentiments in his criticism of Cuban social life.²¹ Landaluze's work furthered Cuban *costumbrista* as it depicts the racial structures of Havana colonial society, including the painting *Ladies by the Window* of 1860, which would appear to represent three generations of women, of progressively lighter phenotype, gazing through the iron bars of a window onto the street [Figure 5]. The image offers these women as blood related (grandmother-mother-granddaughter) and therefore alludes to a nineteenth-century Cuban social ideology that has been referred to as *mejorar la raza* ["improving the race"]. The oldest woman, deepest within the house, has the darkest skin tone and is least well dressed, two social challenges overcome somewhat by her daughter whose skin is lighter and whose dress is more refined. This process of whitening culminates in the granddaughter who is seated with her left arm resting on the horizontal iron bar, her skin the lightest and her dress the finest. She also occupies what would have been an important social space for flirtation and courtship. Hence, the scene refers to desires among women of African descent to advance themselves in society through marriage to men of lighter skin and more "pure" or Spanish blood.

The representation of Cuban settings took increasingly diverse forms and served a growing range of agendas as the century progressed. The Cuban sugar planter Justo Cantero (1815-1871) hired French printmaker Eduardo Laplante (1818-1860) to



◀Figure 5. Víctor Patricio Landaluze, *Damas en la Ventana* (*Ladies by the Window*), c. 1860, oil on canvas, 13½ x 10¾ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida.

▲Figure 6. Eduardo Laplante, *Ingenio Acana*, c. 1856, lithograph.

▲Figure 7. Eduardo Laplante, *Ingenio Flor de Cuba, Casa de Calderas*, c. 1856, lithograph.

²⁰ For Landaluze, see E. Carmen Ramos, "A Painter of Cuban Life: Víctor Patricio de Landaluze and Nineteenth-Century Cuban Politics, 1850-1889" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Chicago, 2011). On p. 170, she cites a Letter to Víctor Patricio de Landaluze from the Director of the School of Painting and Etching, 17 September 1866, Academia de San Alejandro, Havana, Cuba, that speaks to the artist's rejection of an invitation to teach at San Alejandro. Also see Rigol, *Apuntes*, 241-246.

²¹ *Ibid.*



Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte



Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte



Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte

provide lithographic illustrations for the book *Los Ingenios*, published in Havana in 1857 as an international promotion of an increasingly fraught Cuban sugar industry.²² Laplante's images idealize the sugar estate on the island and thereby obscure the disturbing human consequences of the enterprise [Figures 6-7].

The history of landscape painting in nineteenth-century Cuba has multiple trajectories, involving painters both within and without the Academy of San Alejandro. One prominent figure in the genre was Esteban Chartrand, born to a French-descended family that fled the colonial island of Ste. Domingue with the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution to settle on a sugar estate in Limonar near Matanzas, Cuba. The Chartrands, an enormously wealthy family, produced three sons who became painters, Esteban, Augusto, and Phillipe.²³ The brothers made many trips to France to study art, including with Teodoro Rousseau, a leading figure of the Barbizon School. They developed a tendency towards a romantic, interpretive conception of landscape, focusing on Cuba's natural and cultural variety, depicting beaches, waterways, local flora, and sugar estates largely of the Yumurí valley. Their work renders moments of dramatic light such as sunsets, sunrises, and storms. In *Beyond the Sunset*, oil on canvas from 1881, Esteban Chartrand (1840-1884) paints a glowing scene of waves breaking on the shore as birds soar overhead and ships sail on the horizon [Figure 8].

Phillipe Chartrand briefly served as the chair of landscape painting at the Academy of San Alejandro, a position that soon passed to Valetin Sanz Carta (1850-1898), who had arrived from the Santa Cruz de Tenerife in the Canary Islands. Sanz Carta practiced a more realistic landscape style than the Chartrands, one that sought to reproduce the empirical facts of his chosen environments and less to interpret them emotively. Sanz Carta began his teaching at the Cuban academy in 1886, and he directed students in what we might see as the officially approved landscape painting of the times. In the work, *Landscape with Stream and Rocks*, c. 1885, Sanz Carta employs a more matter-of-fact approach to light and color [Figure 9]. He would establish and evaluate a formal examination in landscape painting, installed at San Alejandro in 1888.²⁴

The Director who saw San Alejandro through the turn-of-the-century was Cuban-born painter Miguel Melero (1836-1907), who served from 1878 until his death. Melero introduced new methods and models to the school's pedagogy, and his work brought thematic shifts, changes in lighting, color contrast, and a more

▲ Figure 8. Esteban Chartrand, *Más Allá del Atardecer* (*Beyond the Sunset*), 1881, oil on canvas, 7 x 12 inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida.

▲ Figure 9. Valentín Sanz Carta, *Paisaje con Riachuelo y Rocas* (*Landscape with Stream and Rocks*), c. 1885, oil on canvas, 26 x 36 inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida.

▲ Figure 10. Miguel Melero, *Velero sobre Aguas Vivas* (*Sailboat on Moving Waters*), c. 1898, oil on canvas, 21½ x 27¾ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida.

²² Justo Cantero, Eduardo Laplante, et al. *Los ingenios: colección de vistas de los principales ingenios de azúcar de la Isla de Cuba* (Madrid: Centro Estudios y Experimentación de Obras Públicas, 2005). For Laplante, see de Juan, *Pintura y grabado*, 43-45.

²³ For the Esteban Chartrand, see Martha de Castro, *El arte en Cuba* (Miami, FL: Ediciones Universal, 1970), 44-45; de Juan, *Pintura y grabado*, 21, 49-53; de Juan, *Temas y variaciones*, 11-12; and Pérez Cisneros, *Características*, 58-59. Rigol, *Apuntes*, 195-197.

²⁴ For Sanz Carta, see de Juan, *Temas y variaciones*, 11-15; de Castro, *El Arte en Cuba*, 45; Rigol, *Apuntes*, 200-202. For the examination of landscape painting under his direction, see Armando García Menocal, Leopoldo Romañach, and Luz Merino, "Aquel Cambio de Siglo," *Menocal y Romañach: maestros cubanos del cambio de siglo* (Salamanca, Spain: Caja Duero, 2003) 9-16.

interpretive, romanticist technique.²⁵ In his images of people, his works construct aspects of personality and subjective tension by way of brushwork, color contrast, and lighting. His landscape style is exemplified by *Sailboat on Moving Waters*, c. 1898, oil on canvas, in which themes of humans subsumed within the power of nature predominate [Figure 10].

After the foundation of the Cuban republic in 1902, landscape and genre painting at San Alejandro continued to prevail. A work by Eduardo Morales (1862-1938), trained at the academy, reveals the artist's preference for scenes of Cuban life in rural settings. His work, *Carriage* of 1916, oil on wood, depicts a man of African descent mounted on one of two horses drawing a characteristic Cuban carriage with oversized wheels, known as a *volanta* [Figure 11]. The scene possesses a vivid light and a sense of immediacy also seen in the work of his Cuban contemporary Antonio Rodríguez Morey (1874-1967).²⁶

The last decades of Spanish rule in Cuba witnessed the birth and maturation of two artistic figures that would lead San Alejandro in the new Cuban Republic. Cuban-born Armando Menocal (1863-1942) and Leopoldo Romañach (1862-1951) both received early training at San Alejandro followed by scholarships to study in Europe. Menocal was enrolled for a time at the Academy of San Fernando in Madrid, and Romañach went to Italy and New York. They returned to Cuba to find a new national academy, and as Cuban-born children of Spanish descent they became trusted teachers and directors. Menocal is known for his history painting as well as the incorporation of luminosity comparable to late nineteenth-century Parisian explorations with optics, as in the work of the French Impressionists. Romañach perhaps appropriated certain experimental techniques with optics more extensively in his body of work that consists of landscapes, portraiture, and human studies with loose brushwork and an emphasis on immediate encounters with solid bodies made visible by light.

During his period in Spain in the 1880s, Armando Menocal studied at San Fernando and began experimenting with new handlings of light. His residency abroad put him into direct contact with Spanish and French Impressionists. In his work, *Spanish Dancer with a Mantilla*, 1889, with its deeply saturated red *mantilla* contrasting with the gray background, the artist infuses the scene with light, air, and sensuality [Figure 12]. The specific focus on the *mantilla* (a lace or silk veil or shawl worn over the head and shoulders, particularly in southern Spain) establishes the cultural context as strongly Spanish. Even before his arrival in Spain, Menocal would have known of this element of dress as common in the late nineteenth-century Hispanic Caribbean.²⁷ When he returned to Cuba, he began to produce local scenes, such as *Landscape with Boat and Dry Locust Tree*, in which he sets a low horizon line and establishes a central axis with the locust tree flanked by



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Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte

▲Figure 11. Eduardo Morales, *Volanta (Carriage)*, 1916, oil on wood, 7¼ x 9½ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida.

▲Figure 12. Armando Menocal, *Bailarina Española con Mantilla (Spanish Dancer with Mantilla)*, 1889, oil on canvas, 33½ x 21½ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida.

²⁵ For Melero, see Rigol, *Apuntes*, 246-251; García Menocal, Romañach, and Merino, "Aquel Cambio de Siglo"; de Juan, *Pintura y grabado*, 52-53.

²⁶ For sources on Eduardo Morales and Antonio Rodríguez Morey, see Rigol, *Apuntes*, 203-205.

²⁷ For sources on Menocal, see García Menocal, Romañach, and Merino, *Menocal y Romañach*; de Juan, *Temas y variaciones*, 47-48.



Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte

▲ *Figure 13.* Armando Menocal, *Paisaje con Barca y Algarrobo Seco (Landscape with Boat and Dry Locust Tree)*, c. 1920, oil on canvas, 31½ x 50½ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida.

▶ *Figure 14.* Leopoldo Romañach, *Woman with a Bale of Wheat*, c. 1880, oil on canvas, 35¾ x 24¼ inches. Courtesy of Terry and Linda Cole, Tallahassee, Florida.

▶ *Figure 15.* Leopoldo Romañach, *Playa de Caibarién (Caibarién Beach)*, c. 1920, oil on canvas board, 14¼ x 19½ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida.

▶ *Figure 16.* Leopoldo Romañach, *Muchacha (Young Lady)*, c. 1930, oil on canvas, 25½ x 18½ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida.

rushes and palms. The canoe provides a sign of human presence, and the point of view appears to be suspended above the water line registering reflections, glare, and obfuscations, natural in the intense Caribbean sun [*Figure 13*]. Menocal would direct San Alejandro from 1927 to 1934.

Leopoldo Romañach likewise received a scholarship to study abroad after his early training at the Cuban academy, residing in Italy and New York, in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. One of his works from this period, *Woman with a Bale of Wheat*, from c. 1880, appears thoroughly Mediterranean as it indicates the artist's explorations of light [*Figure 14*].²⁸ After Romañach's return to Cuba, he focused his attention on landscapes, portraiture, and human subjects, including his scenes of the northern coastline in the province of Villa Clara. In *Caibarién Beach* of 1920 [*Figure 15*], he brings an immediacy to the scene through light and color variation with visible paint strokes and impasto. He renders blue sky, clouds, sandy beach, turquoise-blue water, and submerged coral reef through techniques that depart significantly from the earlier work of landscape painters in Cuba like Chartrand and Sanz Carta.

²⁸ For sources on Romañach, see García Menocal, Romañach, and Merino, *Menocal y Romañach*; de Juan, *Temas y variaciones*, 47-48.

The artist's studies of human figures, often in ambiguous settings, focus on color, light, and a sense of the momentary essence of personality. The racial and ethnic composition of Cuba and the tropical light and color echo through these works as well, such as that which we find in the *Young Lady*, of 1930 [Figure 16]. The woman's hair, features, and skin tone identify her as a member of Cuba's multi-ethnic population, perhaps a woman of partial African ancestry. There is no sardonic wit in these images, as we might have found in the previous century at the hands of European artists like Mialhe and especially Landaluze. In his candid studies, Romañach explores the Cuban social body in its human variety with potentially nationalist undertones that link him to the landscape of national imagery production, including the work of the *vanguardia*. He would serve as director of San Alejandro twice (1934-36 and 1950), and his presence there as a charismatic teacher for multiple decades had an impact on generations of artists. Romañach became an educator to many members of the first wave of the Cuban vanguard, including Víctor Manuel, Antonio Gattorno, Eduardo Abela, Fidelio Ponce de León, and Amelia Peláez; and, upon his death in 1951, many of these artists would praise Romañach as a great teacher and mentor.

For contemporary art historians to view the Academy of San Alejandro as a lesser artistic center in the narrative of the development of major academic trends in Europe is to take the inquiry out of Atlantic perspective and to re-inscribe structures invented by early modern colonialism itself. If, rather, we shift the attention to the Cuban art academy as its own Atlantic center of artistic activity, a place in a larger network amidst an extensive ebb and flow of people, ideas, and things, the story becomes much richer and relevant to developments in global art historical studies. The academy offered a site through which artists came and went, moving around the major ideas and visual technologies of the times, producing a Cuban visual modernity in all of its complex cultural functioning within an Atlantic society of social, racial, and gender hierarchies. After the rise of the Cuban *vanguardia*, San Alejandro persisted, its artists, teachers, and directors exhibiting alongside more avant-garde expressions. Hence, we find an American modernity in the visual arts, indeed, the story of another academy/avant-garde tension in Cuba, quite distinct from Paris and one thoroughly situated in the dynamic and contested Atlantic World.



Photo credit: Jon Nalon



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Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte

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Segundo J. Fernandez

Consideration of modernist painting in Cuba invariably begins with the work of Víctor Manuel. The *Enciclopedia de Cuba* is unequivocal on this point: “Víctor Manuel fue el primero. Con él empieza la Edad de Oro de nuestra plástica.”¹ That reference work of 1974, so grounded in nationalistic self-esteem, gives credit to the “generation of 1927” (the “Vanguardia”) for its departure from the academic classicism that dominated the Cuban art scene under the Spanish Crown.²

Juan Martínez, in his book *Cuban Art and National Identity*, and in his essay in this catalogue, casts the work of Cuban modernist painters in terms of the search for and creation of a “national identity,” a reinterpretation of Cuban “reality.”³ Martínez addresses the vanguardia’s role in “the ongoing building of a Cuban national identity” as a deliberate contribution to the “concept of the nation — as the land – people – and – culture.”⁴

If Víctor Manuel is the *primus inter alios* of Cuban modernism, we must then ask the question, “whither Víctor Manuel?” It would be easy to limit this discussion to stylistic comparisons with the likes of Modigliani, Cézanne and Gauguin; but, by engaging in comparisons, one is likely to obtain a conclusion of a greater and a lesser, or of originator and imitator. By considering Víctor Manuel as an artist *sui generis*, one can better understand how he helped define in his own idiosyncratic way, the “Golden Age” of Cuban art spoken of in the *Enciclopedia de Cuba*.

The art of Víctor Manuel is an expression of an original visual language grounded in the Cuban revolutionary experience, a nativist perspective informed, but not defined, by the art of the European avant garde, and, an art expressed in an exuberant manner which we can identify, in a shorthand way, as *tropicalismo*. This term, although used in connection with other artists in other media, has not been critically applied to Víctor Manuel’s work.

¹ “Víctor Manuel was the first. With him begins the Golden Age of our art.” *Enciclopedia de Cuba* (Madrid: Enciclopedia y Clásicos Cubanos, Inc., 1974) 5:164.

² *Ibid.*, 163.

³ Juan A. Martínez, *Cuban Art and National Identity* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1994), 50-51. Martínez states that “The vanguardia painters’ representation of a national identity also received a significant boost from contacts with modern European and, to a lesser extent, Mexican art. In postimpressionism, fauvism, expressionism, cubism, surrealism, and Mexican mural painting the vanguardia found the inspiration and the means to reinterpret Cuban reality. The mixture of native and imported elements in their art enabled the vanguardia artists to express a Cuban ethos without forsaking their claim to be part of the modern world.”

⁴ *Ibid.*, 94. Martínez’s discussion of Víctor Manuel, would find support among Eurocentric critics who would argue that the artist’s work is derivative of the French avant garde: “Although informed of the latest trends in Parisian art of the 1920s, he crafted a personal style inspired by the pioneers of French modernism: Paul Cézanne and Paul Gauguin. Their paintings confirmed his tendency toward the simplification of pictorial means and the idealization of reality. More important, Gauguin’s celebrated representations of the Pacific Islands’ exotic, pre-urban people and tropical environment influenced Víctor Manuel’s focus on similar qualities in his own under-developed country. He adapted Gauguin’s modernist primitivism to depict Cuba and its inhabitants as relaxed, sensual, and timeless. A precedent for this view of Cuba is also found in the Arcadian visions of the island.” *Ibid.*

Figure 1. Víctor Manuel, *Gitana Tropical*, 1929, oil on wood, 46 x 38.5 cm.



▲Figure 2. Víctor Patricio Landaluze, *El Zapateo*, 1828-1889, oil on canvas, 49 x 56 cm.

▲Figure 3. Víctor Manuel, *Bailarines Españoles*, oil on canvas, 37 x 31 inches. Private Collection, Coral Gables.

▲Figure 4. Víctor Patricio Landaluze, *Día de Reyes en La Habana*, 1828-1889, oil on canvas, 51 x 61 cm.



