Contemporary Cuban Art: History, Identity, and Materiality

Large Print Labels
Paradox, dark humor, beauty, sadness, and vulnerability connect the works on view here. Artists still living in Cuba reflect the daily challenges of survival in their art, while those now living in the U.S. and elsewhere convey the tensions of their hybrid citizenship. Regardless of their current physical location, however, all of them are fully engaged in expressing their personal relationship with their homes and the world with honesty, intelligence, and determination. Looking at their work and ideas, I have conceptualized this exhibition through the lenses of history, identity, and materiality. Yet many of the works address more than one of these themes, as they are inextricably connected. It is my intent that this structure will draw you in on your own path of discovery.

As the executive director of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art from 2008 to 2019, and before that, as director of the art museum at the University of Virginia, I had the good fortune to visit Cuba nine times over twenty years. I met many artists, curators, art historians, gallerists, and collectors on the island and elsewhere who have helped me to learn more about Cuban history and contemporary art. I hope this exhibition will spur an urge in you, too, to learn more about the complexities of life on this island so close to our country and yet so distant in other ways.
Jill Hartz, Guest Curator
Paradox, dark humor, beauty, sadness, and vulnerability connect the works on view here. Artists still living in Cuba reflect the daily challenges of survival in their art, while those now living in the U.S. and elsewhere convey the tensions of their hybrid citizenship. Regardless of their current physical location, however, all of them are fully engaged in expressing their personal relationship with their homes and the world with honesty, intelligence, and determination. Looking at their work and ideas, I have conceptualized this exhibition through the lenses of history, identity, and materiality. Yet many of the works address more than one of these themes, as they are inextricably connected. It is my intent that this structure will draw you in on your own path of discovery.

Over the past two decades, I have seen exciting and troubling changes in Cuba that affect its cultural production. Impressive public health, education, and literacy standards exist in the same space as political and artistic censorship and imprisonment. Socialist practices contend with new opportunities for home ownership (for those who can afford it) and private businesses (if supplies are available). Underground entrepreneurs fuel growth, and the wide sharing of media through the hand-to-hand transfer of tapes and publications informs Cubans about world news, movies, and television shows, especially those from the U.S. A more available legal internet increases
global access, but its inconsistency, potential surveillance, and occasionally shutdowns pose challenges. Recent demonstrations by artists against censorship and by Cubans from all walks of life protesting food shortages and other hardships have brought on a new wave of government crackdowns.

Cuba’s tourist economy has given rise to more opulent hotels and luxury stores, rarely affordable to the local populace. Old American cars are ingeniously kept running and glow in their newly painted pastels. Today, a university history professor or doctor earns more as a tourism guide than pursuing his or her profession. Throughout this period and before, events like the U.S. embargo, the Mariel Boatlift, the blowing up of the Maine, the Bay of Pigs fiasco, the Missile Crisis, and resistance from a bloc of Cuban Americans, especially in Florida, have stymied trust between our nations. President Obama’s efforts toward reconciliation were abruptly thwarted by the Trump administration, but now with a new president, hope returns. And then it doesn’t. Yet again. These constant ups and downs, negotiations and renegotiations, can weary the soul—or they can be internalized and expressed in the dreams and nightmares we find in Cuban music, poetry, dance, drama, and the visual arts. In Cuba and Cuban art, pessimism and optimism are not mutually exclusive, and beauty and humor are powerful tools to illuminate and make bearable disappointment and despair.
Most of the Cuban artists whose work I value have benefited from a free education and meticulous training from a young age, following a Beaux-Arts model. Their extensive knowledge of Western art history and their honing of practice and technique have provided strong foundations for their individual visions and expressions. Still, they must contend with such challenges as finding space to work (many have studios in their homes) and a shortage of materials, which can result in unusual media choices. And always, they need to decide what they can share with the public and what they must hide, metaphorically or for real. What is allowed one day might be dangerous the next. What, for example, will be the fate of the San Isidro Movement, a collective of mostly younger black artists, who protest against Decree 349, a 2018 state regulation that requires artists to belong to a state-sanctioned organization that will set their fees for performance and the sale of art?

