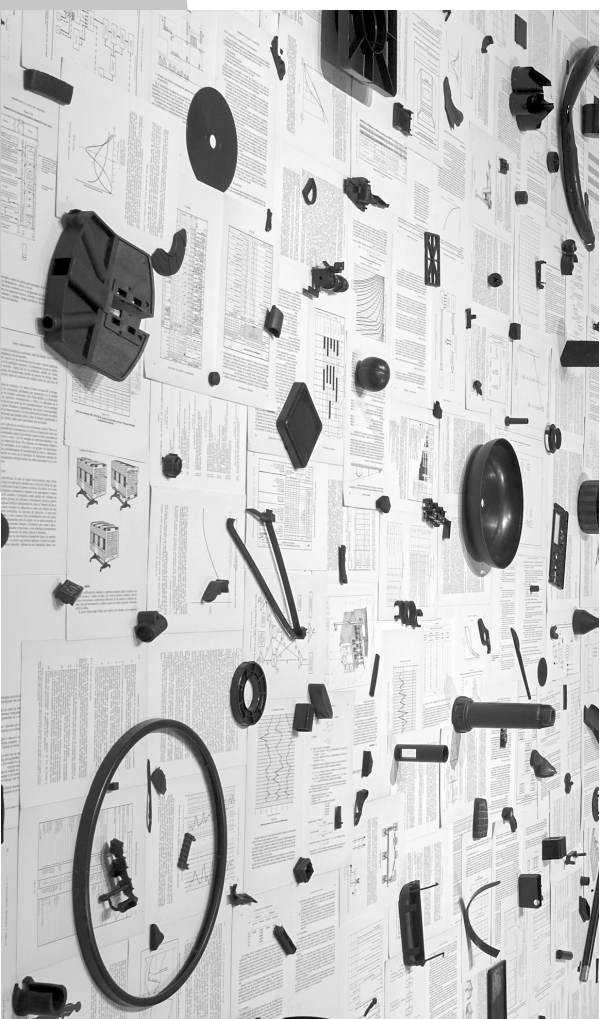


Plural Domains: Dialogs

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Introduction: MARK HODGE

Plural Domains:
Selected Works from the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation is an important contemporary art exhibition.

The various strategies the artists employ to address many of the questions, uncertainties, and realities of contemporaneity are as engaging and thought-provoking as they are diverse and multifaceted.

Yes, all of these artists are originally from countries in Latin America, and this exhibition was made possible by CIFO, an important organization that supports the arts in Latin America, but rather than serve to present some communal "Latin American" essence to be found in these artworks, what *Plural Domains* does best is demonstrate the very contemporaneity of Latin America, itself.

These artists do not deny, nor are they ashamed of their cultural heritage. It is simply that the nature of their work demands they be considered "artists" on a global stage not only "Latin American artists." As Clexis Novoa poignantly states in his conversation collected in this publication:

"To me, to be differentiated as a Latin American artist, it makes no sense. I know that if you study art you need to classify the artist, but I would like to be an artist, not a Latin American artist. You cannot erase my culture, I'm not going to be able to erase my culture, my original country, my origins, my influences.... It's not something that I reject, but I wish that someday someone in America would call me simply an artist and not only me but everybody else [in this exhibition] as well."

This is a sentiment that was expressed repeatedly in the public events surrounding *Plural Domains*, and is part of why the artists' voices have been recorded and collected here, to be published alongside the exhibition.

LUKE EASTMAN
Cognition of Events II,
2017, enclosed pages,
black and white objects,
and printed objects,
48 x 48 in.
(Box: 19 x 18 x 19 in. (total))
Cisneros Fontanals
Art Foundation Collection,
photo Benji Batista,
courtesy University Galleries.



BOB MARCUS

Three in Activity
(London), 2011.
16mm film transfer to video,
00:37:30.
Cisneros Fontanals
Art Foundation Collection,
video still,
courtesy University of California.

Public Conversation with
ELLA FONTANALS-CISNEROS
and JESUS FUENMAYOR,
hosted by DEAN ONYE OZUJI

CHANDLER AUDITORIUM,
HARM MUSEUM OF ART, UNIVERSITY
OF FLORIDA, GAINESVILLE,
OCTOBER 2, 2021

DEAN ONYE OZUJI: Good afternoon. Welcome, I am Onye Ozuji. I am currently serving as the Dean of the College of the Arts, here at the University of Florida. We are in Gainesville, FL, affectionately known, for those of you visiting, as "The Swamp." This is also the traditional lands of the Timucua and Peano indigenous peoples. On behalf of the College of the Arts, I would like to welcome Ella Fontanals-Cisneros and her colleagues from the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation (CFAF) and thank you all for coming to help us initiate our engagement with this important work,

Plural Domains.

Here, at the University of Florida College of the Arts, we intend to be a transformative community, responding to and generating paradigmatic shifts in the arts and beyond. We do so by embracing the complexity of our evolving human experience. We seek to empower our students and faculty

to shape that experience fearlessly through critical study, creative practice, and provocation. By collaborating effectively with the forces of change, such as Ella and the Cisneros Fontanals Foundation, by preparing students to access and unsettle centers of power in a radically changing world, and by facilitating an arts education that will position emerging artists and researchers as catalysts for equity on local and global levels.

So, we are excited and proud that in collaboration with the Harm Museum of Art we are presenting the debut of the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation's collection, which includes works by 31 Latin American contemporary artists. The exhibition just opened in September, and we welcome this opportunity to join forces with CFAF and resonate in our interesting missions. In this momentous moment in the social and political evolution of this country we find ourselves thrust into an undeniable din of the profound complexities of our extant and intrinsic pluralities, with all their tensions, richness, debates, dangers, and opportunities for growth. This exhibition presents us with a potent tool to experience your relationship as a viewer to the art in real time; he served as

who we are becoming. I say, "we" with intention because we are Florida. This is Florida, "the land of flowers," so-called by Spanish colonials off the coast of Saint Augustine. We are the flagship, land-grant institution of this state. We house the oldest center for Latin American studies in the country. We are home to generations of Latino communicators, and so we are contemporary Latin America. This work is here to help us with our ongoing and evolving process of self-recognition and reckoning.

Today, to help us in that process we have two very powerful human beings. Jesus Fuenmayor is a curator with more than 35 years of experience in the field of modern and contemporary art exhibitions with a commitment to artists, innovative curatorial work, dynamic programming, education, and community. One thing that I want to say personally about my opportunity to meet with Jesus in the context of art is that for me as a dancer, his sense of space is just exquisite. Not only in the way that he places works of art in space, but also in the gentleness with which he holds space for your relationship as a viewer to the art in real time; he served as

the chief curator of the fourteenth Cuencua Biennial in Cuencua, Ecuador. Previously, he worked as an independent curator and also held positions as the director and curator of the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation in Miami and as the director and curator of Periferico Caracas. In his native Venezuela, he also worked as curator at the Museo Alejandro Orosco; advised collectors; taught at the architecture school; and prepared exhibitions for international venues, including Spex Art and the Americas Society in New York, as well as the Venice Biennial.