VÍCTOR MANUEL. Manuel García Valdés was born in Havana in 1897, a subject of the Spanish Crown and of Spanish ancestry. At the young age of 13, in 1910, he enrolled at the Escuela Profesional de Pintura y Escultura in Havana, otherwise known as the Academy of San Alejandro, founded a century earlier under the sponsorship of the Royal Academy of San Fernando in Madrid.⁵

From 1917 to 1925, Manolo García, as he was known to his friends, exhibited annually at the Salon de Bellas Artes in Havana. His mentor at this time was his principal Professor of Painting, the eminent Leopoldo Romañach, who also taught Amelia Peláez, both represented in this exhibition and discussed elsewhere in this catalogue.⁶ In 1924, the Galeria San Rafael presented a one-man show of Víctor Manuel's work.⁷ This was a major event that established his importance to the post-independence Cuban art scene.

From 1925-1927, Víctor Manuel traveled to Europe and lived in Paris, joining there other expatriate Cuban artists, including Antonio Gattorno, Eduardo Abela, and Ernesto Riverón. In 1927 he returned to Cuba, mounted a one-man show at the Asociación de Pintores y Escultores in Havana, and then participated in the Exposición de Arte Nuevo of 1927, which was prominently covered by the *Revista de Avance*.⁸ In 1929 he returned to Paris, and stayed there the better part of a year; he also visited Spain and Belgium. Perhaps his best known work, *Gitana Tropical* [Figure 1], was painted in Paris during this time.⁹ After returning to Cuba, he exhibited frequently in both group and one-man shows.

To situate the work of Víctor Manuel in the context of the international avant garde, we need first to understand where Cuban art was before the advent of the "Generation of 1927." To illustrate, we need but look at the treatment of any given subject by a nineteenth-century artist, and the same subject by Víctor Manuel.

Víctor Patricio Landaluze (*b.* Spain 1828 – *d.* Cuba 1889) emigrated to Cuba in about 1850, and established himself as a painter of Cuban genre scenes. His *El Zapateo* (*c.* 1882) is a traditional and sentimental representation of a Cuban folk dance [Figure 2].¹⁰ His attention to detail, harmonious color scheme, perspectival arrangement and realistic spatial setting are characteristic of Cuban art throughout the nineteenth century. Individual faces are portrait-like and color gradations and shading enhance the descriptive nature of the painting. The viewer is safely removed from the scene and can examine it with voyeuristic pleasure. A

5 *Enciclopedia de Cuba*, 5: 164-167.

6 Juan Antonio Molina, "Estrada Palma 261: Still Life with Dream about Amelia Peláez," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* (1996) 22: 230-239.

7 *Centenario de Víctor Manuel*, exhibition catalogue (Havana: Museo Nacional, 1998), 13.

8 José Veigas, et al., *Memoria: Cuban Art of the 20th Century* (Los Angeles: California/International Arts Foundation, 2001), 372-74.

9 Martínez, *Cuban Art*, Plate 2.

10 *Pintura Española y Cubana y Litografías y Grabados Cubanos del Siglo XIX*, exhibition catalogue (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, Casón del Buen Retiro, 1983), 60.

treatment of the same subject by Víctor Manuel [Figure 3] contradicts virtually all of these observations made of Landaluze's work.¹¹ Víctor Manuel's treatment of the Cuban folk dance is a frenzied depiction of doll-like dancers and musicians with bold splashes of color and less-than-graceful limbs in motion that describe not the physical characteristics of the dancers, but rather forcefully convey pulsating sound and color which reflect the physical reaction of the viewer as if he were present in the very space of the dancers.

Similar conclusions can be drawn from a comparison of Landaluze's *Día de Reyes en La Habana* (c. 1882) [Figure 4] and Víctor Manuel's undated *Carnaval* [Figure 5].¹² Most obviously, the ethnographic (not to mention stylistically conservative) depiction of Afro-Cuban revelers in Landaluze's painting is replaced by Víctor Manuel's abbreviated treatment of the human figure, in a deliberate attempt to confound and mystify. Rural landscapes can likewise be compared to illustrate the great leap forward of Cuban modernism. Philippe Chartrand (b. 1825 – d. 1889) was born in Cuba of French-Haitian parents. He received his artistic training in Paris and returned to Cuba where he distinguished himself as a landscape painter. His *Paisaje con Ciervo* [Figure 6], of late in his career illustrates the taste for serene Romantic landscapes of the Cuban bourgeoisie under the Spanish Crown. Greater contrast in color and style could not be obtained than by comparison with Víctor Manuel's *Paisaje Cubano* [Figure 7 on page 36].¹³

A work by Víctor Manuel's teacher, Leopoldo Romañach, further illustrates the contrast in approach between the old and the new. Romañach's *Going to Mass* [Figure 8 on page 36] evokes all of the gentility and grace of a traditionally conservative Cuban society woman, an image imbued with the elevated status of the artist's typical patrons.¹⁴ Víctor Manuel's *Portrait of Lydia Cabrera* [Figure 9 on page 37] portrays a thoroughly modern woman who distinguished herself as an ethnographer of Afro-Cubanism, never married, and eschewed the social life of Havana for hands-on field work in the Cuban countryside.¹⁵

When did Manolo García, young Cuban art student abroad, become Víctor Manuel, a leader of the Cuban Vanguardia? We know that while a student at San Alejandro, he would bring to classes reproductions of works by modern French painters, including Cézanne, Gauguin, and Monet, and discuss the same with Romañach.¹⁶ It was in Paris, during his first sojourn in the 1920s,



Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte

¹¹ Gary Nader, *Latin American Art Auction*, auction catalogue (Coral Gables: Gary Nader, 11 January 1998), Plate 36.

¹² *Pintura Española y Cubana*, 59; Nader, *Latin American Art Auction* (11 January 1998), Plate 127.

¹³ Nader, *Latin American Art Auction*, auction catalogue (Coral Gables: Gary Nader, 7 January 1996), Plate 1.

¹⁴ Gary R. Libby, *Cuba: A History in Art* (Daytona Beach: The Museum of Arts and Sciences, 1997), 60-61.

¹⁵ Nader, *Latin American Art Auction* (7 January 1996), Plate 40.

¹⁶ *Centenario de Víctor Manuel*, exhibition catalogue (Havana: Museo Nacional, 1998), 13-14.

▲ Figure 5 Víctor Manuel, *Carnaval*, watercolor, ink and pencil on paper, 19 x 15 ¾ inches. Private Collection, Santiago.

▲ Figure 6. Philippe Chartrand, *Paisaje con Ciervo* (*Landscape with Deer*), c. 1870s, oil on panel, 16 ¾ x 12 ½ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



▲ Figure 7. Víctor Manuel, *Paisaje Cubano*, c.1950, oil on canvas, 26 x 20 ¼ in. 66 x 51.4 cm. Private Collection Miami.

▲ Figure 8. Leopoldo Romañach, *On the Way to Mass*, early 20th century, oil on canvas, 36 x 34 inches. Gift of the Cuban Foundation Collection, The Museum of Arts and Sciences, Daytona Beach, Florida.

that he was consciously *reborn* as an avant-garde artist. The Cuban modernist Enrique Riverón, in an interview with Giulio V. Blanc in the 1990s, recalled:

(Riverón) ER: There were other Latin American artists and writers, and we would get together at La Rotonde and Le Dôme.... We called ourselves the Grupo de Montparnasse and spent a lot of time at these cafés. I lived with other Latin American artists at the Hôtel du Maine near the railroad station.

(Blanc) GB: Weren't there a lot of Cubans in Paris?

ER: Yes, Víctor Manuel, Antonio Gattorno, who became a good friend of Ernest Hemingway, and Eduardo Abela were there.... He was the first one of us to meet Kiki (Man Ray's lover), also Armando Maribona was in Paris, too. He wrote a book on the Paris years, *El arte y el amor en Montparnasse: Paris, 1923-1930*. Here it is. I wish somebody would reprint it. It is all about our living there.

GB: So the Grupo de Montparnasse really lived it up?

ER: Yes...

GB: Is it true you were there when Víctor Manuel, who is considered the founder of modern Cuban painting, changed his name?

ER: Yes, we forced him to change it from Manolo Garcia since that was too common. *We baptized him with champagne.*¹⁷ [author's italics]

If Víctor Manuel was “reborn” in a baptism of champagne in Paris in 1929 at the hand of his fellow Cuban expatriates, it would seem easy to opine that he was reborn in the “French mold,” and therefore conclude that his art developed as a derivative of the “School of Paris.”¹⁸ Yet, in addition to his Parisian sojourns Víctor Manuel's work also has historical antecedents grounded in the pro-independence Cuban revolutionary movement of the nineteenth century; these antecedents shaped content and format as parts of Víctor Manuel's work. Contextualized in this fashion, we discover the emergence not of a school of “Cuban” art, derivative of Eurocentric models, but rather participation in the international avant garde by artists born in Cuba. To illustrate, we first turn to a review of the works of three prominent Cuban patriots: Isaac Carrillo y O'Farrill, José Martí, and Enrique José Varona.

CARRILLO Y O'FARRILL. Isaac Carrillo y O'Farrill was born in Havana in 1844. After studying Philosophy at the University of Havana, and Law at the University of Madrid, he returned to Cuba and became active in the Cuban independence movement. When the inconclusive “Guerra de los Diez Años” revolutionary struggle broke out in 1868, he was briefly imprisoned by the colonial Spanish government. He left for exile in the US and was an active propagandist for the revolutionary movement, writing for the “El Nuevo Mundo” revolutionary newspaper. He returned to Havana after the Spanish departed in 1898, and died

¹⁷ Giulio V. Blanc, “Enrique Riverón on the Cuban Vanguardia: An Interview,” *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* (1996) 22: 244-46.

¹⁸ Martínez, *Cuban Art*, 155-56. Juan Martínez has noted that “Víctor Manuel holds a seminal position in the history of Cuban art as the artist who introduced the modernism of the School of Paris into painting.”

there in 1901. Carrillo y O'Farrill's poetry reflected his revolutionary zeal and his yearning for his *homeland* while in exile.¹⁹

The poem *Connais tu le pais ... - Kennst du des Land* appeared in *Las Cien Mejores Poesías Cubanas* published in 1922.²⁰ The poem is pointedly subtitled "(Imitación de Goethe)," and, on the surface, appears to be just that, a deliberate and somewhat playful derivation of Goethe's poem *Mignon*.²² A closer reading reveals two very different poems. This can be readily ascertained in a side-by-side comparison.

Mignon
By J.W. von Goethe

Do you know the land where the lemon-trees
grow,
in darkened leaves the gold-oranges glow,
a soft wind blows from the pure blue sky,
the myrtle stands mute, and the bay-tree high?

Do you know it well?
It's there I'd be gone,
to be there with you, O, my beloved one!

...

Do you know the clouded mountain mass?
The mule picks its way through the misted pass,
and dragons in caves raise their ancient brood,
and the cliffs are polished smooth by the flood;

Do you know it well?
It's there I would be gone!
It's there our way leads! Father, we must go on!

Connais tu le pais... - Kennst du des Land?
(Imitación de Goethe)
By Isaac Carrillo y O'Farrill

¿Conoces tú la region donde el naranjo
florece, donde, en armónica union, más
bello el cielo parece y más ama el cora-
zón?...

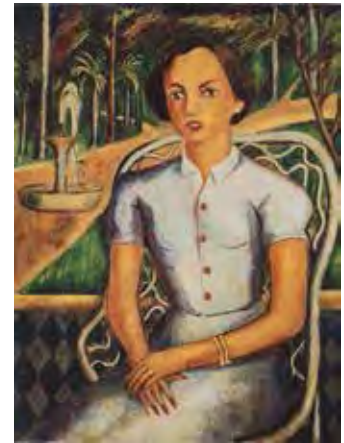
¿Conoces tú la palmera cuyo penacho
sonoro se agita allá en la ribera del país
de frutos de oro y de eterna primavera?

Donde la Guerra taló todo el monte
y todo el llano, y ni una cruz se elevó
donde descansa el hermano que por su
fe sucumbió.

De allí fué donde, a pedir un albergue
al extranjero, me hizo el déspota venir,
i yes allí donde yo quiero ser libre, amar
y morir! ...

Y en este anhelo, a parar van todos los
sueños míos, como corren a buscar, con
ansia eterna, los ríos su inmensa tumba
en el mar.

Goethe's poem deals with a foreigner's yearning for the land of Italy, a Northern Romantic's elegy to Italy as arcadian landscape.²³ Carrillo y O'Farrill's poem deals



¹⁹ José M. Chacón y Calvo, ed., *Las Cien Mejores Poesías Cubanas*, facsimile edition of the original publication of [date] (Miami: Editorial Cubana, 2004), 209-211. Carrillo y O'Farrill had published, while in Cuba, a daring sonnet entitled "Caída de Isabel II" (The Fall of Isabel II), then the Spanish Regent, and had also published a revolutionary broadside, entitled *La Revolución*.

²⁰ O'Farrill's *La Revolución* was an anthology that included works by other poets of the Cuban independence movement, including, of course, José Martí.

²¹ Chacón y Calvo, *Cien Mejores Poesías Cubanas*, 207-209. The O'Farrill poem, which contains nine stanzas, is reproduced here only in part.

²² This English translation of Goethe's poem is taken from www.tonykline.co.uk, s.v. "Goethe."

²³ Interestingly, a recent exhibition at the Neue Pinakothek in Munich was titled "Do You Know the Land – Images of Italy from the Time of Goethe." See www.pinakothek.de/neue-pinakothek, s.v. "Exhibitions." The website notes that "owning to its art and the beauty of its scenery, Italy has exerted an especially strong attraction on German art in particular." The title of the exhibition, of course, is taken from Goethe's "Mignon."

▲Figure 9. Víctor Manuel, *Retrato De Lydia Cabrera*, oil on canvas, 33 x 25 in. 83.8 x 63.5 cm. Private Collection Miami.

with a *native son's* yearning for a *homeland* that is denied him in exile, and to where he longs to return. His characterization of the landscape — including the ever iconic Cuban “palmera” (Royal Palm) — sets the stage for his invocation of “la Guerra” (the revolutionary war), the poet’s exile (“un alberque al extranjero”) and his inevitable return to the homeland, even if in death (“como corren a buscar ... los ríos su inmensa tumba en el mar”).

Carrillo y O’Farrill’s visual imagery in words has been described by Cuban literary critic José María Chacón y Calvo as “*tropicalismo*,” characterized by the poet’s sense of “local color, the concrete word, the rational idea, and the clear emotion.”²⁴ Chacón y Calvo astutely notes that what at first blush appears an “exercise in imitation” really leads to the poet’s discovery, within himself, of a “new perspective.”²⁵ The poetry of the revolutionary generation which participated in the Cuban War of Independence was well known and widely read in Cuba, during and after that war. The “Vanguardia” generation of painters of the 1920s, including Víctor Manuel rediscovered that poetry, particularly through the efforts of art and literary critics Jorge Mañach and Juan Marinello.²⁶ The *Cien Mejores Poesías Cubanas* appeared in Havana in 1922 to popular acclaim. The *tropicalismo* of Carrillo y O’Farrill, which is also found in the writings of José Martí, may prove to be a useful approach at evaluating the work of Víctor Manuel García. Chacón y Calvo’s insightful analysis (and rejection) of “imitation” and derivation in the poetry of Carrillo y O’Farrill is equally valid when considering the work of Víctor Manuel and his relationship to the (mostly) French avant garde of the early twentieth century. The writings of José Martí shed further light on the vanguardia’s modernism.

JOSÉ MARTÍ. Cuban revolutionary José Martí (1853-1895) wrote revolutionary polemics, but also poetry, fiction, and art criticism. Although he died in a skirmish with Spanish troops shortly after his return to Cuba from a lengthy exile, mostly in the United States, his written works comprise a canon of Cuban culture and political philosophy that deeply influenced the vanguardia generation of the 1920s. Juan Martínez has noted that “the ideology expressed in the 1927 Grupo Minorista declaration owes much to Martí’s writings and example.”²⁷

Martí as art critic resembled Martí the revolutionary. In his *Notas sobre pintores* he wrote: “Toda rebelión de esencia...el que pinte igual que todo el mundo caerá pronto en el olvido...el alma es el color...el alma ha de quemar, para que la mano pinto bien.”²⁸ His writings on art while in exile in New York, published in the newspaper “*The Hour*” reflect: “Yo amo tenazmente el arte...una obra bella

24 Chacón y Calvo, *Cien Mejores Poesías Cubanas*, 210.

25 Ibid.

26 Martínez, *Cuban Art*, 169, n16. Martínez reports: “For Mañach’s and Marinello’s early interest in the writings of Martí, see Ripoll, *La Generación del 23 en Cuba*, 70-72; Jorge Mañach, “El pensador Martí,” *Revista de Avance* 4 (1929): 44.”

27 Martínez, *Cuban Art*, 39-41.

28 *Enciclopedia de Cuba*, 5: ii.

es para mí una hermana, un golpe de color, para mí revelación clarísima de los pensamientos e ideas que agitaban el alma del pintor... .”²⁹

Martí praised the Impressionists at the expense of the Old Masters. Writing a newspaper column in 1886 on the occasion of the sale of J.P. Morgan’s collection of Old Master paintings, Martí said:

Pero toda aquella colección de obras maestras, con ser tan opulenta y variada, no dejaba en el espíritu, como deja la de los impresionistas, esa creadora inquietud y obsesión sabrosa que produce el aparecimiento súbito de lo *verdadero* y lo *fuerte*. Ríos de verde, llanos de rojo, cerros de amarillo: eso parecen, vistos en montón, *los lienzos locos de estos pintores nuevos*.³⁰ [author’s italics]

For Martí, the “crazy canvases” of the “new painters” engendered in the viewer, a “creative restlessness and delicious obsession” which resulted in a vision of “truth” and “strength”— not coincidentally also revolutionary virtues.