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Unknown artist

_Territorio Libre De Analfabetismo_
ca. 1961
silkscreen on fabric

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Gift of Mark and Carolyn Foster

This flag announces an “illiteracy-free territory.” In 1960, Fidel Castro spoke at the United Nations and announced that Cuba would become 100% literate. Today, that figure approaches 96%, one of the highest levels of literacy in Latin America.
Unknown artist

Salvemos a Elian (Let’s Save Elian) 1999-2000
offset print

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Gift of Mark and Carolyn Foster

On November 25, 1999, five-year-old Elian Gonzales was rescued at sea. His mother, who had hoped to start a new life with her son in Miami, drowned. Elian became a political pawn, caught in a tug-of-war between his Miami relatives and his father, Juan Miguel, who successfully lobbied for his return to Cuba.
OSPAAAL Posters
(Organization in Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa & Latin America)

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Gift of Mark and Carolyn Foster

OSPAAAL posters aimed to educate and inspire Cubans and potential revolutionaries around the world. Korda’s image of Che was among the most widespread.

top row: left-right
OSPAAL; artist Alfredo G. Rostgaard (born in Cuba, 1943-2004)

Rainbow Che, from Che Portfolio: New Edition, first printed 1987 offset print in paper

OSPAAL; artist Alfredo G. Rostgaard (born in Cuba, 1943-2004)

OSPAAAL
*Paris Volta, Hasta la victoria siempre,*
from *Che Portfolio: First Edition*, 1997
offset print in paper

OSPAAAL; artist Antonio Fernandez Reboiro (born in Cuba, 1935)
*Che comandante amigo,*
from *12 Carteles Cubanos de Cine*, 1978
silkscreen on paper
bottom row: left-right

OSPAAAL; artist Rene Portocarrero (born in Cuba, 1912-85)

**Soy Cuba (I am Cuba),**
from *12 Carteles Cubanos de Cine*, 1964

screen print on paper

The 1964 Russian film presents four stories about life in Cuba, showing the contrasts between the luxurious casinos and normal living conditions, the hardships of farmers, student rebellions, and the personal toll of the guerrilla war—all in a black-and-white, artistically experimental composition. Championed by such directors as Martin Scorsese, the film was restored and has since become a classic, documenting the period.
Memorias del Subdesarrollo (Memories of Underdevelopment), from 12 Carteles Cubanos de Cine, n.d. silkscreen on paper

Documentary footage and fiction co-exist in this Spanish film about a Cuban writer who decides to stay in Havana after his family and friends leave.
OSPAAAL; artist Rafael Morante Boyerizo (born 1931 in Spain; emigrated to Cuba) *Che with flag*, from *Che Portfolio: New Edition*, first printed 1987 offset print in paper

OSPAAAL; artist Gladys Acosta (born in Cuba, 1941) ¡*No a la base naval de Guantanamo!*, first printed 1987 offset print in paper
Juan Carlos Alom  
(born in Cuba, 1964)

*Curando la tierra, de El Libro oscuro*  
(*Healing the Earth, from The Dark Book*), 2002

gelatin silver print mounted on aluminum

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art  
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Irwin R. Berman
Miguel A. Couret  
(born in Cuba, 1964)

*Lección de Historia de Cuba*  
*Cuban History Lesson*, 2015  
Diptych linocut on paper, edition 2/4

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art  
Gift of the Director

Couret shares important moments in Cuba’s history through his distinctive marks. From left to right (translated from his descriptions):
1. Founding of Baracoa, the first Cuban town, in 1522
2. Grito de Yara, literally, “Yara’s Scream,” the first uprising on the island, in 1878
3. The death of José Martí, the greatest Cuban thinker and intellectual of all time, apostle of the homeland. Died May 19, 1895.
4. Start of the War of Independence in Cuba from Spain, 1895
5. Triumph of the Cuban Revolution, 1959
6. Missile Crisis, 1962
7. Fidel Castro assumes the direction of the country
8. The Russians and their presence in Cuba
9. Angolan War
10. Venezuela and the Cuban economy
11. Raúl Castro, Fidel’s brother, assumes the direction of the country
12. Cuba and its relationship with the United States
Juan Carlos Alom  
(born in Cuba, 1964)  