ELLA FONTANALS-CISNEROS is a force of nature, a philanthropist, entrepreneur, and art collector with a keen eye for contemporary art, architecture, and design. She began collecting works by artists from Latin America in the 1970s. The Ella Fontanals-Cisneros Collection has since grown to include important, historic, and cutting-edge pieces from around the world, with a strong representation of abstract geometric art from Latin America, international video art, photography, and installation art. She brings an international perspective to her patronage both as an art collector and as a humanitarian philanthropist.

I want to share something that I read in an article that just came out yesterday, or the day before, on Artnet, where Ella is quoted as saying:

"If you really love art, and you are really into this, you have to look at who the artist is. What are they doing? What is their future? How do you like it, how does it feel for you? Are you happy with it? Do you love it? Is it something that you want to learn more about? I always say that the path is what is most important, because as you are experiencing art and finding what sticks with you, you discover who you are. That is what makes you a collector. The rest is only the market."

I'm going to get out of the way now, Erty. Thank you all for being here.

JESUS FUENMAYOR—Thank you so much, Onye, for your kind words. I have to say that the relationship that you described about the works and space is truly very important to me. I started working in art exhibition making just for that: to wait for that moment when you can see the viewer interacting with the art as you thought they would. Thank you again, for that introduction.

As you, [Dean Ozuji] were pointing out, there is at the level of mission, politics, strategies, philosophy, interesting overlap and coincidences between CFAF and the College of the Arts. To that point [School of Art and Art History Director] Dr. Elizabeth Ross has said that they are both doing the same thing in a way. They both are working to center narratives that have traditionally been marginalized. This is a good way of understanding the similarities between the College of the Arts and CFAF, which otherwise appear to be very different kinds of organizations: one is private, one is public; one is small, run by just a few people, one is a very large institution; so there are a number of differences. But I think that it is beautiful to imagine that these two entities have similar motivations and goals.

I would like to focus our conversation with Ella, not so much on the artists and the works that are here as part of *Plural Domains*, but to speak about the mission, the ideas, and the vision of Ella Fontanals-Cisneros: how she became a philanthropist and such a key figure in support of Latin American modern and contemporary art.

You, [Ella Fontanals-Cisneros] are a collector of modern and contemporary art and the founder of the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation, which was created in 2002. Next year it will be 20 years old. I'm sure there will be a big celebration. You also founded other art institutions in Miami, and you have been part of many different institutions that promote contemporary and modern art, in particular Latin American art, like Tate, London. The Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, the New Museum in New York, among many others.

Why don't you share with us the path that led you to become a prominent figure doing such important work in the production of Latin American art exhibitions and why you were motivated to follow that path?

ELLA FONTANALS-CISNEROS—Thank you, Jesus. I would like to thank first the Harm Museum and the College of the Arts and all of those who have contributed to this wonderful exhibition.

Well, talking about how I started: I have been involved with philanthropy since I was very young. I started working with a few different types of foundations,





View of the exhibition

Ritual Domains:
Selected Works
from the Elia Collection
Art Foundation
courtesy Juan Museum of Art

Just where was,

Black Panther /

Open Library, 2013,

mixed media,

3375 x 177 x 8 x 1/2

1989 x 446 x 200 x 2

enl, Caracas, Venezuela Art

Foundation Collection,

courtesy Juan Museum of Art.

I was with a children and health foundation, as well as a political foundation designed to help the young generation of politicians get into the political arena in Venezuela. So, initially, the scope of my interests was quite large, but I always had a passion for the arts since I was very young. In those years in which I was doing other types of philanthropy, I thought, well, you know this passion of mine is very artistic and maybe I should help other areas of our country at this moment and also of the world because I was a part of another foundation based at the United Nations trying to help the less developed countries. But, suddenly, after seven or eight years in which I was really very involved in all of this, I decided, you know, I have to start back collecting art because for those seven or eight years I had stopped collecting totally. In the beginning I was collecting only Latin American art and then when I came back to collecting, I decided art is really worldwide and we shouldn't divide art by regions and that it is for all of us to admire.

Of course, though, I am Venezuelan, I was born in Cuba, raised in Venezuela and I could feel and I could see that a lot of Latin American artists were in need of a helping hand. Also, in the beginning, we were very involved with the internet and I thought that maybe I could do some things on a global stage, without being restricted by region. That's why when I founded CIFO, I was mainly thinking of how we could help Latin American artists come out into the global arena.

Well, it's been 20 years, and I believe we have given over 750 awards to artists from almost all of the Latin American countries: Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Cuba, all of them. We've given almost two million dollars in prizes out to these artists, and we've also tried to help them by bringing them to the United States for exhibitions.

JE— Can you explain CIFO's organizational structure to us and how you select which artists to grant awards and commissions? Because CIFO has a unique organizational structure, and I think it's important to explain how it works.

EG— Commissioners are given every year to around 20 artists. We have a board of advisors pulled from curators and art professionals around Latin America who are very well known. These individuals are the people who bring local artists projects to our attention for the awards. So, the first step is that the artist has to be promoted by one of those curators in each country. They are the ones who really are in close contact with the artists, so it's a very transparent process.

Each year we receive approximately between 200 to 300 projects that are recommended to us through this network. Then, we bring to our space in Miami, five or six of those curators for the final selection committee. Every year, ten of those projects are chosen by category: emerging, mid-career, and accomplished artists. After that is done, the selection goes to the board of directors for finalization. Then, we bring the artists to Miami, and we give them exhibition spaces for their work.

JE— It is important to differentiate between Elia's personal collection and the collection of CIFO. They are separate entities, and I think this must be pointed out because what you do as a collector is different from running a foundation that has a specific goal and mission of supporting Latin American artists.

EG— My motto always was that this art should be out there for the public to see, so we lend a lot of pieces all the time to museums, to exhibitions, and that's why the collection is in the hands of the foundation.

JE— How would you explain your focus in Latin American art? I know that you said at the beginning, one of the reasons why your focus is in Latin American art is because you are from there. You are from Venezuela. You were born in Cuba. You know the area very well, but some people here may think "some great artists are from Spain, some from the US. Why doesn't Elia support them?"

EG— I wish I could do all of that, you know?

JE— Yes, but also I think that CIFO is working in the context of Latin American institutions where it is so difficult for artists to find the resources to produce their work. Right? It's not as in Europe or in the US, where there are many institutions really doing that work.

EG— Right. That's why we chose to focus on helping all of Latin America in this way.

JE— What would you like to see for the future of Latin American art institutions?

EG— Unfortunately, in Latin America the museums are mostly under governmental control, and the first thing, when there is a cut in expenses, the first thing they do is cut funding for the arts. Then the museums don't have the means to really produce or grow.