The new art of the Impressionists, Martí writes, is based on life-experiences in which: “la vida no es más que una estación en la naturaleza ... Y anuncia a cada hombre que, puesto que el Universo se le revela entero y directamente, con él le es revelado *el derecho de ver* en él por sí, y saciar con los propios labios la ardiente sed que inspira”³¹ [author’s italics] — that is, life is nothing more than a station of nature which leads to a “right to see,” an Emersonian concept that ultimately leads to the recording in either poetry or canvas, of the visual universe, as Martí noted elsewhere, in “Truth” and “Strength.” In politics, as in art, Martí looks to the native soil of the Americas for solutions to pressing social (and by extrapolation, artistic) issues: “Las soluciones socialistas, nacidas de males europeos, nada tienen que remediar en el bosque de las Amazonas, donde se adoran todavía las divinidades salvajes. *Allí es donde hay que estudiar, en el libro de la Naturaleza*”³² [author’s italics]. Martí clearly disavows the imitation of European models: he rejects European solutions as having no place in the “forests of the Amazon.” His prescription is to look to the “book of Nature” in the Americas for direction.

ENRIQUE JOSÉ VARONA. Cuban philosopher and literary critic Enrique José Varona, was a contemporary of José Martí and a friend and collaborator with Martí in the latter’s revolutionary activities. In 1895, Varona took over the editorship of Martí’s newspaper *Patria* after Martí’s death. Varona anticipated Martí’s Emersonian avant-gardism in a lecture delivered at the Atheneum in the provincial capital of Matanzas, Cuba, in June 1880. Varona stated:

Pero una misma pasión puede y debe expresarse con distintas formas según las condiciones intrínsecas del que la siente y las extrínsecas del lugar, del tiempo, de las ideas y gustos dominantes, del medio social

²⁹ Carlos Ripoll, *José Martí: Antología Mayor* (Miami: Editorial Cubana, 1995), 285.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 307.

³¹ Graziella Pogolotti, *Examen de Conciencia* (Havana: Ediciones Union, 1965), 159.

³² *Ibid.*, 134.

en fin. De aquí que la forma artística, así en la literatura como en la pintura y escultura, procure acomodarse y adaptarse a estas nuevas condiciones en que se ve colocada.³³

That is, literary and artistic expressions, including painting and sculpture are and ought to reflect both intrinsic and extrinsic conditions of a time and place. Thus, according to Varona, the prime mandate applicable to the artistic creative hand is to *announce the end of a slow evolutionary movement*, and the advent of *abrupt change* [author's italics], even if dangerous: "En las épocas de transición tienen los espíritus ilustrados un alto deber que cumplir. El de señalar el término del movimiento evolutivo... ." ³⁴

The *Cuban* vanguardia painters accomplished precisely what Varona advocated four decades earlier, a signal call to modernism which arose *out of the Cuban* condition, and embodied the "burning soul" of rebellion praised by Martí that created visual images of Truth and Strength, based on the *Cuban* experience of committed *Cuban* patriots. Just how much of a significant change was brought about by the vanguardia is self-evident in the modernist works represented in this exhibition.

CUBANS STUDYING ABROAD

Víctor Manuel spent a significant amount of time studying in Europe: 1925-27 and again 1929-30. Clearly, his Parisian sojourns exposed him to the contemporary art scene in Europe in a way that could not have happened if he had merely continued to work and study at the Academy of San Alejandro. Studying abroad sets up a fork in the road for the young artist to consciously decide his sense of direction: is he to imitate or to forge his own individual direction?

The cultural impact of studying abroad on impressionable young Cubans had been the subject of at least one literary work published in Cuba in the nineteenth century. In a somewhat sarcastic vein, Cuban writer José Robles wrote, in "Los Cubanos Pintados por si Mismos:"

Ello es que ni en Francia, ni en Inglaterra, ni en Alemania, y aun pudiéramos añadir, ni en los Estados-Unidos, le ocurre á los padres que gozan de algo mas que lo preciso para su cómoda subsistencia, enviar fuera á los hijos á que adquieran aquellos conocimientos con que desean verlos adornados. Dirásenos que la moda y la vanidad influyen mucho en esta determinacion de los de acá....³⁵

33 Gonzalo de Quesada y Miranda, *Martí, Hombre*, facsimile edition (Miami: Editorial Cubana, 1998), 178-179.

34 *Ibid.*, 185-186. Varona's lecture was entitled "Disertación Sobre El Espíritu De La Literatura En Nuestra Época, En Relación Con El Que Debe Animar A La Cubana, Después De La Gran Transformación Social Iniciada." The "Great Transformation" refers to the first war for Cuban independence (The Guerra de los Diez Años) in the 1870s.

35 Enrique José Varona, *Estudios y conferencias*, facsimile edition (Miami: Editorial Cubana, 1998), 253-54.

He notes that it never occurs to parents in France, England and Germany to send their children to study abroad. Robles, in the chapter entitled “El Educado Fuera” (The Student Abroad), satirizes the young Cuban who studies abroad and returns to Cuba preferring “blackberries” to Cuban pineapples and zapotes, and, who decries the fact that in Cuba there are no “blue-eyed young women...nor blondes,” but only in Europe. This apocryphal young Cuban, called “Esteban” proclaims after his return to Cuba his love of all things European.³⁶ The humor of this excerpt is underscored later in the story, when Esteban, who returns to Cuba, is re-acclimatized to his native land and marries one of the “darkest brunettes ever born on the island” (“una de las trigueñas mas oscuras que ha producido esta Antilla”). The writer wryly concludes with the observation that young Esteban might yet grow up to be an accomplished man, but for that he need not have travelled to Germany (“no se necesitaba haber ido á Alemania”³⁷).

In contrast to this mid-nineteenth century prejudice against studying abroad, young Cuban artists after Cuban independence in 1902 flocked to Europe, particularly to France, but the result was not “Esteban’s” rejection of the native Cuban in favor of the European; art critic Graziella Pogolotti has two major points here: 1) the young Cuban artists in Europe need a certain *distance* to distill Cuban reality in its essential features based on memory, and 2) each young artist follows the thread of *his own ideas* in his own *interior monologue*.³⁸ Pogolotti’s observations are illustrated by the interaction between Lydia Cabrera, Amelia Peláez, and Alexander Exter.

LYDIA CABRERA. Lydia Cabrera was born in Havana on May 20, 1900, to a wealthy Cuban “criollo” family of Spanish descent. Her father, a lawyer, was active in the Cuban independence movement against the Spanish colonial regime. He was the founding editor, in 1889 in New York City, of the Cuban

³⁶ Ibid., 256.

-Voy á pasar muchos trabajos aquí! Esclamó despues de un rato de silencio Estéban. No hay muchachas de ojos azules...ni blondas...ni...oh! Que esto es terrible! Aquí no hay muchachas bonitas...en Europa...en Europa...!

-Son *falsas bellezas*, dijo, aquí no hay gusto. En Europa, esas son bellezas *campañardes*, campesinas, como dicen ustedes. Aquí no hay un tipo delicado...Facciones toscas *que todo eso!* Una *complexion* morena...oh, *que esto es terrible!* Lo mismo que las frutas...En este país no se dan buenas frutas...oh, en Europa...Las *black-berries*, que llaman los ingleses...moras en español...Aquí no hay *nada comparable*...

Hombre! Salté yo: aquí tenemos may buenas frutas...la piña por ejemplo...Si tus viajes te han hecho olvidarla ...

Oh, *que la piña!* yo soy por las *black-berries!* Usted se puede comer un plato de ellas, y dos también...y usted no puede acabar una sola piña...oh, *la gran diferencia!*

³⁷ Ibid., 258. The quote roughly translates to “it was not necessary for him to have gone to Germany [to have made himself a cultured man].”

³⁸ Graziella Pogolotti, *Examen de Conciencia* (Havana: Ediciones Union, 1965), 142 [author’s italics below]:

Estamos en los años iniciales del movimiento moderno en Cuba: 1923-1928. Para los artistas de la generación de Abela, se trata de reivindicar lo nacional y de encontrar un lenguaje adecuado. Va a Europa, a España, a Francia, especialmente. *Necesitan cierta distanciaci3n, que les permita elaborar la material a partir de la evocacion y de la imaginaci3n, definir la realidad en sus rasgos esenciales desde el recuerdo.*

Todos los artistas quisieran, como el personaje de Giraudoux, tomar el metro desde su casa y salir por la estaci3n de Vavin a los cafés de Montparnasse, el Dome o la Coupole. Cerca est3n los estudios de la Grande Chaumiére. Se trabaja y se discute. *Pero en ese gran intercambio, cada cual prosigue el hilo de sus propias ideas, de su propio mon3logo interior.*



separatist journal *Cuba y América*, which continued publication until 1915, long after formal Cuban sovereignty was achieved on May 20, 1902. The Cabrera family moved freely between the US and Cuba. Lydia, for example, was baptized at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City three months after her birth in Cuba. Her life of privilege included an education at exclusive Havana private schools, and pleasure trips to Europe starting at the age of five. She enrolled at the Academia de San Alejandro after completing high school, and studied painting with Leopoldo Romañach. She exhibited her works in Havana in 1922, but although she maintained a life-long interest in painting, did not establish herself as a painter. Instead, she pursued with a passion the scholarly study of Afro-Cuban ethnography, becoming a front-line student of Afro-Cuban folkways and religion (Santería), and a chronicler of Afro-Cuban stories and myths.³⁹ She became a major popularizer of what Robin Moore has called “the vogue of Afro-Cubanism.”⁴⁰

The trajectory of Lydia Cabrera's development into the foremost ethnographer of Afro-Cuban culture of the twentieth century places her in the avant garde of Cuban culture. Born to privilege, the aristocratic white woman photographed at her colonial mansion, La Quinta San José [Figure 10], would don slacks and a broad-brimmed hat, notebook in hand, and go alone into the countryside to record first-person histories and folkways [Figure 11].⁴¹

Vicki Unruh has described in detail Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier's *El Milagro de Anaquillé* a performance piece from 1927 which brought together Afro-Cuban dance, theater and religious ritual in what Unruh appropriately describes as an autochthonous development in the avant garde. Carpentier, who signed the “Declaration del Grupo Minorista” manifesto of 1927, was well acquainted with Cabrera. His performance piece, which included a reenactment of a “ñañigo” initiation of the Afro-Cuban Santería religion juxtaposed against the machinations of a modern capitalist businessman, is viewed by Unruh as privileging the former as a “richer source” for Cuban artistic expression than the bourgeois culture of the businessman.⁴²

³⁹ Rosario Hiriart, *Lydia Cabrera: Vida Hecha Arte* (New York: Eliseo Torres & Sons, 1978), 17-26.

⁴⁰ Robin Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness: Afro-Cubanism and Artistic Revolution in Havana, 1920-1940* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997). Moore discusses the social conditions in Cuba in the 1920s and 1930s which led middle and upper class white Cubans to feature Afro-Cuban traditions in primarily musical compositions. The same factors were at work in the fields of literature and the visual arts. He views a primary motivation to be the “challenge of a younger generation seeking new modes of nationalist expression.” *Ibid.*, 116. Although according to Moore, in music “conflicting” tendencies of racism and cultural nationalism were resolved through a process of stylization, I believe the ethnographic element, highlighted in the work of Lydia Cabrera, is largely overlooked. *Ibid.*, 134.

⁴¹ See Edna M. Rodríguez-Mangual, *Lydia Cabrera and the Construction of an Afro-Cuban Cultural Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004) 9, 97. Rodríguez-Mangual upon seeing a photograph of Cabrera for the first time expresses surprise to discover that she was white and not a black Afro-Cuban. *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴² Vicki Unruh, *Latin American Vanguards: The Art of Contentious Encounters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 61-68. Unruh believes *El Milagro de Anaquillé* addresses a mass audience much as a vanguardist manifesto might have invoked “the Cuban people.” If the performance were reviewed in this “political” context, Cabrera could well consider its authenticity compromised, since her interest was first and foremost scholarly.

▲Figure 10. Lydia Cabrera in La Quinta San Jose, c. 1944, Courtesy of the Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami Libraries, Coral Gables, Florida.

▲Figure 11. Lydia Cabrera with an informant at the Central Cuba, Matanzas, Cuba, 1940s. Courtesy of the Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami Libraries, Coral Gables, Florida.

Cabrera, who was from the privileged class anticipated Carpentier's interests in Afro-Cuban folklore. As early as 1923, Cabrera was present at the inauguration of the Sociedad del Folklore Cubano, founded by her brother-in-law, Fernando Ortiz, the first Cuban ethnographer to seriously consider Afro-Cuban culture, albeit from afar. And it was Cabrera who "got there first." When Carpentier went to the Havana suburb of Marianao to witness a "nañigo" initiation similar to the one depicted in his *Anaquillé*, Cabrera was already there taking notes as part of her field work.⁴³

Cabrera left for Paris in early 1927 to study painting, in the company of fellow artist-in-training, Amelia Peláez, whom she had met at San Alejandro. Cabrera rented a flat at 11 Avenue Jounot, Peláez at 13 Avenue Jounot, in Montmartre. They both enrolled at the École du Louvre, and graduated in 1930. Cabrera would remain in Europe until 1938, although she frequently returned to Cuba for short visits. In 1928, during her first visit back to Havana, she reported "a great restlessness to get close to 'negritude'" ("lo negro" as she described it).⁴⁴ As she would later recall, she had "discovered Cuba on the banks of the Seine." When in Cuba, she continued to record first-person interviews in the Afro-Cuban neighborhood of Barrio Pogolotti, not far from her colonial mansion.⁴⁵

Upon her return to Paris, she compiled and wrote *Cuentos Negros de Cuba* which she sent to her friend Teresa de la Parra, the Venezuelan writer who was hospitalized at a tuberculosis sanatorium in Switzerland. Both Cabrera and concluded at the end of their studies at the Ecole du Louvre that they "were not learning anything new" and they sought out and attached themselves to the studio of émigré artist, Alexandra Exter. Both became close friends and students of the Russian avant-gardist.⁴⁶

Little is known today of Cabrera's artistic production in Paris. At one point she recalls that save for two paintings which she gave to the concierge at her apartment building, she burned all of her works as "not good enough," but her interest in Afro-Cuban culture continued unabated, spurred by her exposure to African and Asian art, the latter exhibited at a favorite museum of Cabrera's, the Musée Guimet.⁴⁷ In 1936, Cabrera's *Cuentos Negros de Cuba* was translated into French by Peláez's friend, Francis de Miomandre. One of these stories, *Arere Marekén* [Figure 12] was the basis of a collaboration between Cabrera and Exter.⁴⁸

Cabrera returned to Cuba in 1938. *Cuentos Negros* was published in Havana two years later. Alejo Carpentier, writing in the magazine *Carteles* noted that: "The *Cuentos Negros* of Lydia Cabrera constitute a unique work in our literature which



Photo credit: Jon Nalon

⁴³ Rodríguez-Mangual, *Lydia Cabrera*, 10.

⁴⁴ Hiriart, *Lydia Cabrera*, 22-23; see also José Seoane Gallo, *Palmas Reales en el Sena* (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1987), 35.

⁴⁵ Hiriart, *Lydia Cabrera*, 72.

⁴⁶ José Seoane Gallo, *Palmas Reales*, 36.

⁴⁷ Hiriart, *Lydia Cabrera*, 144-6.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

▲Figure 12. Lydia Cabrera, page from *Arere Marekén*, 1933.



▲Figure 13. Amelia Peláez, *Naturaleza Muerta Sobre Ocre*, 1930. Courtesy of the Amelia Peláez Foundation.

▲Figure 14. Amelia Peláez, *Naturaleza Muerta Con Frutas (Boceto)*, c. 1936. Courtesy of the Amelia Peláez Foundation.

situates Antillean [Afro-Cuban] mythology within the realm of universal values.” Carpentier concludes that this masterpiece will be considered a “Cuban classic.”⁴⁹

Cabrera’s world was firmly centered in Cuba. Only from the distance of the Parisian periphery did the richness of the Afro-Cuban culture come clearly into focus for her. This reflective vision — contained in her observation of discovering Cuba on the banks of the Seine — was not unique to Cabrera’s expatriate experience. In fact, she later reflected that she observed the same phenomenon amongst Cuban artists and writers in Paris (but not as much, she noted, with Cubans in the US, where Cuba apparently was not as distant and the parallel presence of an Afro North American population rendered it less foreign).⁵⁰

AMELIA PELÁEZ. Like Cabrera, Amelia Peláez was born to a life of privilege to a Cuban “criollo” family of Spanish descent. Her grandfather was a judge in Havana, her father a physician. She was born in 1896 in Yaguajay, a provincial town near Havana, where her father was the resident doctor. Her family moved back to Havana in 1915. As with Cabrera’s family, the Peláez family had been active in the Cuban independence movement. After high school, she enrolled at the Academia de San Alejandro, where she met Lydia Cabrera, and like her friend, studied under Leopoldo Romañach.⁵¹ She exhibited at the “Salon de Bellas Artes” of 1925 in Havana, an exhibition that prefigured the vanguardist tone of the 1927 “Primera Exposición de Arte Nuevo.”⁵²

Amelia was awarded a scholarship to study in Paris for three years, but her stay there was extended to seven years with the financial support of her family. Amelia and Cabrera studied together at the École du Louvre and at the Grande Chaumière. Her apartment, next to Cabrera’s, became the gathering place of many moneyed Cuban émigrés as well as other Cuban artists and writers in Paris at that time. Amelia later recalled that her black beans and rice, “prepared Cuban criollo style by me” were a perennial favorite in her frequent soirées.⁵³ Within her circle, Amelia befriended Francis de Miñandré, who translated *Cuentos Negros* for Cabrera. De Miñandré, in fact, wrote the wall texts for Amelia’s exhibition at the Galerie Zak in Paris in 1933.