*K. Mo, Contigo en la distancia* (K. Mo, with you in the distance)  
2010  
inkjet print  

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art  
Gift of Linda and Irwin Berman, in memory of Linda  

A line of powder, perhaps cocaine, offers a connection, if from a distance. Note the repetition of the line in other works in the exhibition, signaling time frames (Couret) and geography (Novo).
Armando Marino  
(born in Cuba,  
1968; lives in U.S.)  

*Untitled (Couch with legs/feet),*  
from the series *Herencia Colonial*  
(*Colonial Heritage*), 2003  
watercolor on paper  

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art  
Gift of Linda and Irwin Berman, in memory of Linda
jorge & larry (Jorge M. Hernández, b. 1975; Larry J. González, b. 1976)

Una santa predice algo que no se cumple y le cae arriba El Castigo: repetir, sabe Dios hasta cuándo, un mensaje estéril (A Saint Predicts Something that is not Fulfilled and Receives the Punishment: Repeat, God Knows Until When, A Sterile Message), 2016
plaster sculpture and graffito on the wall

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Museum Purchase through the Hartz FUNd for Contemporary Art

This artistic duo produces highly literate, topical, and often bitingly sarcastic works in a variety of media. In explanation of this piece, they write,
Beginning in the heavens, a saint writes the following text repeatedly:

“Yah han cortado un pedazo de la cerca y acabo de oír de la mismísima boca del General que todo va bien. Me huele a victoria. Es que la fe, en encrucijadas como esta, siempre gira a favor del héroe.”

(They have already cut a piece of the wall, and I just heard from the very mouth of the General that all is going well. I smell victory. Faith at crossroads like this always turns in favor of the hero.)

This optimistic statement of faith was taken from the diary of Panchito Gómez Toro, assistant to Lieutenant General Antonio Marceo (1845-96), one of the commanders of Cuba’s Liberation Army in its war against Spain. Marceo was killed shortly afterward in a minor skirmish.
Raúl Corrales
(born in Cuba, 1925-2006)

La atarraya (The Cast Net)
c. 1948; printed 2003 by the artist
gelatin silver print, open edition

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Gift of Linda and Irwin Berman, in memory of Linda

One of the official photographers of the Revolution, Corrales spent thirty years in the government’s Office of Historical Affairs, assuring that the Revolution’s photographic legacy was preserved.
René Francisco (René Rodríguez Hernández) (born in Cuba, 1960)

*Norte*, 2009
oil on canvas

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Museum Purchase made possible with major support from Christine and Chris A. Smith and Drs. James and Barbara Walker
Adrián Fernández Milanés  
(born in Cuba, 1984)

*Untitled No.1,* from the series  
*Pending Memories,* 2018  
archival pigment print on  
Hahnemuhle  
Photo Rag Pearl 310 GSM

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art  
Purchased with Funds from the Ford Contemporary Art Endowment
The artist writes, *From a conceptual point of view, I believe this work connects with my perception of the Cuban reality and the crisis this country has lived with for such a long time. The current paradigm crisis, from a social and ideological point of view, drives the creation of these photographs. The accumulation of similar images reveals a reality that shows structures in disuse, abandoned within the idleness of a depleted territory. The “photographed” constructions function as metaphors for the inert remains of a society sustained by the spectral foundation of memory. The residues of the epic past and the current precariousness of the current moment appear as ruins of the fiction that we still have to live with today.*
Alejandro Gonzalez
(born in Cuba, 1974)