Although, for example, Brazil has wonderful museums they still have the same problems with funding. In Latin America it's not like in the US where there are many benefits to where there are many benefits to be had if you donate to a museum or if you help or give back. There is not as much of a culture of giving. It is kind of starting, but it hasn't been there in the past.

So, the museums suffer a lot from that. You know, in our country, Venezuela, it has been a disaster. They just don't know how to take care of anything. Works are getting lost. If you go to the museum in Cuba, they have wonderful things, but they don't have the money for air conditioning and then there's humidity and works are damaged. It's incredible, you know? Unless the private sector steps up and does something about it, all of these wonderful works, we're going to lose them. These works are important for the next generations to have.

JE— That takes me to my next question. You have had this commitment for so many years to bring art to the public. Like with Miami Art Central, it was a short-lived institution, but it was an amazing program showcasing some of the finest contemporary art in the world to the people of Miami. This is something you have continued with CIFO. Why do you think it's important to invest not only the resource but also your energy and your presence to these efforts? Why do you think it's important to show the art to the public?

EG— In my case what I'm interested in is the learning process brought about by the actual relationship with the artists. That, of course, involves the artwork, but privately, owning an object is not the most important part for me. You can own so much that you couldn't display it all, and it could all be kept in warehouses, but that is just a waste.

I fight all the time with even the big museums and excuse me because I know we are in a museum today, but museums tend to get more and more and more and then most of the things they own are never shown. In fifty years, of course, you will know they're kept there, and, yes, of course, they're kept well, but then you go to a small museum, and they have nothing to show.

I feel that the art is not made just to be kept in a safe. It is for every one of us to enjoy. Sometimes, I travel to a museum in Madrid, and they have these wonderful pieces of art from Velázquez or from Goya, and I think to myself that there was a collector at the time collecting those works, and providing for the future a piece so that today we can go and see them. Museums do that, and I applaud all of that, but we have to start thinking of how we are going to



View of the exhibition



ANNA LINDBERGH
Notes on Practice
(Studio Table #3), 2016
mixed media, var. lac. x 62 x 47
in. | 150 x 257 x 119 cm
Art
Foundation Collection
courtesy, Ann Museum of Art.



democratize the system in some way so that all the art kept in warehouses can be seen.

That's why all of the works, which I own are open for any museum and for any exhibition, if an institution asks for a loan, I say yes, as long as they have the capacity to show the work in the proper way.

JE— I remember that you have been in conversation with different institutions about the future of your collection. I think it is interesting that one of the ways that you think that it would be better for your collection to be part of a museum is that instead of donating the piece to one museum, you would like to create a fund where several institutions would be able to share the pieces. What kind of responses do you get from the museums on that proposal?

EEC— I tried for seven years to work out some arrangement like this with the government of Spain. But governments kept changing, and the process would have to start all over again. I said well this is it, I can't spend all my energy working

on something that maybe never is going to happen. Then, I made the decision that I didn't want to burden my daughters with all the responsibility of the collection and of taking care of it forever because you never know what your grandchildren will want to do.

So, I've been thinking over what to do. I don't want to give it all to one museum. One museum cannot possibly show all of it. It would end up in a warehouse. But, recently a new possibility has emerged. It is going to be news, and I can't speak all about it now, but there is a powerful country that recently proposed to create a new museum entirely dedicated to my collection. It looks very good. Let's keep fingers crossed and see what happens.

JE— Why do you think it's not so easy to get different institutions to collaborate? To have two or three or four or five whatever number of museums share?

EEC— I've tried with the Pompidou, the Tate, and the Metropolitan. It was such a complicated thing.

There is just too much red tape in all of these big institutions to do it.

JE— I see, of course. I would like to finish this part of the conversation with one more question and then open to some questions from the public.

How do you feel about what is happening with Latin American art, here, in the States? Because we are in a particular moment when the terminology can be very confusing. Some people say Latin American art, when they are also talking about Latinx. You see that there haven't been new positions for Latin American art scholars opening in the Academy. It's not so clear, right now, the direction Latin American art is going to take in the future in this country. How do you feel about the situation?

EEC— To tell you the truth, I've seen in the last twenty to twenty-five years how Latin American art has been developing a position in most museums around the world, not only in America but in Europe. You can see that there are Latin American curators at the Met,

and for many years at the Tate, and so forth so. Also, right now, there is incredible growth in the Latin American population of this country. There are 60 million Latin Americans living in this country and the number is always rising. So, it means that eventually the museums will have to take more care that this new public that is coming to the museums are included.

Because of political situations and sometimes the violence that they're experiencing in Latin America, many artists are moving to the States and Europe. Because of this, we at the foundation, a few years ago, decided to include any Latin Americans that were living abroad. I have seen a lot of new collectors of Latin American art in the US, many in Texas, a lot in New York, and many other states. So, I can see that there's been a difference between what happened twenty-five years ago and what's happening today.

JE— Ok, we will now take some questions from the audience.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1— Hi. Thank you so much for this wonderful conversation. I was wondering if you could speak a bit more about how you developed taste as a collector and what you think about contemporary art?

EEC— Well, I have to tell you when I started collecting in the 70s, and of course, I was very young, and I was driven to collect the same popular works that everybody buys. One day, though, I was in Paris at one of the art fairs, and I was looking for works that I had seen before and suddenly a friend of mine said you have to come and see the Soho (Venetian) artist Jesus Rabal Sofo. I arrived at the gallery and it's all these non little pieces, very complicated, nothing like what I had come to the fair looking for. I kept looking at the work and thought, well I just cannot understand it. You know, but I know that there is something there that interests me and I want to take a deeper look into what I'm seeing. I said I'm going to buy it. It is there, there is something that interests me, and from there on my whole view of what I wanted to

collect changed completely. Furthermore, when I'm with younger generations and they ask me how to collect or what to collect, I always tell them you should collect with your own age and with artists who are going to grow with you because, then you will have the time and the space to talk to them and to be with them.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2— Ella, thank you so much for this conversation and thank you, Jesús, and everybody at the Horn for hosting this beautiful exhibition and today's event. I'm curious to hear you reflect upon the way that you reflect centered in Miami, with the role of Miami as a center of Latin American culture, which transcends national boundaries and national limitations, a city that can pull together a hemispheric diaspora, has affected CIFO. Would the foundation have taken a different path had it been centered in Caracas?

EEC— Well, you know, for example, I remember that we had a wonderful contemporary art museum in Caracas run by Sophia Imber. That was such a great museum. We had wonderful works. She brought Rauschenberg, she brought all of the great artists around the world into that museum, and we look back at it, today, and there's nothing. This new government has done nothing to preserve it. They have even stolen pieces from the museum. Unfortunately, I don't like to talk like this about my country and about the region, but occurrences such as this are a reality. We do this here in the United States because I think it's an opportunity for all of these artists in Latin America, they will have the opportunity of more people looking at their work and into what they're doing. I think it is better for the artists if we do this and we try to give them this opportunity.