49 Ibid., 38. *Cuentos Negros de Cuba* was not published in Cuba until 1940. The book was dedicated to de la Parra. Fernando Ortiz wrote the introduction to the Cuban edition; he notes that despite the mainly African-Yoruba origins of the stories, they also illustrate significant transculturation features from the culture of the white Spanish Cubans. Lydia Cabrera, *Cuentos Negros de Cuba* (Madrid: Ramos Artes Gráficas, 1972), 7-10.

50 Ibid., 72-73.

51 Gallo, *Palmas Reales*, 11-31.

52 Veigas et al., 370-73.

53 Ibid., 34-35. Many Cuban artists and intellectuals flocked to Paris during the 1920s and 1930s, rather than to Madrid, seat of the former colonial power, Spain. These included the painters Enrique Riverón, Eduardo Abela and Víctor Manuel, all prominent in the vanguardia of Cuban art. See, e.g., Guilio V. Blanc, “Enrique Riverón” in *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* (1996) 22: 240-253.

Cabrera, according to Amelia, came to her house “every day” to study and paint, and both “engaged in illustrating Cuban stories gathered by Cabrera.”⁵⁴ This last statement offers a tantalizing clue as to Amelia’s probable influence on the Cabrera-Exter collaboration in *Arere Marekén*. Amelia returned to Cuba in 1934, two years before de Miômandre translated *Cuentos Negros*, but not before Cabrera collaborated with Alexandra Exter on *Arere Marekén* in 1933.⁵⁵ Amelia’s work during and immediately after her Parisian period shows the beginning of a fluidity of line which became the hallmark of her mature period.

While in Paris, Amelia painted *Still Life with Fruit* in 1923 [Figure 13].⁵⁶ This work, while not quite as “fluid” as Amelia’s later work, begins to show her trademark style: splashes of bright colors, unbounded by line (for example, the monochromatic colors of the fruit) and the curvilinear lines of the wrought iron grille behind the table. Geometrical structures collapse in *Still Life with Fruit* of 1936 [Figure 14] and lines become intensely curvilinear save for the orange and yellow diamond pattern, possibly representing a colonial stained glass window pattern.⁵⁷ All semblance of geometrical design disappears in *Hibiscus* of 1936 [Figure 15] and the entire composition vibrates in the intense red of the hibiscus flower and the unsteady black and ochre shapes which vaguely define the table or stand on which the flower sits.⁵⁸

Amelia’s mature style is already evident as early as 1945. A photograph of 1945 showing the artist at work in her studio in Havana well illustrates the curvilinear lines that overlay distinct monochromatic patches of color [Figure 16].⁵⁹ A decade later, in *Still Life with Watermelon* of 1956 [Figure 17], Amelia’s objects become more abstracted, the space less defined, but figurative quotations from earlier works, such as the bi-color diamond pattern of decorative stained glass windows, persist.⁶⁰

Juan Martínez notes the persistent motifs in Amelia’s work, namely Cuban fruits, architectural decorations and furniture designs, peculiar to Peláez’s Cuban environment.⁶¹ Much later in her life, Cuban scholar José Seoane Gallo interviewed Amelia and two of her sisters for his book on Peláez and the Cuban vanguardia,

⁵⁴ Gallo, *Palmas Reales*, 36, 41.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁵⁶ Museo de Arte Moderno, *Orígenes y la Vanguardia Cubana*, ed. Aimée Kabarrere de Servitje and Gabriela Gorches de Amione (Mexico: D.G.E. Ediciones, S.A. de C.V., 2000), 50. “Orígenes” refers to a cultural magazine published in Cuba between 1944 and 1956 that was considered instrumental in furthering the artistic arms of the Cuban vanguardia. *Ibid.*, 9-10.

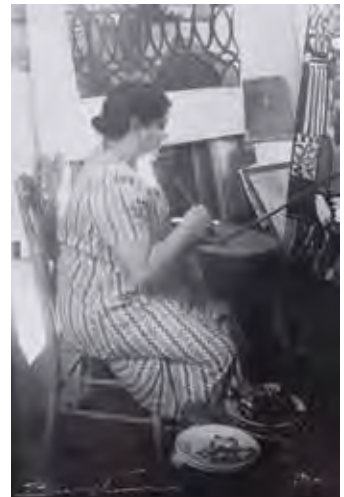
⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁵⁸ Martínez, *Cuban Art*, Plate 6 ff. 94. Martínez suggests that Amelia’s work of the late 1930s consisted of “still lifes representing Cuba’s flora in an austere version of Cubism.” *Ibid.*, 159. I propose an alternate characterization, that her use of vibrant colors and her dissolving lines speak not of Cubist austerity but of the energy and lushness of her Cuban homeland in a style quite original to Peláez.

⁵⁹ Molina, “Estrada Palma 261” in *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* (1996) 22: 220-239, 220.

⁶⁰ Museo de Arte Moderno, *Vanguardia Cubana*, 52.

⁶¹ Martínez, *Cuban Art*, 159-60.



▲Figure 15. Amelia Peláez, *Hibiscus/Marpacífico*, 1936, oil on canvas, 73.8 x 95 cm. Courtesy of the Amelia Peláez Foundation. Private Collection, New York.

▲Figure 16. Amelia Peláez in her studio, c. 1945. Photograph by Jose Gomez Sicre. Courtesy of the Amelia Peláez Foundation.

▲Figure 17. Amelia Peláez, *Naturaleza Muerta Con Melon*, 1956. Courtesy of the Amelia Peláez Foundation.



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Photo credit: Jon Nalon

▲ *Figure 18.* Alexandra Exter, *Maquette de lumière*, 1927, ponchoir, 13 x 19¾ inches (33 x 50.2 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Nikita Lobanov. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York, USA.

▲ *Figure 19.* Amelia Peláez, *Mujer en el Balcon*, 1946, tempera on paper laid on canvas, 21 x 29 inches. Courtesy of the Amelia Peláez Foundation. Provenance: Jorge Fernandez de Castro, Havana Pan American Gallery, Dallas.

▲ *Figure 20.* Amelia Peláez, *Still Life with Fruit*, 1960, gouache on paper, 18 x 21¾ inches. Courtesy of the Amelia Peláez Foundation. Private Collection.

Palmas Reales en el Sena. Peláez recalled to Seoane Gallo a dream she had while in Paris in which the prototypical Cuban emblem, the royal palm, was growing along the banks of the Seine. Like her friend Lydia Cabrera, Amelia understood her Cuban centeredness best once distanced from her native land.

Amelia once remarked that “Cubanía” (Cubanism), was for her something more than “missing royal palms, or sugarcane, our sky so blue, chicken and yellow rice.” The nostalgia which one develops (away from one’s own country) is for the “totality of a way of life, namely its material and spiritual values as a whole.”⁶² Amelia went on to state that her groundedness in Cuba was such that “at San Alejandro I learned that which would allow me to take advantage to the greatest degree of all that the foreign [world] could teach me.”⁶³ But not only the foreign world of Europe since in 1924 Amelia had traveled to the US, and lived there for six months, principally staying in Boston, New York City and Philadelphia. She recalls frequent visits to many museums, expressing a particular predilection for the New York Botanical Gardens (where she was fascinated by the many “exotic plants”) and by the Harvard Museum (where she admired the American Indian artifact collection).⁶⁴

Like Cabrera, Amelia’s sphere was firmly centered in Cuba, and like her ethnographer friend, she discovered her “cubanía” while abroad. Even as she acknowledged absorbing the influences of Braque, Picasso and Matisse, she defended the Cuban sources which dominate her art into her mature period:

I do not doubt that Braque, Picasso and Matisse have something to do with the style of my still lifes, but if I paint still lifes of fruits and architectural elements, it is because for a long time now it has been clear to me that our [Cuban] colonial architecture had developed certain characteristic features, or better still, its own way of employing certain motifs, independently of how those motifs are expressed in the architecture of other countries, and because our [Cuban] fruits are exactly that, ‘ours’ even though some of them may be grown in other parts of the world.⁶⁵

Interestingly, Amelia does not refer to Alexandra Exter. Although she elsewhere referred to her as a “magnificent teacher” who insisted on a multifaceted education, she noted that Exter “specialized in theatre set design,” but that her “weakest area” was “*illustrating books*” [author’s italics].⁶⁶ Amelia’s last comment, taken together with her earlier recollection of collaboration with Lydia Cabrera in illustrating her Afro-Cuban stories offer a second tantalizing hint of her probable role in Exter’s illustration of *Arere Marekén*.

⁶² Gallo, *Palmas Reales*, 140-1, 181-4.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 32-3.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 185. Peláez is very forthright in addressing “influences” in her artistic development, but never waivers from her centeredness in Cuban culture.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 36-7. Exter may also have instilled in Amelia a “strong sense of worth and determination to continue as a professional woman artist.” See María C. Gaztambide, “Amelia Peláez and the Insertion of the Female Sphere: The Cuban Vanguardia Reconsidered,” *Athanos* XX, ed. Allys Palladino-Craig (Tallahassee: Florida State University Department of Art History, 2002), 85-93, 86.

Amelia completed a project under Exter, constructing a maquette for a stage set for King Lear, in which every *element was geometric*.⁶⁷ Although the maquette does not survive, one can get an idea of Exter's style, as noted by Peláez, in a set design by Exter, c. 1927. *Maquette de lumière* [Figure 18] dates to 1927 and is a precise geometric construction which closely approximates Amelia's description of her own design influenced by Exter's style.⁶⁸ The formal elements here in no way relate to Amelia's developing style, in line or color, seen in *Still Life with Fruit* referenced above. Whatever fluidity of style or use of color Exter might have employed in *Arere Marekén* can be fairly compared to these three works by Exter and Peláez to address any question of derivation.

In contrast to the geometric structures of Exter's well-established constructivist style, Amelia's *Woman on a Balcony* of 1946 [Figure 19] and *Still Life with Fruit* of 1960 [Figure 20] can be traced in a direct evolutionary line, to *Still Life with Fruit* of 1936.⁶⁹ These works illustrate her mature style as an *intensification* of the fluidity of line and color already evident in her work from the 1930s discussed above. Exter, in her mature work, moved to remove "figuration, while retaining a definite order." The result, according to G. F. Kovalenko, is "a Cubist style distinguished by a vitality of color, deriving more from the rich traditions of the Ukrainian decorative arts than from the sober conventions of Braque and Picasso."⁷⁰

Ultimately, Exter's compositions became more abstract, and color and geometrical forms became the dominant features. Her philosophical approach is echoed in the observation of her contemporary Russian critic, Nikolai Tarabukhin, who stated in 1916: "As an element of movement, rhythm is an illustration....Rhythm presumes *stability*, on the basis of which its free impulse unfolds. [author's italics]"⁷¹ Exter's *Construction of Color Planes* of 1921 conveys precisely Tarabukhin's formula, but in an explosion of color which activates otherwise static geometric forms; likewise with *Construction* of 1922 [Figure 21] which was also painted in Paris after her voluntary exile from the post-czarist Soviet Union. There is nothing comparable to the fluidity stemming from curvilinear forms seen in Amelia Peláez's work, described above.⁷²

Upon Peláez's return to Cuba in 1934, Exter gave Peláez a gift of one of her paintings, *Cityscape* of 1925 [Figure 22] which still hangs in the Peláez house-museum in Havana.⁷³ This memento stands in stylistic contrast to every other painting by Peláez which hangs in that museum, and serves to underscore Peláez's awareness of the differences between her approach and her teacher's approach to visual representa-

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ G.F. Kovalenko, *Alexandra Exter* (Moscow: Galart, 1993), 148-9.

⁶⁹ Gary Nader Fine Art, *Latin American Modern and Contemporary Art Auction, January 12, 2003*. (Coral Gables: Gary Nader Fine Art, 2003), Plate 50; Gary Nader Fine Art, *Latin America Art Auction, January 10, 1999*. (Coral Gables: Gary Nader Fine Art, 1999), Plate 57.

⁷⁰ G.F. Kovalenko, *Alexandra Exter* (Moscow: Galart, 1993), 148-9.

⁷¹ Ibid., 134.

⁷² Ibid, 152-3.

⁷³ Molina, "Estrada Palma 261" in *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* (1996), 22: 220-239, 226.



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▲Figure 21. Alexandra Exter, *Construction*, 1922-23, oil on canvas, 35½ x 35½ inches (89.2 x 89.9 cm). The Riklis Collection of McCrory Corporation. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York, USA.

▲Figure 22. Alexandra Exter, Title Unknown, gouache, 1925. This was a gift from Exter to Amelia. Photograph by Cathy Leff, 1994.

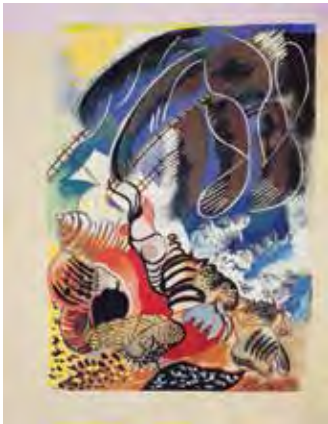


Photo credit: Jon Nalon



Photo credit: Jon Nalon



Photo credit: Jon Nalon

▲ Figures 23-25. Alexandra Exter, pages from Lydia Cabrera's *Arere Marekén*, 1933. Figure 23 is the frontispiece.

tions.⁷⁴ The lives of Cabrera, Peláez and Exter intersected in Paris in the early 1930s. Their spheres overlapped and interacted — and evidence of this interaction is found in one collaborative work, the illustrated manuscript for *Arere Marekén*, an Afro-Cuban folk tale compiled by Cabrera and published in *Cuentos Negros* in 1936. It was illustrated by Exter in manuscript form for an exhibition at the Galerie Myrbor in Paris in 1933.⁷⁵

ARERE MAREKÉN. The Afro-Cuban tale of *Arere Marekén* tells the story of a jealous old king who was married to a beautiful young queen. Every day the young queen would go to market, and the old king commanded her to always sing along her way. He would eavesdrop on her singing through a magic stone that carried her voice to his ears. When the queen encountered a lover along the way to town, and stopped singing, the old king became suspicious, and ordered his guards to follow the queen. The guards come upon the queen in *flagrante delicto* with her lover. He was arrested, brought to the palace, and beaten to death with clubs on orders of the king.⁷⁶

The story, told in an Afro-Cuban Spanish dialect, bears two distinctive features. The first is its Afro-Cuban mythological setting — the lover is named “Hicotea,” or turtle, a native reptile which Afro-Cubans endowed with supernatural attributes of cunning and the capacity for rebirth. The second is its sense of rhythm, for *Arere Marekén* was originally recited in song, probably with the accompaniment of Afro-Cuban musical instruments, such as the *maracas* and the *guiro*.⁷⁷ There is rhythm in the poetry of the story:

Arere Marekén, Arere Marekén

Arere Marekén, kocho bi, kocho ba

The story teller also recalls how color imagery abounds. Every day the queen would “fill her basket with many colors,” implying the gathering of colorful tropical fruits. The queen wore a bright white dress with a long train. As previously noted, Hicotea is murdered, only to be resurrected in the light of the full moon, the rhythmic “*luna lunera cascabelera*,” a direct quote from a nursery rhyme that goes on to say “*ojos azules, cara morena*.”⁷⁸ Afro-Cuban folklore. Rhythm. Color. These

⁷⁴ While most biographical entries attribute Peláez’s use of “color” to her tutelage under Exter (see, e.g. Martínez, *Cuban Art*, 159-60), the differences in their approach have not been discussed.

⁷⁵ Lydia Cabrera and Alexandra Exter, *Arere Marekén* (Mexico: Edición de Artes de Mexico, 1999). This facsimile edition reproduces the original manuscript, exhibited in Paris in 1933, and brought back to Cuba by Cabrera in 1938. It was retrieved out of Cuba by Cabrera in the 1960s after the ethnographer went into exile following the Castro revolution. It was discovered after her death and is now part of the Cuban Collection at the Richter Library of the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Florida.

⁷⁶ Ibid. Cabrera and Exter, *Arere Marekén*.

⁷⁷ *Maracas* are hollowed out spherical gourds, dried and filled with seeds or small stones to make a rattling sound, much like “marekén;” *guiros* are hollowed out elongated gourds, dried and scored on the surface with parallel grooves, against which a polished stick is rubbed, to make a different rattling sound much like “arere.” See Mariela A. Gutiérrez, *Lydia Cabrera: Aproximaciones Mítico-Simbólicas a su Cuentística* (Madrid: Editorial Verbum, 1997), 149-52, for references of the mythical and symbolic attributes of Hicotea.

⁷⁸ The nursery rhyme in its entirety reads: “luna lunera, cascabelera / ojos azules, cara morena / luna lunera, cascabelera/ cinco toritos y una ternera.” There are oblique references here to race and sex: references to blue eyes and dark face, to five young bulls and one young calf. The main point here, however, is the sing-song rhythm of the poetry.

are the fundamental elements of Lydia Cabrera's ethnographic work and Amelia Peláez's visual compositions, respectively.