**Quinquinio gris**
2015
archival pigment print on 100% cotton paper

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Museum Purchase

With the failure of the sugar cane harvest in 1970, Cuba became more dependent on Soviet support. Starting in 1971, the “Five Gray Years” that followed remade Cuba to be more like the USSR, with greater restrictions on cultural life and increased harassment of the LGBTQ community, among others. Gonzalez’s photograph shows a model he made (of cardboard and metal) that aimed to reproduce physically what was shown in the original photograph—the First Congress of the Cuban Communist Party (1975), which agreed to draft a Socialist Constitution.
Ana Marie Cruz  
(birthdate unknown, born in Cuba)

*Alfabeticemos y Venceremos*  (*Let’s Teach Literacy/We Shall Conquer*)
1961 book

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Gift of Mark and Carolyn Foster

In 1961, Fidel Castro launched a literacy campaign, closing schools and sending teachers and students into the countryside, to teach people how to read, many with this book.
F. Lennox Campello
(born in Cuba, 1956; lives in U.S.)

*Sanctus Guevarus*  
*Castrum Canis* 2010
charcoal on paper, electronics, video player and video

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art  
Gift of Steve Pieczenik

A Cuban-American artist and art dealer, Campello offers this unusually critical take on one of the heroes of the Revolution. One translation of the title is “Saint Guevara, Castro’s Dog.”
Ernesto Capdevila (born in Cuba, 1926-1995); with Mario Jiménez and J. M. Picart, authors; L. Domínguez Triay and René Jiménez Ornelas, contributors

*Album de la Revolución Cubana*, original circa 1959, reprinted late 20th to early 21st century lithograph on paper

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Gift of Randall and Susanne Stender

During the 1960s, buyers of Felices fruit cans could take home stamps that children would paste into an album about the Cuban Revolution, covering the years 1952-59.
Alfredo Manzo Cedeño  
(born in Cuba, 1964)  

The Cuba’s Soup, Homage Warhol (Ideology), 2003  
collage, silkscreen, gouache and ink on paper, edition 6/10  

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art  
Museum Purchase through the Hartz FUNd for Contemporary Art
Alfredo Manzo Cedeño
(born in Cuba, 1964)

The Cuba’s Soup, Homage
Warhol (Revolution), 2003
collage, silkscreen, gouache,
ink, and pencil on paper,
edition 6/10

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum
of Art
Museum Purchase through the Hartz FUNd
for Contemporary Art
Alfredo Manzo Cedeño
(born in Cuba, 1964)

*The Cuba's Soup, Homage Warhol (Revolution/Censored)*, 2003
collage, silkscreen, acrylic, gouache and ink on paper,
edition 5/10

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Museum Purchase through the Hartz FUNd for Contemporary Art
Alfredo Manzo Cedeño  
(born in Cuba, 1964)

*The Cuba’s Soup, Homage Warhol (History)*, 2003  
collage, silkscreen, gouache  
and ink on paper, edition 4/15

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art  
Museum Purchase through the Hartz FUNd  
for Contemporary Art
Alfredo Manzo Cedeño
(born in Cuba, 1964)

*The Cuba’s Soup, Homage Warhol (Religion)*, 2003
collage, silkscreen, acrylic,
gouache and ink on paper, edition 5/10

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Museum Purchase through the Hartz FUNd for Contemporary Art

In this series, Cedeño questions the artificial division between "high" and "low" art (a core tenet of Pop Art) as well as Cuban and North American cultural and political histories. By appropriating Warhol’s iconic images, he comments on the pervasiveness and prepackaging of Cuba’s “consumer” goods: ideology, history, revolution, and censorship.
Ibrahim Miranda  
(born in Cuba, 1969)  

**Guantanamo**  
2001  
acrylic on canvas  

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art  
Museum Purchase  

Miranda’s series of maps of cities around the world shows their networks of transportation while also suggesting their unique characters, whether in the shapes of people or animals. This painting, which highlights an African woman, referencing the country’s history of slavery and colonialism, was one of the few the artist produced as he began to conceptualize the series, after which he began making prints.
Reynier Leyva Novo
(born in Cuba, 1983)

*Entre tu y yo hay un vacío profundo*, series
*Historias de amor*
*(There is a deep gap between us, series Love stories)*

2010
digital print triptych

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
General Acquisition Fund purchase made possible with support from Adriana Giustina