JE— I think we are over time, so thank you Ella for this conversation.

EEC— Thank you, Jesús, thank you.



Pluralism and Latin American Avant-Garde: A Gallery Talk
by MACARENA OJEU PRADO
Hart Museum of Art, University of Florida, Gainesville,
September 9, 2022

ERIC SEGAL—Thank you again for joining us. I'm Eric Segal, Director of Education here at Hart. We're very pleased to have you. In a moment we're going to have the first public event of this exhibition. It's very exciting. *Plural Domains* just opened today! It is really an honor for us to be able to present one of the UF affiliates who has worked so hard on this exhibition, Macarena Ojéu Prado. Macarena is a graduate student in art history studying the colonial Americas. She's been working as a curatorial assistant, through the University Galleries with Jests Fuenmayor, the curator, and tonight she'll take us on a tour, introducing us to select works of the exhibition. Please join me in welcoming Macarena.

MACARENA OJEU PRADO—I am excited to be conducting this first public guided tour with all of you. It is an honor for me to be part of this wonderful exhibition. *Plural*

Domains is an exhibition, that addresses the complexity of Latin American art, and the premises of Latin America and Latin American art. This is something that we are going to see through the work of 23 artists who are being exhibited, here, at the Hart. The exhibition also comprises the work of 30 other artists that is going to be exhibited at the University Galleries. That opens in a couple of days. You are welcome to join us in that space to see the complete show.

One of the main questions that *Plural Domains* addresses is how it is possible to create an avant-garde in Latin America. This is a significant question because historically, Latin America as a culture, as a continent, Latin American art, has been understood somehow as a continuity to European art, like an extension of the European artistic tradition. What the artists here are trying to embrace, from different geographies and different discourses and ideologies, is that really what Latin American artists do is work within the realm of

the Western tradition, but from the margins, from the other side of the coin or of the picture. And this is something that we are going to see through different works that are addressing more precisely the notion of time. So that being said, please join me as we move through the exhibition. One thing that I want to say before we move forward, when we talk about architectural installation precisely in these works, and in this collection, there's a significant component of the open axis, the spectator, there's that expectation from the part of the artist, that the spectators are going to be highly involved in many of the works. An example of that is this one, the first work that I would love for us to think about. This work is by a Mexican artist Jorge Mendez Blake, who created this piece in 2010.

It's called *Black Position/Open Library*. It's a fascinating work that embraces the idea of an open library, and also the impossibility of writing. At this context, what that means is that the artist created a selection of texts, you can actually pick these books up and you're invited to open them. You're facing this random chance, because you don't know when page you're going to be looking at. For every page,

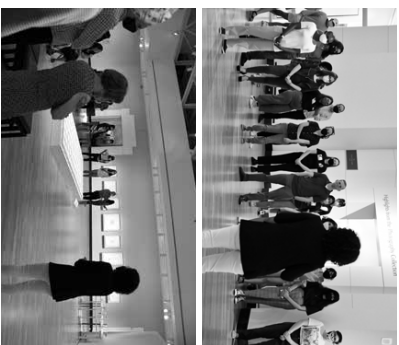
the artist has selected quotes from different writers the books with black jackets are in Spanish, and there are a few copies in English with gray jackets. When you open the books, what you're going to find are texts that specifically relate to the idea of the impossibility of writing or the emptiness in the creation. One example is from Chilean poet Nicanor Parra, who wrote something that goes along the lines of "there's nothing left to be said, everything that I want to say, has already been said countless times." What Mendez Blake is trying to do is to convey the idea of how an artist approaches the process of writing when a lot of things have already been said, self-reflecting on the conflict of the creative process. The idea of an open library is emphasized through the fact that as you see there's a mirror in the center that gives us the sense that it's an infinite library. *Open Library* wants to reflect that everyone should have access to that kind of knowledge.

Speaking still about architectural installations and the engaged spectator, we have here the work of Brazilian artist Marcus Galan, titled *3 Sections*. If you want to try, you can just walk through

and so it's a fascinating work and so it's a fascinating work for us to experience. It's playing with our sensorial perception. If we are standing in front of the installation one has the kind of idea that there are three pieces of glassess dividing the space, but as we walk through, we find that we are being deceived through the eye. The artist is playing with the alignment and colors to trick the eye and to use this space in a critical way. When I mentioned earlier about the way in which artists from Latin America work within the European tradition, one aspect that can be seen here is the idea of perspective, which is a very renaissance construct, in terms of working in different planes. This is an example of how Latin American artists are working within a complex Western tradition of art.

If you follow me we're going to start walking through the exhibition hall. If you have questions at any point, I'm happy to take them so feel free to ask.

This is a work by Ecuadorian artist Manuela Ribaldeneira, titled *Artificial Horizons, Night Instruments: The Space Between Doubt and Certainty, from the series The Art of Navigation*. It is a work that embraces in a fascinating way the idea of decolonization, that a lot of artists deal with on this exhibition. When we think about colonization and we think of synonyms for the word, we might think of inquisition, destruction, or other things that have to do with the manipulation of culture. Decolonizing [ideas] on installations like these force us to relearn what we know, what has been said, what has been written about our culture and identities. It also places an emphasis on the restricted access to knowledge and ideas that have been denied by different cultural constructs, like capitalism, or by race, these official institutions. So Ribaldeneira, here on this table, displays different navigational tools that were used as such in the eighteenth century and focuses on two kinds of objects. One, what she calls artificial horizons, which are elevation tools that were used by explorers to simulate the horizon whenever the actual horizon wasn't visible, because of different weather and climate conditions. And the also has reflection instruments, which are those tools that have paid mirrors on both sides. Those reflection instruments allowed eighteenth-century explorers to observe two objects at the same



MANUELA RIBALDENEIRA, *3 Sections*, 2011, mixed media, 109 x 201 cm, in glass and stainless steel, Hart Museum of Art Foundation, Gainesville, Florida, University of Florida



Student Paper 1:
Jorge Mendez Blake,
Black Pavilion/Open Library,
 by AVILA SANTOS

1. David, Eric, "Seeing Beyond: Mexican Artists Jorge Mendez Blake Transforms Literature into Sculpture." *March 16, 2016.* <http://www.yourart.com/jorge-mendez-blake/>

2. Edgerton, Colin, "Jorge M., 'The Brooklyn Ball,' *April 25, 2013.* <http://www.artforum.com/2013/04/25/edgerton-jorge-mendez-blake/>

3. Edgerton, "Jorge M." *April 25, 2013.*

4. Bisset, Janet, "Shelved archive." *Art: M. Da.* 2013.

An architect by profession but book artist, Jorge Mendez Blake creates a distinct combination of architecture and literature in his artworks, using space to engage the viewer to interact with his artworks, and transforming the act of reading as part of his work, giving it a physical dimension through architecture. Mendez Blake's installation, *Black Pavilion/Open Library*, is composed of a large black cube with shelves carrying numerous black covered books filled with quotes collected by the artist. With a large mirror at the bottom of the cube, the viewer is forced

to face their own image, facing texts that encapsulate parts of Latin American history and the artist's identity. *Black Pavilion/Open Library* is a large installation that harnesses the value of reading, creating a space for different viewers carrying different identities to read what is unknown to them, and using a cube to ground the connections between literature and the visual arts.