How Exter would treat her subject matter in her illustration of *Arere Marekén* raises questions concerning her geometric mature style and her interaction with Cabrera and Peláez. The results were startling. Explosive use of color and fluidity of line are well illustrated in the reproduction of the frontispiece to the *Arere Marekén* manuscript [Figure 23].⁷⁹ Exter has constructed in visual terms an imaginary water world inhabited by fanciful shells, vegetable and animal shapes. There is hardly a straight line or recognizable geometrical form in the composition. But the use of the curvilinear line and unconfined color fields activates the composition and makes it pulsate, much like the rhythmic sounds of the story read out loud. The same approach is carried forward in the opening page of the tale [Figure 24] and in the pages that follow. Exter, who never traveled to the tropics, relies, to be sure, on her Cuban sources to convey a sense of place. That she is striving to portray a Cuban venue is beyond doubt, indicated by the presence of an outline of the Morro Castle. That landmark fort and lighthouse guarding the entrance to Havana harbor is shown in the lower right-hand corner in the book illustration [Figure 25]. That fortress, from whose ramparts flew the Cuban flag on May 20, 1902, for the first time, is shown in an early twentieth century photograph [Figure 26] which interestingly also shows the US Stars and Stripes.⁸⁰

Swirling images with frolicking monkeys often frame the text [Figure 27]. The rhythmic repetition of the refrain:

Arere Marekén, Arere Marekén
Arere Marekén, kocho bi, kocho ba
Arere Marekén
rey no pué estar sin yó

continues the rich interaction between image and word. The many colors in the queen's market basket are indicated by amorphous images of colorful tropical fruits [Figure 28]. A casual review of these images reveals a complete departure, some might say rupture, with Exter's previously established mature style, into a visual language completely foreign to her work up to this point. Curvilinear design — curves and strokes and sensuous shapes, of the kind seen in Amelia Peláez's work, both in Paris and in Cuba — abound in *Arere Marekén*.

When one recalls how Amelia and Lydia Cabrera would get together in Paris to illustrate folk tales collected by Cabrera, as well as Amelia's comment that Exter's "weakest area" was illustrating narrative books, it becomes clear that Cabrera and Peláez must have had a profound influence on Exter. Her work in *Arere Marekén* was nothing like Exter had ever done before. The question can be fairly asked whether Exter's "encounter with Cuba" in Paris changed her. I believe the question can be answered with a definite affirmative. The production of *Arere Marekén*



Photo credit: Jon Nalon



Photo credit: Jon Nalon

▲Figure 26. Environs of the Punta Castle after redevelopment, May 1902. Encroaching structures have been demolished and a historical marker preserved in a picturesque setting. Morro Castle is in the background.

▲Figures 27-28. Alexandra Exter, pages from Lydia Cabrera's *Arere Marekén*, 1933.

⁷⁹ All images in the ensuing figures are from Lydia Cabrera and Alexandra Exter, *Arere Marekén* the 1999 facsimile of the original manuscript. The pages are not numbered.

⁸⁰ Miguel A. Bretos, "Imaging Cuba under the American Flag: Charles Edward Doty in Havana, 1899-1902," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* (1996) 22: 93. The image may well show the raising of the Cuban flag on May 20th, 1902.

underscores the proposition of cross-pollination and a rejection of the “imitation/derivation” model of Cuban modernism.

THE CHANGING CULTURAL MILIEU IN CUBA

After 1902, the Cuban cultural scene was in a headlong race to “modernize.” Juan Martínez calls our attention to the importance of the *Revista de Avance*, first published in 1927, which featured the “Arte Nuevo” exhibition of that same year, but an earlier publication also merits consideration. The magazine *Social* founded in 1916 by the illustrator and caricaturist Conrado Massaguer was geared to the rising middle class in post-colonial Cuba which, as described by María Luisa Lobo Montalbo and Zoila Laprique Becali, wanted “to catch up with the world’s high bourgeoisie” [author’s italics].⁸¹

“The Magazine will be dedicated to describing our great social events, art exhibits, and fashion shows by means of the pencil or the camera lens”⁸² — so proclaimed *Social* in its first issue in January 1916. Through graphics, the magazine also brought to its audience recurring features on a variety of other topics, including architecture, literature the visual and performing arts, including the new medium of film. *Social*, thus, prepared the way for the coming of age of the Cuban avant garde in the decade of the 1920s, paving the way as well for the *Revista de Avance* in 1927. Both Massaguer and the literary editor of *Social*, Emilio Roy de Leuchsenring, were members of the “El grupo minorista,” the association of intellectuals of the right and left, which was founded in 1923 and found public expression through the pages of *Social*. The *minorista* manifesto of 1927 was published in *Social*, and the magazine also covered the “Protesta de los trece” of 1923 when young intellectuals publicly demonstrated against corruption and the growing urbanization of Havana. *Social* also served as a vehicle for the internationalization of the Cuban avant garde, by publishing contributions of such prominent foreigners as José Vasconcelos, Federico García Lorca, and Langston Hughes.⁸³

The first issue of *Revista de Avance* in 1927, then, which featured the “Primera Exposición de Arte Nuevo,” was not an avant-garde novelty that burst unexpectedly upon the Cuban cultural scene, but rather one more indicator of a maturing and sophisticated public ready to engage the modern world after the departure of the artistically conservative Spanish colonial regime.⁸⁴

The Grupo Minorista Manifesto plainly laid out the group’s goals, and these included:

⁸¹ See María Luisa Lobo Montalvo and Zoila Lapique Becali, “The Years of Social,” *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* (1996) 22: 104-131.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ See, generally, Montalvo and Becali, “The Years of Social,” in *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*; see also Martínez, *Cuban Art*, 37-42.

- For the revision of false and tired values.
- For vernacular art and, in general, for new art in its diverse manifestations.
- For the introduction and popularization in Cuba of the latest artistic and scientific doctrines, theories, and practices.

The Manifiesto emphasized the concept that avant-garde artists of the first generation were consciously creating a visual vocabulary for the manifestation of Cuban nationhood and identity.⁸⁵

While Cuban vanguardia painters incorporated Cuban vernacular iconography in their works, they were equally interested in participating in the international discourse of modernism in its own right. The vernacular iconography was often if not consistently subordinated to a modernist and idiosyncratic mode of representation. The art of Víctor Manuel and Amelia Peláez, when reconsidered under this premise can help illustrate this point.

The concept of Cuban national identity is itself problematic. In the 19th century, Cuba was referred to by Spain as “la isla más leal” — the most loyal (and by the end of the century, one of the very few remaining) of Spanish colonies in the Americas. Successive waves of immigration from Metropolitan Spain in the 19th century kept the “official” culture distinctly European, with the Amerindian population having been decimated early on in the colonization of the island. An underclass of workers of African slave and mestizo descent also formed at the other end of the spectrum, in what Juan Martínez terms the “bipolar nature” of Cuban society.⁸⁶

Juan Marinello, a literary leader of the vanguardia generation was a poet, critic, and essayist. He was also a leftist-communist leader, who was keenly aware of the role of art in a society’s political “liberation.” Marinello advocated, as reported by Martínez:

... a serene artistic criticism and the promotion of a truly national art” for the betterment of society. He then argued that the cubanization of art required a process of artistic integration in which artists would learn to view the indigenous with the eyes of foreigners and the foreign with the eyes of Cubans, resulting in the universalization of Cuban artistic themes. “For as long as Cuba did not offer the world a significant culture of originality and strength,” he concluded, “she would remain half free. Only art could achieve our total liberation.”⁸⁷ [*author’s italics*]

Víctor Manuel and Amelia Peláez did precisely that.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 49. “The most visible impact of sociopolitical ideology on the artistic vanguard was on the vanguardia painters’ iconography. These painters’ consistent interest in expressing the national ethos and their choices of land, creole tradition, and the common people as symbols of *cubanidad* are closely connected to the ideology of the sociopolitical vanguard. The 1923-34 revolutionary movement’s acclamation of the patria, of the African element in the Cuban *ajiaco* (a Cuban ‘melting pot’), and of the Cuban farmer and worker was given symbolic form in the art of the vanguardia.”

⁸⁶ For an excellent review of Cuban history, see Hugh Thomas, *Cuba, or the Pursuit of Freedom* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998).

⁸⁷ Martínez, *Cuban Art*, 42.



▲Figure 29. Víctor Manuel, *En El Sena*, oil on canvas, 24 x 28 inches. Private Collection, Coral Gables.

▲Figure 30. Henri Matisse, *Notre-Dame in the Late Afternoon*, 1902 Paris, oil on paper mounted on canvas, 28 ½ x 21 ½ inches. Allbright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo. Gift of Seymour H. Knox, 1927.

Writing in 1969, on the occasion of a posthumous retrospective on the work of Víctor Manuel, Marinello states:

I have always believed that Víctor Manuel was an exemplar of true modernity, of rich and accomplished contemporaneity and from this arise[s] the strength of his example. Our painter absorbed in Paris in the 1920's a good measure of the rising experience and latest unique styles of looking at the world ... *These new modalities made Víctor Manuel their accomplice, never a follower.* Once he relocated that universal restlessness to his home island, he was free of imitation... He was a true citizen of the plastic arts of his times with his own gestures and polemics.⁸⁸ [author's italics]

Guy Pérez Cisneros, the Cuban art historian and critic, wrote in 1946 in his doctoral dissertation:

At all times, under all circumstances, our Cuban artists have known how to use the original [Cuban] subject matter... For we possess a vigorous and joyful art truly Cuban.... But this is not enough.... For it will only be when – not satisfied with painting the palm tree and the guanabana fruit, the voodoo practitioner and the Cuban mountain.... But when we can proclaim that this Arabian horse or that Swiss mountain or perhaps a Chinese bridge have been seen through Cuban eyes, that we will have achieved that highest privilege to which a nation can aspire: To share in a culture in which the national and the universal are so intimately welded together that it is impossible to distinguish one from the other.⁸⁹

Pérez Cisneros also writes:

If instead of isolating our art under a magnifying glass we situate it in a place correspondent to a vast universal panorama, the problem of continuity and coherence will be best understood. The solution may not always be found ... in Cuba; one must look for it sometimes in France, or Spain, or Italy.⁹⁰

Pérez Cisneros does not believe modernist Cuban art to be derivative of European art. Pérez Cisneros speaks here to issues of continuity and coherence — process, not substance. Pérez Cisneros goes on to affirm that “Cuban art is flowering in a modernist school of great vitality” which ultimately rewards with a better understanding of “our own essence, our own reality.”⁹¹ Víctor Manuel’s prodigious output captured the world in color and motion, through uniquely Cuban eyes. Even his vision of Notre Dame by the River Seine [Figure 29] seems to glow in tropical color when compared to Henri Matisse’s composition of the same subject [Figure

⁸⁸ *Centenario de Víctor Manuel*, exhibition catalogue (Havana: Museo Nacional, 1998), 7.

⁸⁹ Guy Pérez Cisneros, *Características de la Evolución de la Pintura en Cuba*, facsimile edition (Miami: Editorial Cubana, 1998), 23-24.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15. Writing of Cuban artists working in Paris in the 1920s and 1930s, Graziella Pogolotti observed that “...in this great dialogue, each one pursues the thread of his own ideas, of his own interior monologue.” Graziella Pogolotti, *Examen de Conciencia* (Havana: Ediciones Union, 1965), 142. Juan Marinello observed that “the way to Berlin or Paris ... towards Blas Cendrars or Leon Frobenius – led us to our own homeland.” Hilda Perera, *Idapo: El Sincretismo en los Cuentos Negros de Lydia Cabrera* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1971), 43.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

30];⁹² and Víctor Manuel's *Gitana* [Figure 31] suggests a tropical sensuality completely missing in Amedeo Modigliani's *Portrait of a Woman* [Figure 32] set in a sterile interior, as compared to Víctor Manuel's tropical setting.⁹³

TROPICALISMO, CAETANO VELOSO AND THE CUBAN VANGUARDIA

In his essay, "Rethinking the Theory of the Avant-Garde from the Periphery," George Yúdice sets out the problem of referencing modernity in Latin American art of the first half of the twentieth century. In attempting to move away from a model that places modernity at a "center" (typically European, more often than not Paris) and Latin American art at the "periphery" (drawing the modernist impulse from the center), Yúdice refers to the writings of Jorge Luis Borges of Argentina, who gives the problem, according to Yúdice, "a new twist." Yúdice writes,

rather than naturalize a universal repository of value, which could only be situated outside oneself or one's sphere of influence, why not undermine such a center by stretching it out to infinity? In a parody of Pascal's "fearful sphere," he suggests that a center cannot remain as such if its peripheries are expanded endlessly. For Borges, the "history of the universe [is] the history of the different intonations" given to the metaphor of Pascal's "sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere."⁹⁴

Yet Borges' insight still leaves Latin American "modernism" in the dilemma of either confronting European tradition or competing with the European avant-garde's rejection of tradition. Yúdice reconciles these options by noting that the course of European avant-gardism was invariably affected by the presence at the center (Paris) of representatives of the peripheries, including artists and writers from the non-European world as well as objects from the peripheries in European collections and museums.⁹⁵

In contrast to Yúdice, Vicki Unruh has noted that the Latin American avant garde "grew out of and responded to the continent's own cultural concerns." Describing it as an "activity" rather than a body of work, she notes that it was "a continental development and should therefore be examined comparatively." Yet Unruh acknowledges that: "Latin American vanguardism as a whole was simultaneously international and autochthonous in its orientation, as artists interacted with European avant-garde currents in keeping with their own cultural exigencies."⁹⁶

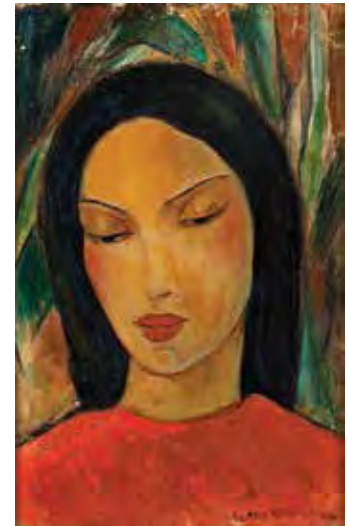


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⁹² Gary Nader, *Latin American Art Auction*, auction catalogue (Coral Gables: Gary Nader, 12 January 1997), Plate 22; John Elderfield, *Henri Matisse: A Retrospective* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1992), 252.

⁹³ Nader, *Latin American Art Auction* (12 January 2003), Plate 115. Kenneth Wayne, *Modigliani and the Artists of Montparnasse* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002), 104.

⁹⁴ George Yúdice, "Rethinking the Theory of the Avant-Garde from the Periphery," in Anthony L. Geist and José B. Monleón, eds. *Modernism and its Margins: Reinscribing Cultural Modernity from Spain and Latin America* (New York: Garland, 1999), 53.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

⁹⁶ Unruh, *Latin American Vanguards*, 3, 8-10.

▲Figure 31. Víctor Manuel García, *Gitana (Girl)*, c. 1940, oil on canvas, 10¾ x 6¾ inches. Private Collection.

▲Figure 32. Amedeo Modigliani, *Woman with Blue Eyes*, 1917, oil on canvas, 81 x 54 cm. Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris.

It may seem incongruous to conclude this essay with a discussion of “tropicalismo” as the term is used by modern Brazilian singer/composer/performer Caetano Veloso; yet Veloso has described the term *tropicalismo* in a way that reaffirms Chacón’s use of the term when critiquing the poetry of Carrillo y O’Farril, as discussed above. In words which could well apply to Cuban modernist painters, Veloso confidently states: “I cannot negate where I live, nor can I forget what I’ve read.”⁹⁷ Christopher Dunn has written that Veloso’s “declaration sounds almost unremarkable today, in an era when cosmopolitan intellectuals and immigrant workers alike regularly negotiate myriad ‘border crossings,’ both figurative and literal. Yet in the Brazil of the 1960’s, Veloso’s attitude seemed irreverent, if not treacherous, to proponents of cultural nationalism.”⁹⁸

For Veloso, *tropicalismo* connotes: “a certain strategy toward cultural production which ‘cannibalizes’ both local and foreign styles and technologies in a process of ironic appropriation and recycling.” Veloso has described the *tropicalismo* he espouses thus: “we rejected the role of a Third World country living in the shadow of more developed countries. Through our art we wanted to put forward a vision of the world at that time, from our own perspective as Brazilians.”⁹⁹ This resonates indeed with the quotations from Marinello and Pérez Cisneros cited above, and provides a contemporary postscript that encapsulates the modernist processes in the Americas, so often described in terms of imitation and derivation. Substitute “Cubans” for “Brazilians” in Veloso’s statement, and one describes Cuban vanguardia painters Víctor Manuel and Amelia Peláez. For, to paraphrase Veloso, they could not forget what they had seen, nor could they forget where they lived.

— Segundo J. Fernandez
Guest Curator, Florida State University
Cuban Art in the 20th Century: Cultural Identity and the International Avant Garde

⁹⁷ Caetano Veloso and Christopher Dunn, “The Tropicalista Rebellion,” *Transition* (1996), 70: 116.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 116-138.

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

R.C. Bears

Augusto Chartrand

Esteban Chartrand

Philippe Chartrand

Henry Cleenewerck

Víctor Patricio Lanadluze

Miguel Melero

Armando Menocal

Frédéric Mialhe

Leopoldo Romañach

Valentín Sanz Carta



◀R.C. Bears, *Viandas (Staples)*, 1879, oil on canvas, 14½ x 12 inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.