The distance between Cuba and the U.S. is rendered poignantly by a simple line.
Eduardo Marín
(born in Cuba, 1965)

*Untitled*, 2001
planographic print on hot-pressed paper
Produced at Taller Experimental de Grafica, Havana, for annual exhibition *Encuentro de Grabado/Engraving Encounter*

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Gift of Mark and Carolyn Foster

As a member of the young generation of graphic designers that collaborated with the Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos, Marín helped introduce more contemporary film and visual influences into 1990s Cuba.
René Peña
(born in Cuba, 1969)

*De la serie Ritos*
(Rituals: man with chicken)
2010
gelatin silver print

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Museum Purchase

During the Special Period (1991-2000), when Cuba was reeling from the departure and financial support of the Soviet Union, finding enough to eat was a daily hardship. Castro came up with the solution: he would give each family a chicken, which would produce eggs, and the people could feed themselves. Unfortunately, most of the chickens became diseased and died. Peña often produces black-and-white self-portraits that explore race and politics.
Liudmila & Nelson
(Liudmila Velasco, born 1969, Moscow; Nelson Ramirez de Arellano Conde, born 1969, Berlin; both live in Havana)

23 El Broadway Habanero 1958-2008, from the series Hotel Habana
2008
video 10:15 min. with English subtitles

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Gift of the Robert and William Spencer Foundation

In the 1950s, before the Revolution, Havana was a popular U.S. destination. Photographs and films of its beautiful avenues and exciting nightlife drew tourists. The 2008 video travels the same routes as the 1958
Fernando Rodriguez Falcón  
(born in Cuba, 1970)  

*Mandarria y Matraca*  
2007  
DVD-R, 17:13 min.  

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art  
Purchased with funds from Marla and Jeff Michaels and Beryl Cowley  

Rodriguez lampoons a group of Cuban artists whose works, at the time of making the video, were on view at the Museum of Fine Arts in Havana. Many of these artists are featured in this exhibition. A dog chases a cat throughout the museum while the works come alive, and the video concludes with a humorous escape from the island.
Identity: The Body Politic

When is a body not just a body? Many of the artists in this exhibition use the body—at times, their own—as both a metaphor for state repression and as a means to exorcize those restrictions. Belkis Ayon influenced generations of Cuban printmakers, especially through her teaching and her collagographic process: she collaged onto cardboard various materials and textures that she then printed and further worked. Her mostly black-and-white, often massive pieces are transgressive in having a woman depict male-only Abakuá (Afro-Cuban secret society) rituals. Work by Marta María Pérez Bravo, Aimée García, Elsa Mora, Cirenaica Moreira, and Magdalena Compos-Pons bear her influence in their exploration of feminism, spirituality, and sexuality.

José Bédia’s angular figure projects distress and violence, in contrast to Roberto Fabelo’s ghostly image of his wife, a commanding presence caught in the act of formation. Augustin Bejarano’s gorgeous etching of his pregnant wife uses surrealism to convey the pain and stoic endurance of women (and perhaps Cuba). Sandra Ramos’s “imprisoned” schoolgirl explicitly takes the form of Cuba, while René Peña appropriates and recontextualizes Jacques-Louis David’s iconic Death of Marat, exchanging the mighty pen for a toilet brush, a cleansing act of humorous tragedy. Alejandro Gonzales and Eduardo Hernandez give agency to the lives of those whom the state pretends do not exist,
specifically, the queer community, while Ishmael Rodriguez uses the art of burlesque to explore the blurring of real and imagined identities.
Belkis Ayón Manso
(born in Cuba, 1967-99)

*Untitled*

1998
collagraph on paper

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
General Acquisition and Jordan Schnitzer Acquisition Funds
Belkis Ayón Manso
(born in Cuba, 1967-99)