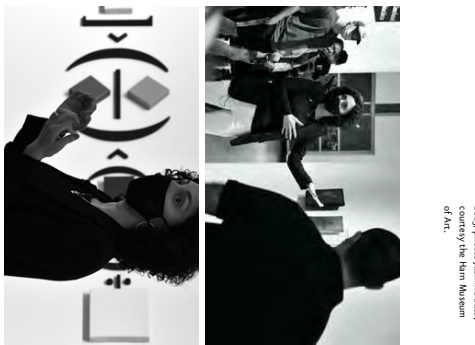
Walking into the gallery, the viewer is confronted by the large installation, a grand black cube with numerous shelves, which hold about four to ten books each. What appears to be the skeleton of a cube holds at the bottom a mirror, reflecting the faces of the viewers as they interact with the installation. All the books displayed are covered in black, making their content and title unknown to the viewer. In order to know what the book consists of, the viewer must pick it up and read it. Some books are available to be read in English or Spanish, however, no one book is the same. When interacting with this installation, one phrase that interested me from a book was "Mi soledad no me asusta, es casi olímpica." (My loneliness does not scare me, it is almost Olympic). Many of the books are filled with small quotes like these, some larger than others, but the only that is created with these books, as the mirror captures the faces of confused, excited, or intrigued viewers creates a space unique to their identity and the art of literature. The notion of transforming literature into architecture is not new to Mendez Blake, in his installation work *Amerika*, the artist constructed a vast red brick wall in the gallery, with only a copy of Franz Kafka's

first novel, *Amerika*, under the wall, creating a visible break in the linear structure of the wall. The book tells the story of a young immigrant named Karl Rossman, and by creating a subtle curve in the composition of the wall, it subtly suggests themes of inequality, systemic racism, ideological barriers between nationalities, and political and economic disparities in history.¹ The wall is crushing Kafka's humorous immigrant story, yet the singular book almost fights back, creating the noticeable curve.

Amerika, just like the *Black Pavilion/Open Library*, harnesses the importance of literature, with one work symbolizing the imperfect wall between Mexico and the United States, and another forcing the viewer to confront their own identity, while reading the artist's manifestations of his own.

Jorge Mendez Blake is a master manipulator in incorporating classical literature with sculpture, but it is his use of gallery space that makes his works fascinating. Why display the books in a cube and not typical rectangular shelves? Why the grand installation and not make the work more intimate in size? Mendez Blake creates a space within the gallery that calls for all kinds of viewers in the gallery: black, Asian, Hispanic, and white, to unite at this single installation, picking up unknown books and not being afraid to read what is inside. With interactive art comes innovation from both the artist and the viewer. The artist sets up the installation, and it is now up to the viewer to interact with art and in the process, create different interpretations and perspectives that make the art in itself unique and creative. Creating a large black cube to hold his books in the *Black*

Pavilion/Open Library, Mendez Blake is not only uniting the viewers under the common thread of literature but is uniting the essence of literature with sculpture. An artist from Guadalajara, Mexico, Jorge Mendez Blake decided to take his love for classical literature and incorporate it into his sculptures, and in the process invent a new language of literature in architecture, creating long extended metaphors in a variety of his works. The *Black Pavilion/Open Library*, 2013, placed as the first work the viewer encounters when stepping into the *Pilani Domains* gallery at the Ham Museum of Art, makes a statement. In a gallery where numerous Latin American artists use their identity and culture to create art using vastly different mediums and inventions, Mendez Blake is one



JORGE MENDEZ BLAKE,
Black Pavilion/Open Library,
 2013, photos Laraine Bao,
 courtesy the Ham Museum
 of Art.



Student Paper II:
AMALIA PICA,
If These Walls Could Talk by
 AMALIA PICA

1. "The 'Walls' by Amalia Pica." *Artforum*, March 2014. Accessed <http://www.artforum.com>.
 2. Dana Burton, "Argentina's Dirty War: Memory, Repression, and the Role of the Artist," *Artforum*, March 2014.
 3. Dana Burton, "Argentina's Dirty War: Memory, Repression and the Role of the Artist," *Artforum*, March 2014.
 4. Dana Burton, "Argentina's Dirty War: Memory, Repression and the Role of the Artist," *Artforum*, March 2014.
 5. Dana Burton, "Argentina's Dirty War: Memory, Repression and the Role of the Artist," *Artforum*, March 2014.
 6. Dana Burton, "Argentina's Dirty War: Memory, Repression and the Role of the Artist," *Artforum*, March 2014.
 7. Dana Burton, "Argentina's Dirty War: Memory, Repression and the Role of the Artist," *Artforum*, March 2014.
 8. Dana Burton, "Argentina's Dirty War: Memory, Repression and the Role of the Artist," *Artforum*, March 2014.
 9. Dana Burton, "Argentina's Dirty War: Memory, Repression and the Role of the Artist," *Artforum*, March 2014.
 10. Dana Burton, "Argentina's Dirty War: Memory, Repression and the Role of the Artist," *Artforum*, March 2014.

3 feet of space between them. They scale about 12 feet in height and 17 feet in length. The walls are made of drywall, the same material traditionally used in a gallery space to divide the artist's work. The furthest wall has just enough room between it and the gallery's wall for the viewer to walk around to view both sides of the installation. Drilled into both walls are a row of holes in no particular pattern. Upon further inspection, the holes are filled with lidless, empty tin cans. As the viewer moves around the piece it is discovered the space between the walls is open. The open space is inhabited by the now exposed tin cans with strings attached to the ends, connecting to tin cans on the opposing wall. Some cans have their labels removed but many still have their original food label (green beans, chicken noodle soup, etc.). The string and tin can ensemble is reminiscent of a child's handmade telephone, but the large and complicated quantity of strings makes it impossible to tell which cans are connected. The form of the tin can telephone is vital to her concept of repressed memory.