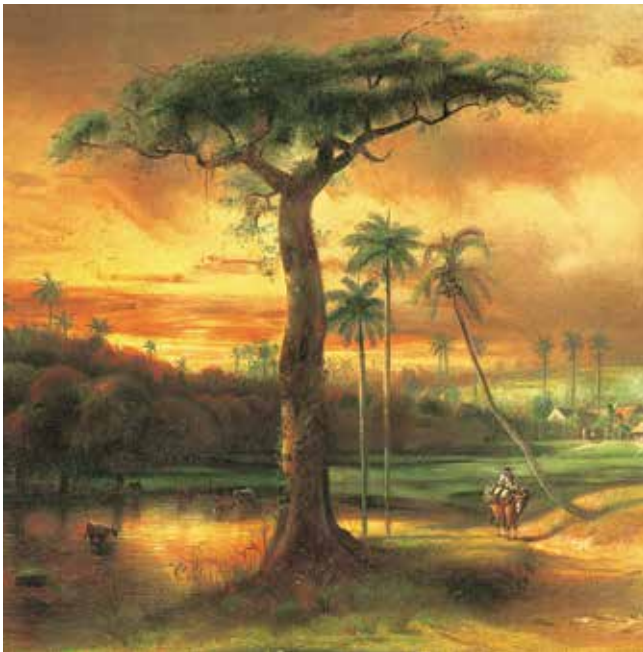
▼[below] Augusto Chartrand, *Veleros en el Mar (Sailboats at Sea)*, 1888, oil on canvas, 9 x 12 inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

▼[bottom] Esteban Chartrand, *Beyond the Sunset*, 1881, oil on canvas, 7 x 12 inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.





▲ Víctor Patricio Landaluze, *La Mañana Siguiete*, c. 1880, oil on canvas, 10 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



◀ [top left] Phillippe Chartrand, *Paisaje con Ciervo* (*Landscape with Deer*), c. 1870s, oil on panel, 16 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

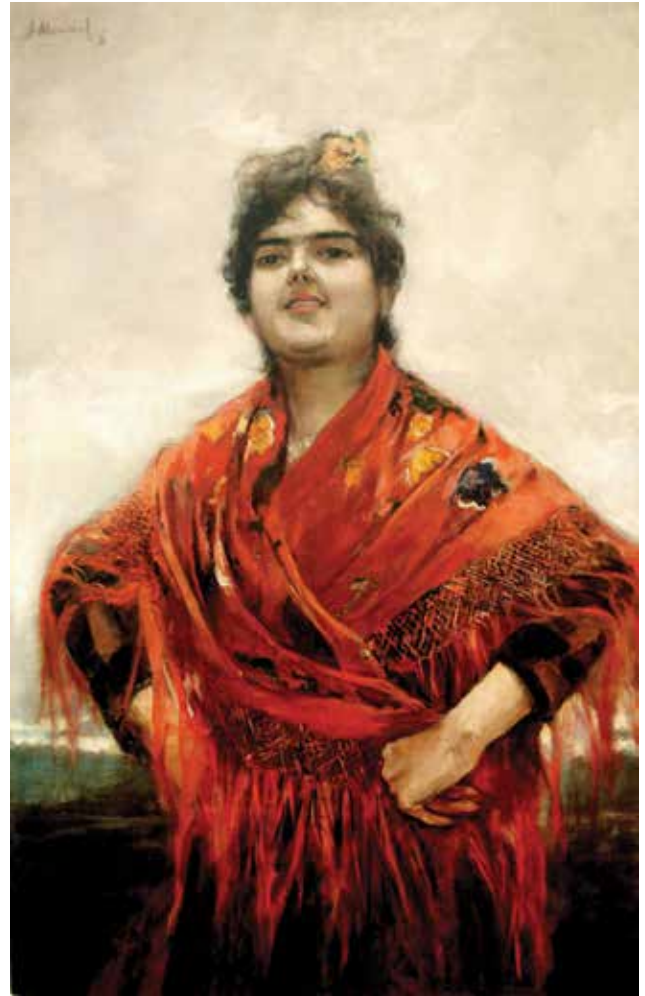
◀ [bottom left] Henry Cleenewerck, *La Ceiba* (*The Ceiba Tree*), 1875, oil on board, 20 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 21 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



▲Victor Patricio Landaluze, three paintings, c. 1880 of ink and watercolor on heavy paper laid down on board: *La Declaración de Amor* (*The Declaration of Love*), 4 x 5½ inches; *Fiesta de Negros dei Día de Reyes* (*Negro Fiesta at Three Kings Day*), 4¾ x 5¾ inches; and *El Secreto* (*The Secret*), 4¾ x 5¾ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

▼Miguel Melero, *Sailboat on Moving Waters*, c. 1898, oil on canvas, 21½ x 27¾ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.





▲ Armando Menocal, *Bailarina Española con Mantilla* (Spanish Dancer with Mantilla), 1889, oil on canvas, 33½ x 21½ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



◀ [top left] Armando Menocal, *Escudero de un Cabellero* (A Knight's Squire), c. 1880, oil on canvas, 19½ x 12½ inches. Collection of Henry James Fernandez. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.

◀ [bottom left] Frédéric Mialhe, *Escena Rural Cerca de La Habana* (Rural Scene Near Havana), c. 1985, oil on canvas, 16¼ x 21⅜ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



▲Leopoldo Romañach, *Woman with a Bale of Wheat*, c. 1880, oil on canvas, 35 5/8 x 24 1/4 inches. Collection of Terry and Linda Cole, Tallahassee, Florida. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.



▶Leopoldo Romañach, *Fishing Boat in Havana Bay*, c. 1985, oil on canvas, 22 1/2 x 11 inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

► Leopoldo Romañach, *Pueblo (Townscape)*, c. 1910, oil on board. 7½ x 8½ inches. Private Collection, Coral Gables, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



▼ Valentín Sanz Carta, *Landscape with Stream and Rocks*, c. 1885, oil on canvas, 26 x 36 inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



THE EARLY REPUBLIC PERIOD

Pastor Argudín y Pedroso

José A. Bencomo Mena

Juan Gil García

Armando Menocal

Eduardo Morales

Domingo Ramos

Antonio Rodríguez Morey

Leopoldo Romañach



▲Pastor Argudín y Pedroso, *Vista del Valle de Viñales (View of the Viñales Valley)*, 1939, oil on cardboard laid down on canvas, 10½ x 18 inches. Private Collection, Coral Gables, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



▲Juan Gil García, *Still Life with Tropical Fruit*, c. 1925, oil on canvas, 25½ x 37½ inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.

◀José A. Bencomo Mena, *La Ceiba (The Ceiba Tree)*, 1949, oil on board, 15¾ x 12 inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.

◀ Juan Gil García, *River Landscape*, c. 1928, oil on canvas, 13¾ x 27½ x inches. Private Collection. Photo credit Jon Nalon.



▼ Armando Menocal, *Cuca Parando una Codorniz (Cuca Retrieving a Quail)*, 1915, oil on canvas, 35¼ x 48 inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.





▲Armando Menocal, *Paisaje con Barca y Algarrobo Seco (Landscape with Boat and Dry Locust Tree)*, c. 1920, oil on canvas, 31½ x 50½ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



►Eduardo Morales, *Palmar Soleado (Sunny Palm Grove)*, 1913, oil on wood, 9 x 6¾ inches. Private Collection. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



►Eduardo Morales, *Volanta (Carriage)*, 1916, oil on wood, 7¼ x 9½ inches. Private Collection. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



▲ Domingo Ramos, *Paisaje con Río y Palmeras* (*Landscape with River and Palm Trees*), 1950, oil on canvas laid down on wood, 35½ x 47¼ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



◆ Antonio Rodríguez Morey, *Cañas Bravas*, 1910, oil on canvas, 43 x 24½ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



◆ Antonio Rodríguez Morey, *Campo* (*Field*), c. 1890, oil on canvas, 9½ x 11¼ inches. Private Collection. Photo credit Jon Nalon.



▲Leopoldo Romañach, *Pueblo (Townscape)*, c. 1920s, 11 x 9½ inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.

◆Leopoldo Romañach, *Muchacha (Young Lady)*, c. 1930, oil on canvas, 25½ x 18½ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



►Leopoldo Romañach, *Caibarién Beach*, c. 1920, oil on canvas on board, 14¼ x 19½ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

THE FIRST GENERATION

Eduardo Abela

Carlos Enríquez

Víctor Manuel García

Antonio Gattorno

Wifredo Lam

Amelia Peláez

Fidelio Ponce de León



▲ Eduardo Abela, *Dancers*, c. 1953, oil on board, 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 9 inches. Private Collection. Photo credit Jon Nalon.



◀ [top left] Eduardo Abela, *The Lost Children*, c. 1950, oil on canvas, 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 5 inches. Private Collection. Photo credit Jon Nalon.

◀ [bottom left] Eduardo Abela, *Personaje (Personage)*, 1953, mixed media on heavy paper, 8 x 8 inches. Private Collection. Photo credit Jon Nalon.

The First Generation

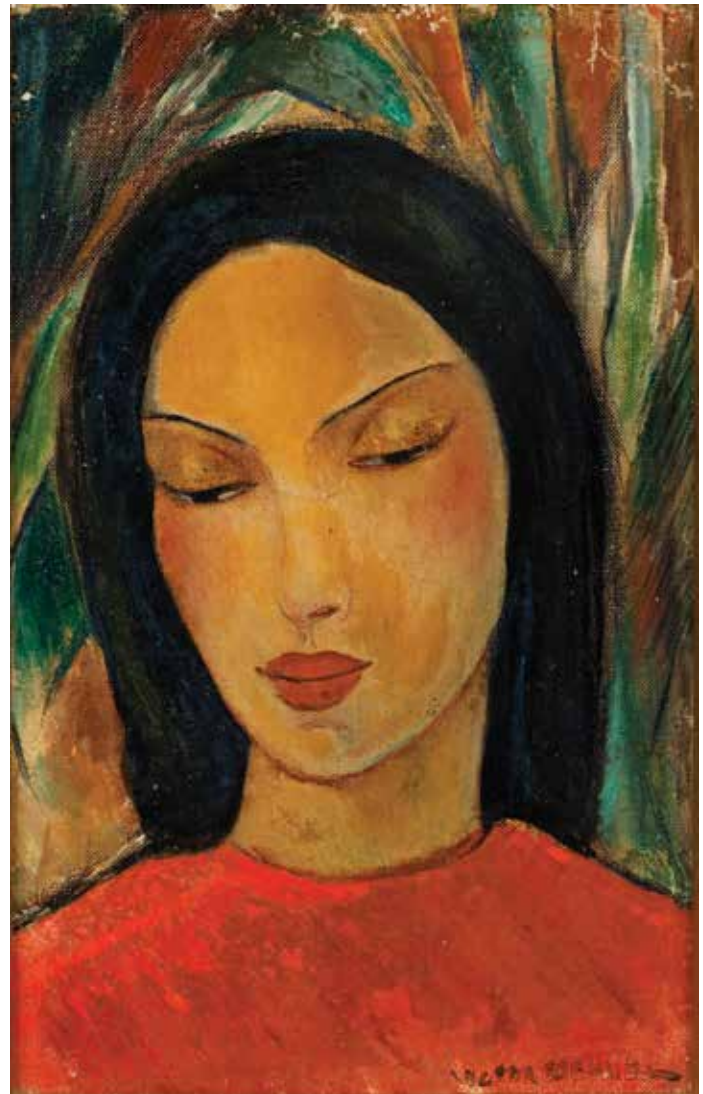
▶ Víctor Manuel García, *Joven*, c. 1930, graphite, crayon and sepia on heavy paper, 11½ x 9 inches. Private Collection. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



▼ [bottom left] Carlos Enríquez, *Corcel de Fuego (The Fire Stallion)*, 1948, ink on paper, 16½ x 11 inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.

▼ [bottom right] Carlos Enríquez, *Paisaje (Landscape)*, 1943, oil on canvas, 27¾ x 24½ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.





▲Victor Manuel García, *Gitana (Girl)*, c. 1940, oil on canvas, 10¾ x 6¾ inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.



◀[top left] Victor Manuel García, *City Park*, c. 1940, oil on canvas, 12½ x 10½ inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.

◀[bottom left] Victor Manuel García, *Mujet con Sombrero (Lady with Hat)*, c. 1950, oil on canvas, 18 x 14 inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



▲ Antonio Gattorno, *Frutas del Trópico (Fruits of the Tropics)*, c. 1930, oil on canvas, 21½ x 17 inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



▲ Wifredo Lam, *El Bien Vestido (The Well Dressed)*, 1968, oil on canvas, 28 x 36 inches. Private Collection. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



◆ Wifredo Lam, *Pescado Sobre Plato (Fish on Plate)*, c. 1962, bronze, 14 x 15 inches. Private Collection. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

►Wifredo Lam, *Sin Títul [Mujer y Personajes]* (Untitled [Woman and Personages]), 1977, one-of-a-kind terracotta, hand painted by the artist, 20½ inch diameter. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



▼[bottom left] Amelia Peláez, *Perfil de Mujer*, 1930, ink and wax crayon on paper, 17 x 11 inches. Courtesy of the Amelia Peláez Foundation. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

▼[bottom right] Amelia Peláez, *Interior con Balcón (Interior with Balcony)*, 1947, mixed media on heavy paper laid down on board, 22 x 30. Courtesy of the Amelia Peláez Foundation. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



The First Generation

►Amelia Peláez, *Self Portrait on a Balcony*, 1959, gouache on paper, 24½ x 18¾ inches. Courtesy of the Amelia Peláez Foundation. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.

►[bottom right] Amelia Peláez, *Still Life with Fruit*, 1960, gouache on paper, 18 x 21¾ inches. Courtesy of the Amelia Peláez Foundation. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.

▼[below] Amelia Peláez, *Vase with Abstract Motifs*, 1957, hand painted ceramic, 10¼ inch height x 5 inch base diameter. Courtesy of the Amelia Peláez Foundation. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.

▼[bottom] Amelia Peláez, *Juego de Seis Tazas de Café Espresso con Platos* (Set of Six Espresso Cups with Plates), 1960-62, hand painted ceramics (12 pieces total), 1¼ inch height x 2¾ inch diameter. Courtesy of the Amelia Peláez Foundation. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.





▲Fidel Ponce de León, *Nostalgia*, c. 1940, oil on wood, 18 x 24 inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



◀Fidel Ponce de León, *Las Fuentes (The Sources)*, c. 1940, oil on canvas, 16 x 20¼ inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.

THE SECOND GENERATION

Cundo Bermúdez

Mario Carreño

Mirta Cerra

Juan Roberto Diago

Luis Martínez Pedro

Raúl Milián

René Portocarrero

Domingo Ravenet

Mariano Rodríguez



▲ Cundo Bermúdez, *Nostalgia*, c. 1940, oil on wood, x 24 x 18 inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



▲ Mario Carreño, *Paisaje de Viñales (Viñales Landscape)*, 1941, mixed media on canvas, 30¼ x 24 inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



◀ [left] Mirta Cerra, *Campesina (Peasant Girl)*, c. 1946, oil on canvas board, 20 x 16 inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

◀ [right] Mirta Cerra, *Campesina (Peasant Girl)*, c. 1946, oil on canvas board, 20 x 16 inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



▲ Luis Martínez Pedro, *Playa de Jibacoa (Jibacoa Beach)*, 1946, mixed media on board. Private Collection, Coral Gables, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



▲ [top left] Juan Roberto Diago, *Bodegón (Still Life)*, 1946, oil on canvas, 25¼ x 20 inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.

◀ [bottom left] Raúl Milián, *Rapsodia (Rhapsody)*, 1954, mixed media on heavy paper, 15 x 11 inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.



◆René Portocarrero, *Retrato de Joven (Portrait of a Young Lady)*, 1958, mixed media on heavy paper laid down on board, accompanied by its original frame, painted by the Artist, 15 x 11 inches. Private Collection. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

▼René Portocarrero, *Ciudad (City)*, 1954, mixed media on board laid down on canvas, 13¼ x 17¼ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



The Second Generation

► Domingo Ravenet, *Mujet (Woman)*, 1966, oil on canvas, 36½ x 30½ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



▼ Mariano Rodríguez, *Sisters*, 1949, oil on board, 18½ x 26½ inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.



THE THIRD GENERATION

Agustín Cárdenas

Hugo Consuegra

Guido Llinás

José Mijares

Felipe Orlando

Loló Soldevilla

Uver Solís



◀[left] Agustín Cárdenas, *Autorretrato (Self-Portrait)*, c. 1943-49, 12¼ x 9¼ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

◀[right] Agustín Cárdenas, *La Promenade (The Promenade)*, c. 1960, bronze with black patina, 17 x 10½ x 4 inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.

▼Hugo Consuegra, *La Venganza (The Vengeance)*, 1956, oil on canvas, 50 x 80 inches. Private Collection. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

▶[facing page] Guido Llinás, *Sin Titulo (Untitled)*, 1958, oil on canvas, 39½ x 32 inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.







▲ José Mijares, *Composición Geométrica* (Geometric Composition), 1957, gouache on paper, 12 x 17¼ inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.



►[left] Felipe Orlando, *Esperando* (Waiting), c. 1950, oil on canvas, 19¾ x 15¾ inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon



►[right] José Mijares, *Interior con Mujer* (Interior with Woman), c. 1949, oil on canvas, 24¾ x 18 inches. Private Collection. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



▲ Loló Soldevilla, *Sin Titulos, Mundo Celestial (Untitled, Celestial Realm)*, 1956, 27¼ x 39¼ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



◀ [top left] Felipe Orlando, *Naturaleza Muerta (Still Life)*, c. 1950, oil on canvas, 25 x 30 inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon

◀ [bottom left] Uver Solís, *Muchacha con Sombrilla (Young Lady with Umbrella)*, c. 1945, oil on canvas, 30¼ x 31¼ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

THE LATER MODERN PERIOD

Antonia Eiríz

Agustín Fernández

Ángel Acosta León

Servando Cabrera Moreno



▲ Angel Acosta León, *Bottles*, 1958, oil on canvas, 17½ x 14 inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.