*Intolerancia*
1998
collograph, ed. 9/10

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer
Museum of Art
Gift of Norman Brown and Anne Cooling
Belkis Ayón left a powerful narrative legacy through her investigation of the mythical universe and practices of Abakuá, an all-male Afro-Cuban society whose members were said to take the form of leopards. Many of her pieces tell the story of Princess Sikan, who, by accident, captured a magical fish that gave power to anyone who heard its voice. Her father cautioned her not to tell anyone, but when word traveled, she was killed. All of Ayón’s figures lack mouths, representing the silencing of power, which, extends to the voices of Cuban women in a patriarchal and macho culture. According to Cristina Vives, a Cuban art historian and curator of Nkame, the current Ayón retrospective, the artist began creating circular images, like this one, perhaps in response to a growing sense of anxiety. Ayón killed herself in 1999.
Augustin Bejarano
(born in Cuba, 1964)

La Coqueta VII (Mujer Embarazada) (The Coquette VII, Pregnant Woman) 1998
etching

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Irwin R. Berman
José Bedia
(born in Cuba, 1959; lives in U.S.)

*Casi todas las noches*
2013
acrylic pastel, mixed media on red amate paper

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Gift of Linda and Irwin Berman, in memory of Linda
Marta María Pérez Bravo
(born in Cuba, 1959; lives in Mexico)

*Ver es creer (To See is to Believe)*
2000
gelatin silver print, ed. 7/15

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Gift of Linda and Irwin Berman, in memory of Linda

Bravo’s self-portraits have an affinity to magical realism. Here, a hand transforms into something non-human, perhaps a periscope, for reasons unknown.
Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons
(born in Cuba, 1959; lives in U.S.)

*Nesting*
2007
Polaroid print

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Jordan Schnitzer Acquisition Fund Purchase
Nesting the Owl
by María Magdalena Campos-Pons

Oulll Uo uo Uo Uuooll, the Owl sings
The Owl
Who can see through the night.
Who could travel in pitch black with its nocturnal lens flare.
Who spoke with the stars under the piercing light of a full moon
Guiding the spirits’ search in their return to the sugar fields.
Hunting in the evening with ancestral fire that traverses the land
until dawn.
Abuela/grandmother, is it true that when the owl is singing we
just hear the voice of a loved one long departed?
Oulll Uo uo Uo Uuooll, the Owl sings
Hum!!! I can see now.
A mysterious bird of evening, keeping vigil in the Ceiba tree and
the ruins of the old plantation. The owl drawing silhouettes
of the movement of things that only could enter those silent
eyes.
She was in the bedroom window, 2 perfect black moons.
Mother is it possible that the sorrow tune of the owl song is just
a
prayer for the souls in transition? Or it is just a hymn to
alleviate the pain?
Oulll Uo uo Uo Uuooll, Oulll Uo uo Uo Uuooll, the Owl sings.
Hum!
I can see clear now. She who has eyes in her back. A young girl is sleeping in La Vega, a mosquito net covering her fears and exhilaration. She could see through the dark...

the image of a woman owl. La Lechuza. She has eyes like black holes, witnesses of the solid darkness of the universe, the sugar prairies and the irrevocable blue of the open sea. Could she glance the vessels, from such distance? The towers, the riots, is she noticing the bodies tracing lines in the fields. The despair.

Could she see the hands trying to grasp water? Tall grass leaves like ocean waves. She is witness of the negotiations at place when men, women, children go to bed, standing like columns, not knowing? Will be there a place to rest, to fall? + + + Ruins + Drones are invading her night +

There is no site to go + Ruins + There is not + + +

What is home? She is listening again to the ancient owl song. Oulll Uo uo Uo Uuoolll, Oulll Uo uo Uo Uuoolll

Could s/he/i see, hear clear now, tomorrow ... Sighting through dark Hum.
Roberto Fabelo
(born in Cuba, 1950)

*Moscas (Flies)*
2010
oil on vinyl

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Jordan Schnitzer Acquisition Fund and General Acquisition Fund
Aimeé García Marrero
(born in Cuba, 1972; lives in U.S.)

Enigma
2004
dye transfer print, ed. 6/10

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Museum Purchase
Aimeé García Marrero
(born in Cuba, 1972; lives in U.S.)