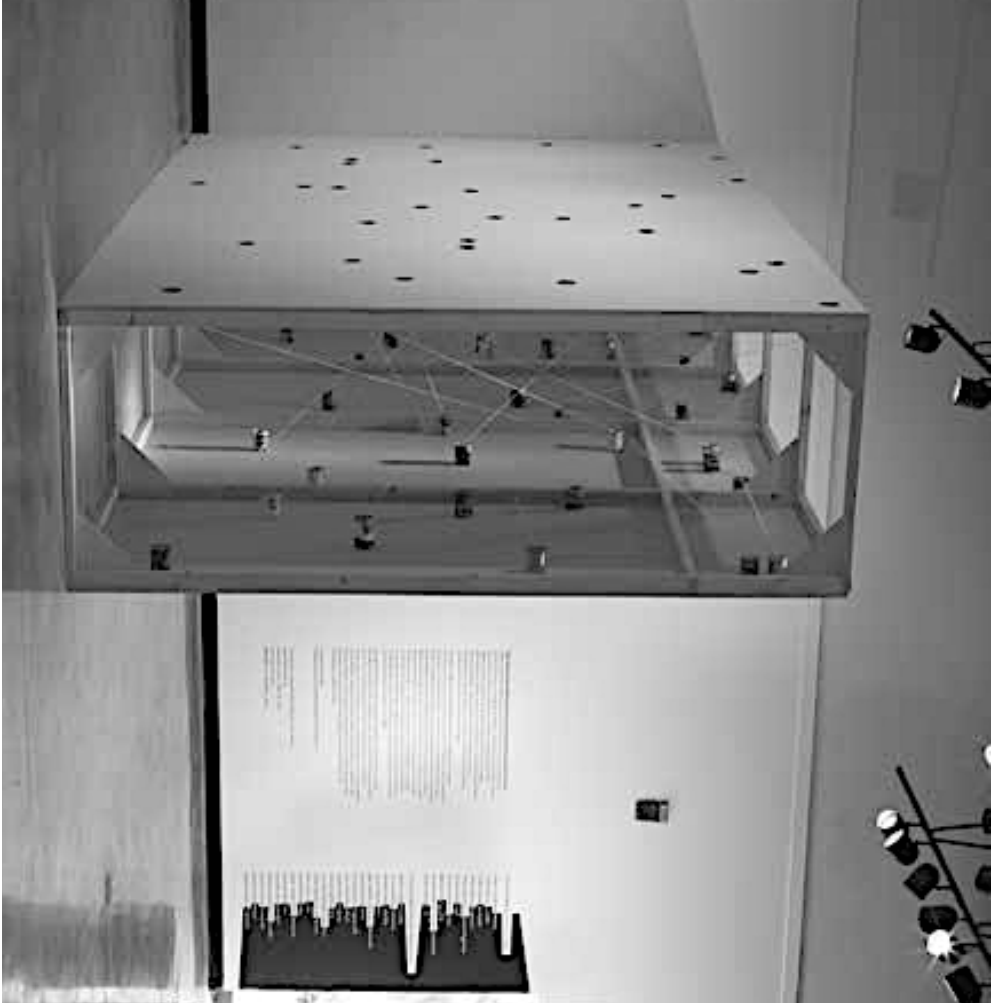
Amalia Pica was born in 1978, just two years after Argentina became ruled under dictatorship and waged war against its people and any suspected left-wing subversives. During an eight year period, the Argentinian government repressed citizens' memories to control the population and avoid revolt. They did this by erasing evidence, silencing entire families, effective media campaigns, and almost universal denial. For the most part, the government was successful in controlling the memory of its citizens. This is significant because memories of these times have turned into political capital resulting in memory control by the government. Since many people disappeared without evidence and record of the war was highly censored, there is limited recollection of the turmoil experienced. What ties a society together is the collective identity of a nation that is often based on shared memory and experience. Without collective memories, it is difficult for a feeling of connection. Despite many human rights groups working to keep the memory of the war and victims alive (and to keep the government accountable),

memory repression has had long-term consequences on Argentinian families. Amalia's work aims to speak memories of these events to piece together her country's history and keep the narrative out of the hands of the oppressors.

In an interview with Amalia, she mentions her love of philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty who believes that objects hold memories that are triggered when touched or seen. Because of this, it is no surprise she used an object associated with childhood, the tin can, to represent the period of her life most affected by the war. Furthermore, canned goods are also reminiscent of countries under dictatorship as their food source is usually heavily monitored. In an interview with the artist, she confirms her association of canned goods with class division and political unrest on a global scale. Due to the large, opaque size of *If These Walls Could Talk*, it can be difficult to discern what you are talking to on the other side. In addition, many of the holes to speak into are impossible to reach due to their height and there are too many strings to keep track of. This is a visual representation

of the fear many Argentinians felt during the war. They did not know who was safe to talk to, who would turn them in for being "left," or who was secretly working for the corrupt government. As a result, there were many failed communicative exchanges during this time. Amalia uses the trope of a childhood toy along with her expressive metaphors to evoke memories that may be repressed. Childhood tropes surrounding communication difficulties have been seen in her oeuvre many times before. For example, her installation *Eavesdropping*, in which a plethora of drinking glasses were pressed backwards against a wall, illustrates the inherent social importance of effectively listening and communicating. *If These Walls Could Talk* and *Eavesdropping* both represent an individual's desire to be a part of a larger social exchange and the universal impulse and necessity of communication.

The work is simple in form, but complex in concept. There is a reason why she has become such a successful artist in a short amount of time. The Dirty War is difficult to study due to the government's erasure of its events, but artists like Amalia Pica are keeping the public's interest and victim's names alive.



AMALIA PICA,
If These Walls Could Talk,
 2011, wood, tin cans, screen,
 paint, glue, string,
 192 x 45 x 120 in (487 x
 14 x 204.8 cm),
 Giverny Foundation Art
 Foundation Collection,
 photo: Emily Barkus,
 courtesy

Student Paper III:
ANALIA PICA,
If These Walls Could Talk,
 by KAVYA GREER

1. Kavya Greer, "Analia Pica, *If These Walls Could Talk*," *Rebus*, June 29, 2022. <https://rebus.org/essential/2022/06/29/if-these-walls-could-talk/>.
2. Kavya Greer, "Analia Pica, *If These Walls Could Talk*," *Rebus*, June 29, 2022. <https://rebus.org/essential/2022/06/29/if-these-walls-could-talk/>.
3. "Analia Pica, 2024," *MIT List Visual Arts Center*, April 11, 2024. <https://lean.mit.edu/exhibitions/analia-pica/>.
4. "Analia Pica," *Rebus*, June 29, 2022. <https://rebus.org/essential/2022/06/29/if-these-walls-could-talk/>.
5. MIT List Visual Arts Center, "Analia Pica, 2024," <https://lean.mit.edu/exhibitions/analia-pica/>.
6. Kavya Greer, "Analia Pica, 2024," <https://rebus.org/essential/2022/06/29/if-these-walls-could-talk/>.
7. Pica, "Analia Pica, 2024," <https://lean.mit.edu/exhibitions/analia-pica/>.
8. "Analia Pica, 2024," <https://lean.mit.edu/exhibitions/analia-pica/>.
9. "Analia Pica, 2024," <https://lean.mit.edu/exhibitions/analia-pica/>.