◀ [top left] Antonia Eiríz, *Still Life with Fish*, c. 1955, oil on canvas, 19¼ x 15½ inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.

◀ [bottom left] Agustín Fernández, *Penetration*, c. 1980, oil on canvas, 14 x 14 inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.

► Servando Cabrera Moreno, *El Espejo (The Mirror)*, 1976, oil on canvas, 44 x 34½ inches. Private Collection. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



▼ Ángel Acosta León, *Camastro en Azul (Beat up Bed in Blue)*, c. 1959, mixed media on heavy paper laid down on board, 7¼ x 10 inches. Private Collection. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD

Joel Besmar

Carlos Alfonzo

Guerra de la Paz

Giosvany Echevarría

Roberto Fabelo

Miguel Florido

Flora Fong

Lilian Garcia-Roig

Dayron González

Manuel Mendive

Gina Pellón

Tomás Sánchez

Osmany Soler Mena



▲ Carlos Alfonzo, *Yemayá*, 1987, oil on canvas, 40¼ x 40¼ inches. Collection of the FSU Museum of Fine Arts. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.



▲ Joel Besmar, *El Desengaño (The Disillusion)*, 2009, mixed media on heavy paper, 30¼ x 39¼ inches. Private Collection. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

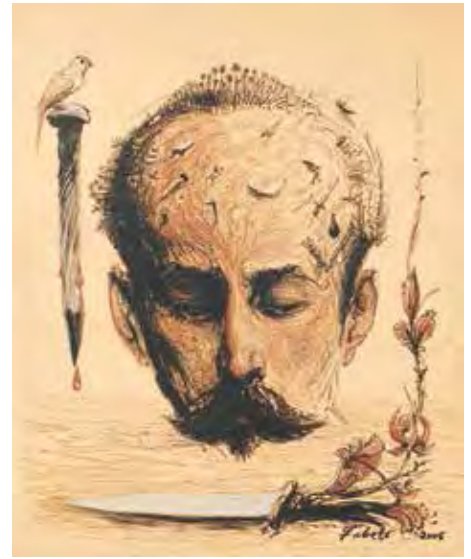
▼ Joel Besmar, *La Inmortalidad (Immortality)*, 2009, oil on canvas, 30 x 39½ inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.



► [facing page top left] Giosvany Echevarría, *Mi Campo bajo el Ciel Azul*, 2008, oil on canvas, 47 x 67 inches. Private Collection. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

► [facing page top right] Roberto Fabelo, *Martí (José Martí)*, 2005, oil on canvas, 63½ x 51¼ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

► [facing page bottom] Guerra de la Paz, detail of *A Stitch in Time: Ghost Variations*, 2002-15, installation. Courtesy of the Artists.





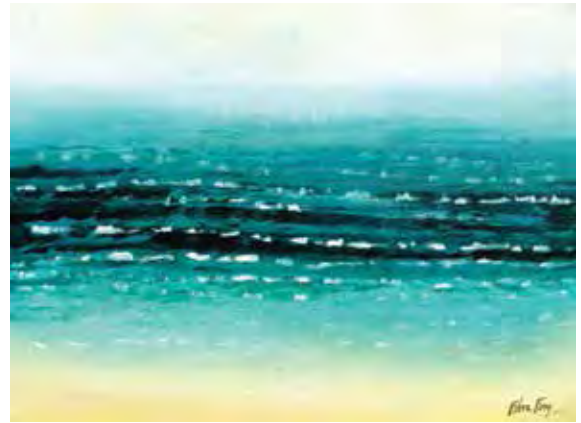
◀[facing page top left] Miguel Florido, *Queda el Aroma de Tu Presencia (The Aroma of Your Presence Remains)*, 2009, oil on canvas, 14 x 11 inches. Private Collection, Coral Gables, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

◀[facing page bottom left] Miguel Florido, *Hoy Espero Por ti (Today I Wait for You)*, 2010, oil on canvas, 13¾ x 9¾ inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.

◀[facing page right] Miguel Florido, *Tristeza (Sadness)*, 2013, mixed media on canvas, 78½ x 39 inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

▶Flora Fong, *Mar de Las Antillas II (Caribbean Sea II)*, 2010, mixed media on canvas, 51¼ x 69¼ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

▼Lilian Garcia-Roig, *Rio Grande Gorge (NM)*, 1992, oil on canvas, 28 x 40 inches. Courtesy of the Artist.





◀[facing page top left] Lilian Garcia-Roig, *St. Marks Inlet (FL)*, 2007, oil on canvas, 40 x 30 inches. Courtesy of the Artist.

◀[facing page top right] Dayron González, *Tocados por Luz (Touched by the Light)*, 2011, mixed media on canvas, 24 x 17¼ inches. Private Collection. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

◀[facing page bottom] Dayron González, *Estampida II (Stampede II)*, 2013, oil on canvas, dimensions, Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.

▼[bottom left] Manuel Mendive, *La Palma (The Palm)*, 2004, acrylic on Royal Palm trunk, 34 x 15¾ x 5½ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

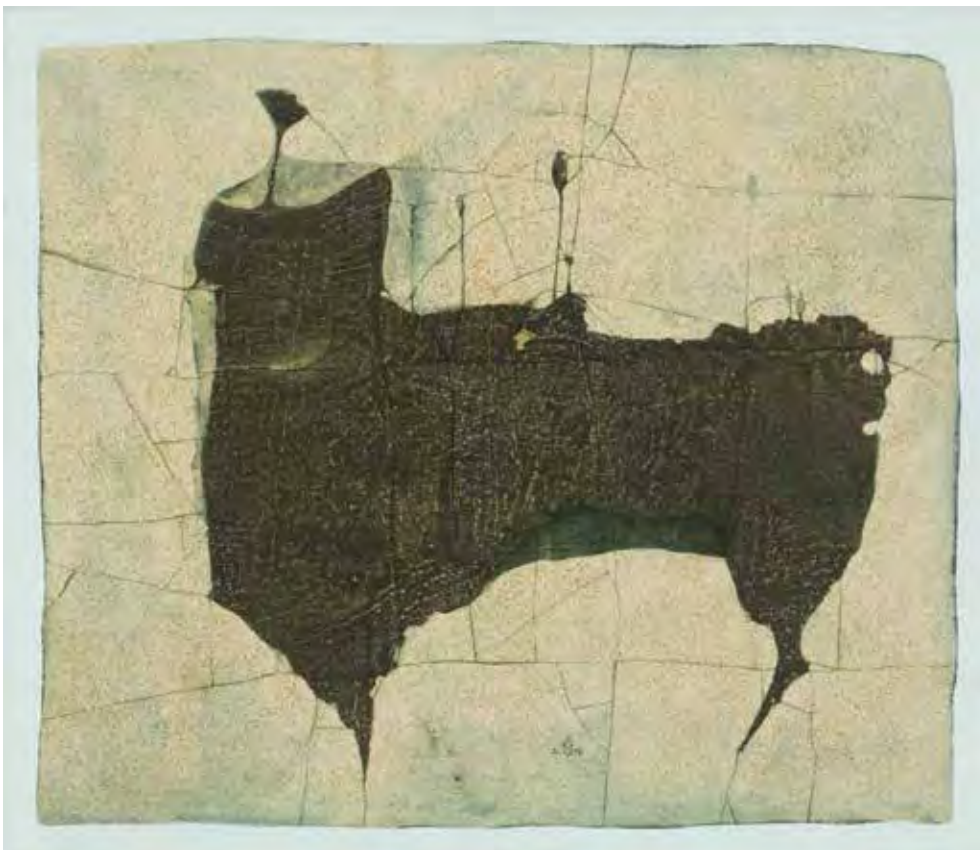
▼[bottom right] Manuel Mendive, *La Caridad del Cobre (Our Lady of Charity)*, 2000, acrylic on canvas, 31¾ x 39¼ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.

►Gina Péllon, *Ven A bailar (Let's Dance)*, 2009, mixed media on canvas, 57½ x 44¾ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.





▲Tomás Sánchez, *Orilla (Lake Shore)*, 1986, acrylic on canvas, 31½ x 77 inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida. Image courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



◀Osmany Soler Mena, *Forma zoomorta (Zoomorphic Forms)*, 2006, oil on canvas, 21¾ x 26 inches. Private Collection. Photo credit: Jon Nalon.

ABELA, EDUARDO (1889–1965): Eduardo Abela was born in San Antonio de los Baños, Cuba. The artist studied at the Academy of San Alejandro, where he graduated in 1921. Abela lived and painted in Spain from 1921 to 1924, and in France from 1927 to 1929, networking with other members of the Cuban vanguard working abroad. After returning to Cuba, the artist briefly worked as the director of the short-lived Free Studio of Painting and Sculpture, and later as Cuba's cultural attaché to Mexico and Guatemala. Eduardo Abela died in Havana, Cuba.

ALFONZO, CARLOS (1950-1991): Carlos Alfonzo was born in Cuba and received his art degree from the Academy of San Alejandro in 1973; he took a subsequent degree in art history from the University of Havana. Alfonzo was an émigré during the Mariel boat lift in 1980 and he worked in Miami until his death.

ARGUDÍN Y PEDROSO, PASTOR (1889-?): Pastor Argudín Pedroso was an Afro-Cuban artist who lived and worked in France in the 1920s as well as in the United States. He participated in the 1924 Exposition d'Art Américain-Latin at the Musée Galliera, as well as the Salon des Indépendants in 1925 and 1931. The media of works appearing in exhibitions and at auction houses have been cited as murals, paintings, and pastels.

BEARS, R.C. (19th century): R.C. Bears was an artist active during the late nineteenth century. Bears' birthplace is unknown; his career included a professorship of drawing at the Academy of San Alejandro, appointed in 1863,

until he briefly served as interim director following the directorship of Juan Francisco Cisneros Guerrero (d. 1878).

BERMÚDEZ, CUNDO (1914-2008): Secundino (Cundo) Bermúdez y Delgado was born in Havana, Cuba. He attended the Academy of San Alejandro in 1930 to study painting, and the University of Havana in 1934 to study law and social sciences. Following his 1941 graduation, the artist briefly studied in Mexico City at the Academy of San Carlos, where he was influenced by the work of Diego Rivera. Upon returning to Cuba, he helped found the Asociación de Pintores y Escultores de Cuba (APEC). After the rise of Fidel Castro, Bermúdez relocated first to Puerto Rico, and then to Miami, where he died in 2008.

BESMAR, JOEL (b. 1968): Joel R. Besmar Nieves lives and was born in Camagüey, Cuba. The artist first studied at Camagüey's Vocational School of Arts, and later went on to graduate from the Academy of San Alejandro in Havana. Besides his work as a visual artist, Besmar has worked as a lecturer at the Vocational School of Arts, illustrator, and essayist.

BENCOMO MENA, JOSÉ A. (1890-1962): José A. Bencomo Mena was born in Remedios, Las Villas, Cuba. He studied painting and drawing at the Academy of San Alejandro, earning the first scholarship bestowed by the Cuban state to study painting in Europe. He returned to Cuba in 1927 after studying in Italy for eight years. After his return, the artist taught in the Academy of San Alejandro for over twenty-five years, earning multiple awards and honors.

Mary Margaret
Fernandez

CÁRDENAS, AGUSTÍN (1927-2001): Agustín Cárdenas Alfonso was born in Matanzas, Cuba, to an Afro-Cuban family of Congolese and Senegalese descent. In Havana, Cárdenas studied under the sculptor Juan José Sicre and at the Academy of San Alejandro. The artist received international recognition for his surrealist-influenced sculpture during his lifetime, exhibiting in South Korea, the United States, Japan, France, and many other international centers for the arts. He died in 2001 in Havana, Cuba.

CARREÑO, MARIO (1913-1999): Mario Carreño y Morales studied painting at the Academy of San Alejandro in his hometown of Havana, Cuba, from 1925 to 1926. In 1934, the artist entered the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando in Madrid, Spain, and later studied at the School of Applied Arts and the Académie Julian in Paris, France, after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Carreño spent a brief period of time living in the United States and Mexico, where he became acquainted with some of the major players of Mexican Muralism, before finally settling in Santiago, Chile. He lived there for the remainder of his life.

CERRA, MIRTA (1904-1986): Mirta Cerra Herrera was born in Bejucal, Cuba. She studied at the Academy of San Alejandro from 1928 to 1934, and received a scholarship to study at the Art Students League of New York in 1935. The artist participated in significant international exhibitions and salons in New York, Philadelphia, Havana, and Paris during her lifetime, and died in Havana, Cuba, September 26, 1986.

CHARTAND, AUGUSTO (1828-1899): Augusto Chartrand Dubois was born in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1828 to parents of French-Cuban ancestry. He studied painting in France from the age of nine to nineteen, from the years 1837 to 1847. Following his studies, the artist traveled extensively through Europe, Asia, and the Americas. Along with his brothers, Esteban and Philippe, the artist explored the theme of the Cuban landscape in his work. Augusto Chartand died August 25, 1899, in Matanzas, Cuba.

CHARTRAND, ESTEBAN (1840-1883): Esteban Sebastian Chartrand Dubois was born in Matanzas, Cuba, on October 11, 1840. Beginning in 1864, the artist studied painting in France under the landscape painter Théodore Rousseau. Chartrand was widely celebrated during his lifetime, and was offered a position at the Academy of San Alejandro, which he turned down. The artist moved to

Hoboken, New Jersey, for his health in the early 1880s, where he died from tuberculosis in 1883.

CHARTRAND, PHILIPPE (1825-1889): Philippe Chartrand Dubois was born in Matanzas, Cuba, the eldest of three artist brothers. He traveled to Paris in 1854 to study painting, and was heavily influenced by members of the Barbizon School. He was named the first Interim Professor of Landscape and Perspective at the Academy of San Alejandro in 1886. Philippe Chartrand died in Havana, Cuba, on August 9, 1889.

CLEENEWERCK, HENRY (1818-1901): Henri Cleenewerck was born in Watou, Belgium, in 1818. He studied painting at the academies of art in Poperinge and Ieper. In 1860, the artist moved to work in Savannah, Georgia, and in 1865, he relocated to Havana, Cuba. It was during this period that Cleenewerck created his most iconic works showcasing the Cuban landscape. He returned to the United States in 1868 at the beginning of the Cuban War of Independence. Henry Cleenewerck died in Brussels, Belgium, at the age of eighty-three.

CONSUEGRA, HUGO (1929-2003): Hugo Consuegra Sosa was born in Havana, Cuba, where he concurrently studied piano at the Conservatorio Hubert de Blanck, and painting at the Academy of San Alejandro. In 1953, he became one of the founding members of The Eleven, a group of young abstract expressionists in Cuba. The artist relocated to New York in 1970, where he would reside until his death in 2003.

DE LA PAZ, GUERRA: Guerra de la Paz is the composite name of the artists Alain Guerra (b. 1968 in Havana, Cuba) and Neraldo de la Paz (b. 1955 in Matanzas, Cuba). The duo employs the use of recycled, readymade objects in their art, inspired by the waste bins of second-hand goods they found on the streets near the artists' original studio. Guerra de la Paz first began its collaboration in 1996. They are currently based in Miami, Florida.

DIAGO, JUAN ROBERTO (b. 1971): Juan Roberto Diago Durruthy lives and was born in Havana, Cuba, to an established family of Afro-Cuban artists and intellectuals. Diago graduated from the Academy of San Alejandro in 1990, where he studied painting. He has been the recipient of a number of national and international awards, and in 1999 was the first Latin American recipient of the Amédée Maratier Award in Paris, France.

EHEVARRÍA, GIOSVANY (b. 1971): Giosvany Echevarría was born in the municipality of Viñales, Pinar del Río, Cuba, where he also graduated from the Provincial School of Visual Arts in 1986. He completed his Master's degree in painting from the Academy of San Alejandro in Havana in 1990. His landscape paintings are heavily influenced by the natural settings of his native province.

EIRÍZ, ANTONIA (1929-1995): Antonia Eiríz Vázquez was born in April of 1929. She attended the Academy of San Alejandro to study painting, and graduated in 1958. In the early sixties, the artist began to move away from academic painting to study and promote Cuba's long tradition of craft art. She was nationally acclaimed during her lifetime, and taught at both the Escuela de Instructores de Artesanía and the Academy of San Alejandro. Eiríz moved to Miami, Florida in 1993, where she later died of a heart attack in 1995.

ENRÍQUEZ, CARLOS (1900-1957): Carlos Enríquez Gómez was born in Zulueta, Cuba, to a wealthy family. As an artist, Enríquez received little formal education, and was largely self-taught. Enríquez is considered one of the founding members of the Cuban vanguard, and he was influenced by the surrealist and modernist movements. The artist lived and worked in both Cuba and the United States, and he died while painting in his Havana studio in 1957.

FABELO, ROBERTO (b. 1951): Roberto Fabelo was born in Camagüey, Cuba, in 1951. The artist studied painting and drawing at both the Academy of San Alejandro and Superior Art Institute of Havana. Fabelo has worked as a painter, illustrator, professor, and art judge over the course of his celebrated career. He has been the recipient of several national awards for art and culture, including the Alejo Carpentier medal. Fabelo presently lives and works in Havana, Cuba.