**Obsession**
2004
digital lambda print, ed.
7/10

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Aimeé García Marrero
(born in Cuba, 1972; lives in U.S.)

*Abaco (Abacus)*
c. 2001
oil on canvas

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Gift of Lynne Foster

According to the artist, the portraits represent an anonymous mother and daughter, two separate generations, while the necklace functions symbolically as an abacus that calculates and shares the experiences and differences of their lives.
Alejandro Gonzalez
(born in Cuba, 1974)

Conducta impropia (con ojos verdes) (Improper Conduct, with Green Eyes)
2008
archival inkjet print on 100% cotton paper

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Eduardo Hernández Santos  
(born in Cuba, 1966)

_Corpus Fragile (Man with Shards of Glass)_

1997

gelatin silver print collaged onto paper with Prismacolor drawing

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Gift of Linda and Irwin Berman, in memory of Linda
Elsa Mora
(born in Cuba, 1970; lives in U.S.)

_Perda do Sentido (Loss of Reason)_
2000
archival digital photograph

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Irwin R. Berman
Elsa Mora
(born in Cuba, 1970; lives in U.S.)

*Perda do Sentido (Loss of Reason)*
2000
archival digital photographs

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Gift of Linda and Irwin Berman, in memory of Linda

Mora was a good friend of Belkis Ayon and was shocked by her suicide. She retreated to her studio for solace and created this triptych to address the loss. The choice of Portuguese further obfuscates a search for meaning in this poignant homage.
Elsa Mora
(born in Cuba, 1970; lives in U.S.)

*Lagrima* and *La busqueda*
(top: *Tear*; bottom: *The Search*)
2014
cut paper

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Museum Purchase supported by John Fisher and Jennifer Caldwell
Cirenaica Moreira
(born in Cuba, 1969)

*Libertad es una palabra enorme (Liberty is a Huge Word)*
1999-2003
gelatin silver print, ed. 6/15

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Gift of Linda and Irwin Berman, in memory of Linda
René Peña
(born in Cuba, 1969)

Black Marat
2009
color lambda print

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
General Acquisition Fund Purchase made possible with support from Natalie Newlove
Sandra Ramos  
(born in Cuba, 1969)

*En Mi Carcel de Papel*/In My  
Paper Jail; *Esclavos del Amor*/  
Slaves of Love; *Prisioneros del  
Tiempo*/Prisoners of Time  
2004  
mixed media on canvas

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer  
Museum of Art  
Jordan Schnitzer Acquisition Fund Purchase and  
Gift of Anonymous Donor
Ishmael Rodriguez
(born in Cuba, 1962)

*Untitled—de la serie Burlesk 2011-2012*
2013
gelatin silver print

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Purchase supported by the Ford Contemporary Art Fund
Materiality: Mixing Media and Metaphors

It is a testament to the rigor of their training in Cuba’s fine art academies that the artists showcased in this section are so adept in manipulating media in unusual ways. The multi-part pieces, sculptures, textiles, and installations blur the boundary between fine art and craft with a fluent command of varied materials and a disregard for traditional forms and standards.

Acknowledgments

Presenting Art Museums
Boise Art Museum
Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Schneider Museum of Art

Individuals & Foundations
David Griffiths
Elizabeth D. Moyer, Ph.D., and Michael C. Powanda, Ph.D.
Ellen Tykeson and Ken Hiday
Sharon Ungerleider Family Foundation
Barbara and James Walker

Deep appreciation goes to the participating artists and the collectors and supporters who donated Cuban artworks or made their acquisitions possible at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art.
José Manuel Fors  
(born in Cuba, 1956)

*Parasol*

2003
mixed media, color
photographic strips on
umbrella frame

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art  
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Irwin R. Berman

Jose Fors’s *Parasol* provides neither shade nor shelter from the elements. Each spoke consists of spliced film negatives, featuring images of nature, people, and objects. The implied circular motion of the object teases us with a cinematic experience, if only it weren’t fixed to the wall and we could magnify the tiny images.
Glenda León  
(born in Cuba, 1976)

*Every Sound is a Shape of Time (Cada Sonido es una Forma del Tiempo)*

2015
artist book, 7 engravings  
(Shown with video of a concert during the 2015 Havana Biennial with musician Aldo López Gavilán interpreting several scores in the artist’s book.)