In the wake of the digital era, technology has revolutionized the way people communicate in the context of long-distance communication. Analia Pica's conceptual artwork located in the University Gallery, entitled *If These Walls Could Talk* revolves around the fundamental issues of communication such as the modes of receiving and delivering messages, interpersonal connection, and verbal and non-verbal communication in a global political context. This paper will explore how Analia Pica's piece highlights the complex relationship between privacy, listening, and consent; these factors also relate to the importance of communication through nostalgic means.

In the installation piece, telephones fabricated from tin-cans of commercial goods are attached to opposing walls and are connected to a large network of thin strings. The strings that cross towards the open space are intertwined with each other, presenting the blurred transmission of information and

making it difficult to differentiate which message is connected to which. The cans are all situated in two free-standing wooden walls that stand parallel to each other. Here, the artist utilizes antiquated forms of technology to further display ironic circumstances for possible miscommunication between the viewer and the artist. The artwork can thus be interpreted in a broader political dimension, where it can be argued that global and cultural divisions stem from modernization of society. In this case, Pica's work brings up a sense of familiarity, one that calls to the viewer's past memories of shared experiences. The materials utilized in the piece, cans and strings, evoke a sense of simplicity and aesthetic appeal to which the viewer can easily respond. As an artist who was born under a civic-military dictatorship and state terrorism (The Dirty War) in Argentina, Pica identifies the relationship between form and politics as well as collective communication. In recalling the message and declamation of thousands of civilians accused of political dissent, the artist's metaphorical installation piece forms a critique of the individual's pure egoism as much as certain

barriers in communication, whether one is able to form a bond or if that bond would be deflected depending on the circumstance. The piece is interactive, yet it is still very private, further noting that it is difficult to communicate to those on the other end.

This artwork can also be tied into Pica's other prominent works that deal with human modes of communication on multiple levels, with subjects that range in passivity, practicality, and political contexts. For instance, one of her prominent installation pieces, entitled *A B C*, is currently held at the Guggenheim Museum in New York. In it, Pica pivots to focus on the concept of set theory, a facet of mathematical logic that deals with a collection of multiple sets including similar elements. In the installation piece, translucent colored shapes overlap, illustrating a constellation of distinct intersections and configurations that can be created when moving the shapes. By inviting performers to shift and manipulate the positions of the colored shapes, Pica installs a new element of abstraction as a way for the viewer to envision a new meaning for collectivism and community.

Similarly, her 2013 piece, *Venn*, one is able to form a bond or if that bond would be deflected depending on the circumstance. The piece is interactive, yet it is still very private, further noting that it is difficult to communicate to those on the other end.

This artwork can also be tied into Pica's other prominent works that deal with human modes of communication on multiple levels, with subjects that range in passivity, practicality, and political contexts. For instance, one of her prominent installation pieces, entitled *A B C*, is currently held at the Guggenheim Museum in New York. In it, Pica pivots to focus on the concept of set theory, a facet of mathematical logic that deals with a collection of multiple sets including similar elements. In the installation piece, translucent colored shapes overlap, illustrating a constellation of distinct intersections and configurations that can be created when moving the shapes. By inviting performers to shift and manipulate the positions of the colored shapes, Pica installs a new element of abstraction as a way for the viewer to envision a new meaning for collectivism and community.

Building from these two artworks, it can be further argued that communication plays a much bigger role in the artwork entitled



ANALIA PICA,
If These Walls Could Talk,
 2022. Tin cans, strings,
 photo. 100 x 65 x 200 in.
 (left) 73 x 33 x 204.8 cm.
 Currents: Formanok Art
 Foundation Collection,
 photo: Randy Batista,
 courtesy: University Galleries
 (detail and view).



GLEXIS NOVOA - *Blural Domains artist talk at the Ham Museum of Art, Ham Museum of Art, University of Florida, Gainesville, October 27, 2021*

JESSIE SUENMAYOR—Hello, my name is Jessie Suenmayor, I am the curator of *Blural Domains*, and we are, here, at the Ham Museum of Art, today, to have a conversation with Glexis Novoa. Glexis is one of the artists featured in the exhibition, he is the author of the works that we have behind us.

We are thankful to the Cisneros Foundation for letting us organize this show because it is an important set of artists and works, and, also, we are excited about the possibility of showing the diversity of contemporary Latin American art.

We are here today because Glexis Novoa was invited by the School of Art and Art History at the University of Florida to give a lecture for the students of the school. He has also been making

studio visits to talk with graduate students about their work.

We, of course, wanted to take advantage of Glexis' presence here in Gainesville to have this public conversation at the Ham. Glexis was born in Holguin, Cuba in 1964. Holguin is a provincial town about a 24-hour drive from Havana. So, it is away from the metropolis. You moved to Havana when you were a little kid, yes? Five years old?

GLEXIS NOVOA—Yes, some important people in the past also moved from Holguin to Havana. Fidel Castro was from Holguin.

LE—Oh! Castro was from Holguin? I did not know that. Well, in Havana you studied at the national school of art. While at the school, when he was still student, he became an important member of the avant-garde art scene in Havana. In 1968 there was an exhibition called *Voluntad Única*, the "Volume one" generation, which was able to bring together the most radical artists working in Cuba. This was an important moment for Cuban art because, as you may already know, in the years since the revolution took over the government in the late 1950s, there was also a cultural revolution. This idea that we have from a western point of view

of what an artist should do was not seen as useful by the leaders of the revolution. They wanted artists to focus on promoting the style of Socialist Realism that could also be found in the Soviet Union or East Germany at the time. So with *Volume One* Glexis was a part of the first generation of artists that were able to create a different type of art. An art that was not the type of art that the government was telling the artists to do. This was an important movement. They held shows here everywhere. They did shows here in the in the US, in Germany, and elsewhere in Europe. It was a group of artists, there were like 10 or 12 of them, and Glexis was one of the main figures in that scene.

You, then, decided to move to Mexico, right? In the early 90s?

GN—Early 90s.

LE—He did very well in Mexico. There was another group of Cuban artists who also went there, and

they became very well known all throughout Latin America and the US. At that time you were also teaching part of the time in Mexico?

GN—Yes, I taught in Monterrey, and, then, in 1995 I moved to Miami.

LE—He has been a US citizen since a while ago and he has been living in this country for the last 30 years. His work that we have behind us [*Specific Obstacles*, 2021] is connected to the idea of re-viewing the symbolic meaning of certain icons.

These are a set of works that the did in relation to a performance that was a collaboration between Glexis and with physically challenged dancer John Beaurgard. What Glexis did was to create these drawings for John, who is disabled. John is a dancer who lost the ability to walk and began performing in a wheelchair.