FERNÁNDEZ, AGUSTÍN (1928-2006): Agustín Fernández was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1928. The artist studied at the Academy of San Alejandro between 1944 and 1950, and in 1959 he traveled to Europe to work and exhibit internationally. He would remain abroad, living in France, Puerto Rico, and finally New York City from 1972 until his death in 2006.

FLORIDO, MIGUEL (b. 1980): Miguel Florido lives and was born in Havana, Cuba. The artist is self-taught, and

has been widely praised for his still-life paintings. His works are part of both national collections in Cuba, and in collections abroad.

FONG, FLORA (b. 1949): Flora Fong was born in Camagüey, Cuba. She graduated from the Academy of San Alejandro, where she also served as a professor from 1970 to 1989. Fong has been widely exhibited internationally, including fine art fairs such as Art Chicago, Art Miami, and Arteaméricas, and numerous personal and group exhibitions. The artist currently lives in Havana, Cuba.

GARCÍA, JUAN GIL (1876-1932): Juan Gil García was born in Madrid, Spain, and moved to Havana, Cuba, near the end of the nineteenth century. While in Cuba, the artist's still-life paintings emphasized the natural world of the island, particularly its fruits and flowers. Many of García's works can be found in the National Museum of Fine Arts in Havana, Cuba, the same city in which the artist died in 1932.

GARCÍA, VÍCTOR MANUEL (1897-1969): Víctor Manuel García Valdés was born in Havana Cuba, in 1897. García showed artistic promise from a young age, entering into his studies at the Academy of San Alejandro at the age of twelve. García left Cuba in 1925 to study abroad in France, returning to exhibit in the landmark 1927 salon at the Painters and Sculptors Association of Havana, which marked the beginning of the Cuban modernist period. Afterwards, the artist traveled back to Europe before settling permanently in Cuba in 1929, when he created some of his most iconic works. Víctor Manuel García Valdés died in Havana at the age of seventy-two.

GARCIA-ROIG, LILIAN (b. 1966): Lilian Garcia-Roig was born in Havana, Cuba. She received her BFA from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, in 1988, and her MFA from the University of Pennsylvania in 1990. The artist taught in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Texas in Austin from 1991 to 2001, later moving to Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida. Garcia-Roig served as the Director of Graduate Studies in Visual Art at FSU from 2002 to 2008, and is currently a professor of painting.

GATTORNO, ANTONIO (1904-1980): Antonio Gattorno was an important figure in the Cuban modernist movement. He attended the Academy of San Alejandro in his

hometown of Havana, Cuba, before winning a scholarship that allowed him to travel to Europe for artistic training. The artist returned to Cuba in 1926 to teach at the Academy. In 1940, Gattorno married and moved to New York City. He would remain in the United States until his death in 1980, only visiting Cuba once in 1946.

GONZÁLEZ, DAYRON (b. 1982): Dayron González was born in Quivicán, Cuba, in 1982. He studied at the Superior Institute of Industrial Design for a year before enrolling in the Academy of San Alejandro, where he graduated in 2007. The artist was a member of AHS (Asociación Hermanos Saiz), a member of the “Arte y Conducta” art workshop directed by Tania Bruguera and Lázaro Saavedra between 2006 and 2008, and a founding member of MAKINAH (Professional Association of Cuban Contemporary Plastic Artists). Dayron González currently lives and works in Miami, Florida.

LAM, WIFREDO (1902-1982): Wifredo Óscar de la Concepción Lam y Castilla was born to a family of mixed Afro-Cuban and Chinese descent in the village of Sagua La Grande, Cuba. The artist moved to Havana in 1916 to study law before switching to the study of academic painting at the Academy of San Alejandro in 1918. Lam left the Academy in 1923 to continue his artistic studies in Europe. While in Spain, he studied under Fernando Álvarez de Sotomayor y Zaragoza, who had also served as an instructor to Salvador Dalí. The artist moved to France in the 1930s, where he formed a close friendship with Pablo Picasso. Picasso acted as a mentor to the young artist, introducing Lam to some of the leading artists of the period. Lam returned to Cuba in 1941, where he began exploring his family’s heritage and infusing his art with Afro-Cuban themes and motifs. It was during this period that Lam’s iconic style truly evolved. His work was widely celebrated and exhibited during his lifetime. The artist settled permanently in France in 1952, though he traveled extensively until his death on September 11, 1982, in Paris.

LANDALUZE, VÍCTOR PATRICIO (1830-1889): Víctor Patricio Landaluze was born in Bilbao, Spain, in 1830. He arrived in Havana, Cuba in 1863, where he worked as an illustrator for the magazine *El Almendares*. Though the artist was strongly against Cuban independence, his work captured the contemporaneous culture and customs of the country. Landaluze is considered one of the most important artists within the costumbrismo movement,

and his prints were widely circulated during his lifetime. The artist died in Cuba in 1889.

LÉON, ÁNGEL ACOSTA (1930-1964): Ángel Acosta León was born in Havana, Cuba, to a family of ten children. He began his studies at the Academy of San Alejandro in 1952, from which he graduated in 1958. The artist left Cuba in 1963 to travel throughout Europe. Despite his short career, León was a prolific artist who received both national and international awards during his lifetime. The artist committed suicide on the open sea during his return to Cuba in 1964.

LLINÁS, GUIDO (1923-2005): Guido Llinás was born in Pinar del Río, Cuba. Though he studied a few months at the School of Fine Arts in Pinar del Río, the artist was largely self-taught, specializing in both painting and engraving. Llinás taught elementary school in his home province until 1957, when he left to study Pedagogy at the University of Havana. Following his graduation, the artist traveled extensively throughout the United States, Italy, Spain, England, Germany, and France, where he remained to study engraving at the Hayter atelier. Llinás returned to Cuba in 1963 to serve as a visual arts professor at the School of Architecture at the University of Havana, and later moved back to Paris to work as inventory manager for the Denise René Gallery. The artist died in 2005 at the Mondor Hospital in Creteil, outside of Paris, after being struck by a motorcycle while crossing a street.

MARTÍNEZ PEDRO, LUIS (1910-1989): Luis Martínez Pedro was born in Cuba in 1910. After studying architecture at the University of Havana, the artist began his studies at the Academy of San Alejandro in 1929. Martínez Pedro left Cuba for New Orleans, Louisiana, to escape the censorship of the Machado regime and study painting and drawing at the city’s School of Arts and Crafts. He returned to Cuba in 1933, where he worked first in advertising, and then illustrating, while exhibiting his work in national and international exhibitions. Luis Martínez Pedro died in 1989 at the age of seventy-nine.

MELERO, MIGUEL A. (1836-1907): Miguel A. Melero Rodríguez was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1836. He began his artistic studies on the island before moving to Paris, France, to continue his education. The artist traveled throughout Europe, returning to Cuba in 1868 at the outbreak of the Cuban War of Independence. Melero

became the first Cuban-born director of the Academy of San Alejandro, and he made the significant decision to allow women to enter the Academy for arts instruction. Melero died in Cuba in 1907.

MENDIVE, MANUEL (b. 1944): Manuel Mendive was born in Havana, Cuba, to an Afro-Cuban family of Yoruba descent. Mendive's family was active in the practice of Santería, which heavily influenced the artist's style and artistic interests. The artist graduated from the Academy of San Alejandro, and is considered one of the most important living, contemporary Cuban artists. Mendive made his first trip to West Africa in 1982. The artist lives and works in the outskirts of Havana, and continues to promote Afro-Cuban art and culture through his painting and sculptures.

MENOCAL, ARMANDO (1863-1942): Armando Menocal was born and died in Havana, Cuba. He studied at the Academy of San Alejandro until 1880, when he left to study painting in Spain under the artist Francisco Jover. He exhibited in Spain before returning to Cuba to fight in the Cuban War of Independence. Following its completion, the artist returned to the Academy to serve as professor of landscape painting. The artist was named director of the Academy in 1927, and was named director emeritus in 1940. Armando Menocal died in 1942.

MIALHE, FRÉDÉRIC (1810-1868): Pierre Toussaint Frédéric Mialhe, known as Federico Mialhe in Cuba, was born in France in 1810. Mialhe was trained as a painter and engraver, and he lived and worked in Cuba between 1838 and 1854. The artist was hired by the printing house of the Real Sociedad Patriótica to document the island, and he additionally worked as a drawing professor at the Academy of San Alejandro during his time in the country. Mialhe died in 1868 at the age of fifty-eight.

MIJARES, JOSÉ (1921-2001): José María Mijares Fernandez was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1921. He entered the Academy of San Alejandro in 1936, where the artist studied painting. Mijares would later teach at the school for two years before his resignation at the emergence of the Castro regime in 1968. The same year, the artist left Cuba for Miami, Florida, where he lived until his death in 2001.

MILIÁN, RAÚL (1914-1984): Raúl Milián was born in Havana, Cuba. He was a self-taught artist, who has

been widely exhibited on an international scale. The artist began painting in 1952, and he explored the use of non-traditional materials in his art. Raúl Milián died in Havana in 1984.

MORALES, EDUARDO (1862-1938): Eduardo Morales was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1862. Morales enrolled at the Academy of San Alejandro, later leaving his studies to fight in the Cuban War of Independence. Following the end of the conflict, he joined the National Police Force, painting in his spare time and later in retirement. While small, the artist's oeuvre is extremely meticulous, and his landscape paintings captured the Cuban countryside in a transitional period of the island's history.

MORENO, SERVANDO CABRERA (1923-1981): Servando Cabrera Moreno was born in Havana, Cuba. The artist attended the Art Students League in New York City and La Grande Chaumière in Paris before enrolling in and later graduating from the Academy of San Alejandro in Havana. While the artist was successful and celebrated during his lifetime, Moreno's work pushed cultural boundaries, and he faced censorship throughout his entire career. Servando Cabrera Moreno died in Cuba in 1981.

ORLANDO, FELIPE (1911-2001): Felipe Orlando Garcia Murciano was born in Tenosique, Mexico. The artist's family moved to Cuba in 1914, where the artist would live until 1946, before settling first in New York City, and later in Mexico City, Mexico, in 1951. Orlando studied Anthropology at the University of Havana, where he also attended the painting workshops of the artists Jorge Arche and Víctor Manuel. The artist taught at both the Universidad de las Américas and the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, both in México City, and was widely exhibited in Mexico, Cuba, and the United States during his lifetime.

PELÁEZ, AMELIA (1896-1968): Amelia Peláez del Casal was born in Yaguajay, Cuba, where she lived with her family until they relocated to Havana in 1915. The artist entered the Academy of San Alejandro at the age of twenty, where she quickly became recognized for her paintings. Peláez left Cuba to work in Europe in 1927, settling in Paris, but traveling throughout the continent. She studied at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, later returning to Cuba in 1934. The artist exhibited nationally and internationally, and was prolific in

the media of pottery, mural painting, and easel painting. Amelia Peláez died in Havana in 1968.

PAVÓN, GEANDY (b. 1974): Geandy Pavón was born in Victoria de las Tunas, Cuba, in 1974. He attended the Las Tunas Art School, while participating in different forms of street art with other young artists. After studying at Las Tunas, the artist received his BFA from the Academy of San Alejandro in Havana. Pavón left Cuba for New York City in 1996, studying at the National Museum of Fine Art for four years. The artist lives and works in the New York area.

PELLÓN, GINA (1926-2014): Gina Pellón was born in Cumanayagua, Cuba. She studied at the Academy of San Alejandro, where she graduated in 1954. The artist taught at the Velado Polytechnic Institute until 1957. In 1959, Pellón left Cuba for France, fleeing from the Castro regime. Her first solo exhibition took place in Switzerland in 1960. The work of Gina Pellón has been widely exhibited throughout Europe. The artist remained in Paris until her death in 2014.

PONCE DE LEÓN, FIDELIO (1895-1949): Fidelio Ponce de León was the pseudonym of Alfredo Fuentes Pons, a painter born in Camagüey, Cuba, in 1895. The artist studied at the San Alejandro Academy in Havana from 1913 until 1918. Following graduation, he taught drawing to disadvantaged children and worked in commercial arts for many years. The artist traveled to New York City in 1937, where The Museum of Modern Art obtained his work, *Mujeres*, as part of its permanent collection. Ponce de León died in Havana in 1949 from tuberculosis.

PORTOCARRERO, RENÉ (1912-1985): René Portocarrero was born in Havana, Cuba. While the artist very briefly studied at the Academy of San Alejandro, he is generally considered self-taught. His work was first exhibited at the Salon of Fine Arts in Havana, and the artist served as a professor at the Free Institute of Painting and Sculpture. Portocarrero traveled throughout Europe and the Americas, and was highly prolific. He died in Havana at the age of seventy-three.

RAMOS, DOMINGO (1894-1956): Domingo Ramos was born in Guines, Cuba. He was admitted into the Academy of San Alejandro in 1907, and in 1918, the artist was awarded a scholarship from the National Congress to study at the San Fernando School in Madrid, Spain. After his return in 1919, Ramos was named a professor at the

Academy in Havana. He served as a professor until he was awarded the position of Principal of the School in 1949. Ramos had a productive artistic career, and he presented over twenty personal exhibits of his artworks. The artist died in Havana in 1956.

RAVENET, DOMINGO (1905-1969): Domingo Ravenet was born in Valencia, Spain, but was raised in Havana, Cuba. The artist graduated cum laude from the Academy of San Alejandro. Following graduation, he continued his studies at the Academy Chaumière in Paris, France. Ravenet chose to dedicate his life to the instruction of the arts, and served as a mentor and instructor to many renowned Cuban artists. Ravenet died in Havana, Cuba, in 1969.

RODRÍGUEZ, MARIANO (1912-1990): Mariano Rodríguez was born in Havana, Cuba. He showed interest in drawing and painting at a young age, and at the age of twenty-four the artist traveled to Mexico, where he would meet the painter Rodríguez Lozano. Lozano mentored the young Rodríguez, who devoted himself to his work upon his return to Cuba. He was appointed assistant professor at the Escuela Libre de Pintura in 1937. Throughout his career, the artist sought to depict Cuba's contemporary history in his work. Mariano Rodríguez died in Cuba in 1990.

RODRÍGUEZ MOREY, ANTONIO (1874–1967): Antonio Rodríguez Morey was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1874. He studied at the San Alejandro Academy under the landscape painter, Valentín Sanz Carta. The artist traveled to Europe to continue his artistic training in 1891, finally settling in Rome in 1895, where he served as professor of drawing at the Sacred Heart Institute. In 1912, Rodríguez Morey was appointed to a professorship at the Academy of San Alejandro in Havana to teach drawing, artistic anatomy and art history. He later moved on to the position of Director of the National Museum of Havana in 1918, leaving an important legacy to the development of Cuban art in the twentieth century after a long, fruitful career. The artist died in Havana in 1967.

ROMAÑACH, LEOPOLDO (1862-1951): Leopoldo Romañach y Guillen was born in Sierra Morena, Cuba. During his childhood, the artist's education took place in Barcelona, Spain. Romañach returned to Cuba at the age of fifteen, and in 1885, he enrolled at the Academy of San Alejandro. In 1889 he received a scholarship to study at

the Free School of Painting in Italy. After his tenure in the country, he traveled to New York City, where he worked as a painter for several years. The artist returned to Havana in 1900, where he was appointed professor of color theory at the Academy. He would spend the remainder of his life training three generations of artists, mentoring many of the members of the Cuban vanguard. The artist died in Havana in 1951.

SÁNCHEZ, TOMÁS (b. 1948): Tomás Sánchez was born in Aguada de Pasajeros, Cuba, in 1948. The artist is the eldest of two sons. At the age of sixteen, Sánchez moved to Havana to study at the Academy of San Alejandro, later transferring in 1967 to the newly founded National School for the Arts to attain a more contemporary focus in his studies. After graduating, the artist served as the professor and chair of engraving at the National School for the Arts until 1976. Sánchez has participated in exhibitions in over thirty countries, including a number of individual retrospectives. The artist currently lives and works in both Miami, Florida, and Costa Rica.

SANZ CARTA, VALENTÍN (1849-1898): Valentín Sanz Carta was born in the Canary Islands, and he began his art education at the Provincial Academy of Fine Arts in the region. In 1882, the artist moved to Havana, Cuba, establishing himself as a painter of portraits, landscapes, and seascapes. Sanz Carta won the position of landscape painting chair at the Academy of San Alejandro in 1887 as the result of a contest, and the artist held the position almost until his death in Havana in 1898.

SOLDEVILLA, LOLÓ (1901-1971): Loló Soldevilla was born in Pinar del Río, Cuba, in 1901. He received his artistic training in Paris, France, and served as the Cuban cultural attaché in Paris from 1949 to 1957. He served as a professor at the School of Architecture in Havana from 1960 to 1961. During his lifetime, the artist was exhibited primarily in Cuba and France. Loló Soldevilla died in 1971 in Havana, Cuba.

SOLER MENA, OSMANY (b. 1974): Osmany Soler Mena was born in Camagüey, Cuba, in 1974. In his painting, Soler Mena mixes natural imagery with abstract language. The artist lives and works in his hometown.

SOLÍS, UVER (1923-1974): Uver Solís was born in Matanzas, Cuba. She studied drawing at the School of Education in Havana, under the direction of the artist,

Domingo Ravenet. Her first exhibition took place in Havana in 1945, and in 1946, she participated in the Modern Cuban Painting Exhibition at the Fine Arts Palace in Mexico City, Mexico. In her later years, Solís painted and served as a teacher before developing health issues that prevented her from working. The artist died in Havana in 1974.

— *Biographies compiled by Mary Margaret Fernandez, MA/PhD Graduate Fellow in Art History, Rutgers University*



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