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art  
Gift of Victoria and Jeffrey Wilson-Charles

Glenda Leon’s artist book *Every Sound is a Shape of Time* offers a unique synesthetic experience. Evocative photographic images drawn from nature share pages with an elegant score. The result is visual music. Although Leon is not a musician, her compositions have been performed while images of her works were projected in the same space, as seen in the accompanying video, which documents a
Ibrahim Miranda
(born in Cuba, 1969)

*Sin título (Untitled)*, from the series *Cubrecamas* (Bedspreads)
1998
patchwork quilt

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Irwin R. Berman

Ibrahim Miranda’s quilt offers its own set of contradictions. Here, we have a male artist working in a traditionally female activity, meant to combine creativity and function. How comforting, though, is the outline of a skull?
Aurora Molina
(born in Cuba, 1984; lives in U.S.)

Pope, Trump, Maduro, Castro, Chavez, Hitler
2016
felcted silk on linen

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Purchase with Funds from the
Patricia Noyes Harris Bequest
Aurora Molina
(born in Cuba, 1984; lives in U.S.)

*Hawks to Doves—*  
*Pope, Trump,  
Maduro, Castro,  
Chavez, Hitler*

2016  
felted silk on linen, hand and machine embroidered

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art  
Purchase with Funds from the Patricia Noyes Harris Bequest
Aurora Molina’s sculptures of world leaders (mostly autocrats) with bird heads (including Trump) are coupled with embroidered portraits of the same figures. The grouping has a basis in reality as each man has been connected with a specific bird. Hitler, for instance, was called the “Jackdaw of Linz,” for stealing art (jack is an older English word for thief). Castro was associated with a white dove, which landed on his shoulder during a speech (and based on the African religion Santería, prevalent in Cuba, the bird symbolizes the spirit Obatalá, such that he could have been seen as a spiritually appointed leader).
In Venezuela, in 2013, then-President Nicolás Maduro said that the late President Hugo Chávez appeared to him in the form of a bird, recalling that, in 2002, Chávez, himself, had come to a rally with “Simon Bolivar” on his shoulder, a beret-wearing parrot named for the famous South American freedom fighter.

“Birds,” says Molina, “are omens of luck in pagan religion and in alchemy they are mystical and are symbolic of magical endeavors. Humans have given a vast symbolism to birds from fleeting to transitory and this has remained in the human psyche and that’s maybe the main difference between birds and humans, because we are not ruled by our unconscious mind.”
Elsa Mora  
(born in Cuba, 1970; lives in U.S.)

**Fading**

2018

paper and glue

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Museum Purchase with funds from the Ballinger Endowment Fund

Elsa Mora’s elaborate paper constructions comprise the series *Fading*, one of a group of works that explores the faculties of the brain, in this instance, consciousness. The series began while Mora, waiting in a doctor’s office while her son was treated for autism, needed something to do that would be both creative and helpful in dealing with the diagnosis.
Cirenaica Moreira
(born in Cuba, 1969)

*Con el empeine al reves*, de la serie: *Con el empeine al reves*
(*With the Instep Upside Down*)
2003-2006/2010
color lambda print

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art General Acquisition Fund Purchase
Cirenaica Moreira
(born in Cuba, 1969)
*Mi pie derecha (con flores)*
*(My Right Foot, with Flowers)*

2015
mixed media

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Museum Purchase

Cirenaica Moreira references her career as a dancer and performance artist in this wall installation. When paired with her photograph *Con el empeine al reves, de la serie: Con el empeine al reves (With the Instep Upside Down)*, the piece offers a memorial to the inability of moving forward—or making progress. Is she referencing the flowers thrown after a performance by audience members, the short career of a dancer, or the political situation, which keeps life at a standstill in Cuba?