Glexis created an installation for him inside of the CIFO gallery space in Miami. The main components of the installation were these drawings behind us and a stage for John to perform on. After we finish this conversation, you can come closer, and you will be able to see

that each work is a piece of wall that has been cut from the original placement of the drawing at the CIFO space. We literally cut the wall and then framed the pieces as drawings.

One of the main elements of this piece was the location of the drawings. The drawings were placed according to the type of movement that John, as a performer, can do from his wheelchair.

This was a very large space and several of these drawings were set at different heights in the space. One was very low so that John was level with it when he got out of his wheelchair and crawled on the floor. There were others that were at his height when he was seated in the chair, so he could see the piece from his wheelchair and interact with the drawings.

The drawings all take a subject matter an interpretation of John's spinal column afflicted by the condition he was suffering from. There is one that has a circular shape, and it is a reference to the wheelchair, but the others are all referencing the spine. It was an installation that created an emotional relationship between the dancer, the drawings, and the people at the show.

audience members? So, these drawings are inspired by natural shapes?

GN—Yes, most of the drawings are inspired by organic shapes. Mostly from the spinal cord, as Jesus mentioned before, because the dancer, John Beaurgard, as a result of all of his back surgeries, has a model of his spinal cord made for doctors to use. The surgeon would use this reproduction of his spine to explain to John what they needed to accomplish in surgery to alleviate some of his pain.

With this work we also had a conversation between John and the audience in which he explained his spinal issues and described his experiences during the process of recovery. Often, his memories and his experiences related to gravity. How gravity became something important for him after the accident. How gravity became basically the most crucial and dramatic element of his movement in everyday actions. I increased the spine model in various positions related to his new condition and over there is related to balance and all the negotiation that he has to apply to his body in his condition, playing with the weight of his body

that doesn't move, the weight of his body that does move, and using elements like the wheelchair, which became something important that that he had to incorporate into his natural movement with it becoming part of his everyday life. All of these images are related to that.

This piece could look like a lizard, for example, it could be representing an imaginary animal skeleton that could be moving in that way. At the same time, it could look like a piece of jewelry or like something precious. Also, this element and the one that is all the way at the other end are recalling the shape of a boat. The hydrodynamic form of the boat imitates the shape of a fish to be able to move and navigate through water.

So, by natural intuition it is all related. John is also a boater. He has a boat. He works on his boat and he fits himself in position to work on the engine. This is such a brave man. He went out to the ocean and you have to help him, to drop him in the water, but in the water he feels a lot of relief. It's an important element because in the water the spine can just relax, be relieved

of the weight of his body, and so he is in an environment in which he feels capable.

John is a tall guy. He used to be a construction manager for his own company, and he studied engineering design. He is originally from Colorado. He is just a special character and a very brave man. I mean, he recovered from the accident that occurred during his work, and he became a dancer, which is something completely different than his previous way of life. Now, he's deep into dance, understanding dance, expressing himself with dance, and even collaborating with other dancers, actors, and artists like me.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2—What he did with you is the choreographed a dance, and you created specific images for him in advance?

GN—Yes, the original space is not here. This could be thought of as an archeology of the original space. The original piece was the ramp that was designed by him and that he wanted to play with the gravity of his body, so there was a ramp where he could crawl all the way to the top of these mattresses, we put two mattresses on two

GLEXIS NOVOA, *Specific Obstacles*, 2021, eight graphite drawings on 90-year-old paper, Cisneros Foundation Art Foundation Collection, courtesy Ham Museum of Art.



Gabe Nevo.

Specific: Consider, 2012, eight graphic drawings on 90 x 120 cm paper, ink and performance by contemporary dancer John Beauregard, view of the installation at the CTR Art Space, Miami, Curators: Fonnahs Art Foundation Collection, courtesy CTR.

different levels like two steps he could move up. In his everyday life, he would use a cooler to help transition himself from his chair to the part of his chair to the cooler. So, we incorporated that tool that the already had, and we had two different coolers within the installation for him to use it as props. Then, in the installation, he would move himself from his chair to the cooler, from the cooler, to the mattresses, and then from one mattress to the other that was higher. Then, from this height he would slide all the way down to the floor. That moment of weightlessness and motion was something that he was aiming himself all the way down to the floor that was really a very special moment during the performance. He also wanted to crawl all the way to the top of the mattresses and put the two coolers up there just for him to see the space from a tall vantage point because he was all over the time down low in the chair; it was a special moment during the performance.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3—How did his choreography relate to the drawings? It sounds like he's going through some positions that may feel that what he was doing was

important to him and to watch him communicate with the space, that was beautiful to see.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4—This sounds like such a beautiful project, and I think it's important for handicapped museumgoers to see their body represented in work. Is there a video of this performance?

GN—Yes, there is a link on my website where you can see the motion. Going from one place to another. This required interacting with the with the public. The public had to allow him to pass by or just stay in place and let him go around them. In one case, this little drawing was all the way down to the floor, and he came out of the chair and he crawled just to get there closer to the drawing, and he stayed there for a while looking at this piece because this one has in it what looks like an eye. It was a kind of contemplation, but also a dialogue of looking.

JE—There were many people at the performance. I was there. Even though you would tend to imagine that watching a performer without the ability to move his legs would be painful to see, I think it was interesting that he was getting the attention of the viewers in a very positive way. You could feel that what he was doing was

just about a brave thing. And I am intimidated by the ocean, but that he figured out how to be in the ocean, to make it work, and the relief that followed. It's just a beautiful story. All of it. I just love it.

GN—John, is such a character and has such a willpower within his own person. There is something interesting that I will mention. In contemporary dance when you compare handiapped people who dance, that to me is pretty much the axe-grade of conceptual dance. Because dancing is all about the shape of the body and the possibilities and skill of the body. In moving, it is about representing beauty through the body, so when someone who has an impediment and who has physical limitations on their body is able to express ideas with their body in a public forum it's something that is not just about the beauty of the body; it is not just about the perfection of form or technique. There is beauty in all of that power and all of that language that the artist must develop to be able to express themselves and their ideas through that medium.

The drawings are only one piece of what is a body of work that I'm developing related to space.

I'm using the drawings like a pretext to induce the viewer to pay attention to the space. Sometimes, if you think of a space like this, totally white walls, and there are only the drawings in the space, as a viewer you look at the drawings because the space is basically empty otherwise, so I'm inducing the viewer to participate with his own identification with the space and his own relationship with the space.

The viewer needs to decide where to go and look, first, here, then there. Some people they don't pay enough attention. They just pass by and they ignore the drawing. It's a process in which I like to create communication with the viewers and between the viewers because when you have more than one viewer in the room sometimes they can coincide looking at the same drawing, and the drawings are small, so the viewers need to get closer to each other to look the same drawing and maybe they start looking into each other's eyes. That eye contact can create potentially a conversation. They could interact with each other.

This is how I incorporate the ephemeral part of my installations. They are not only about

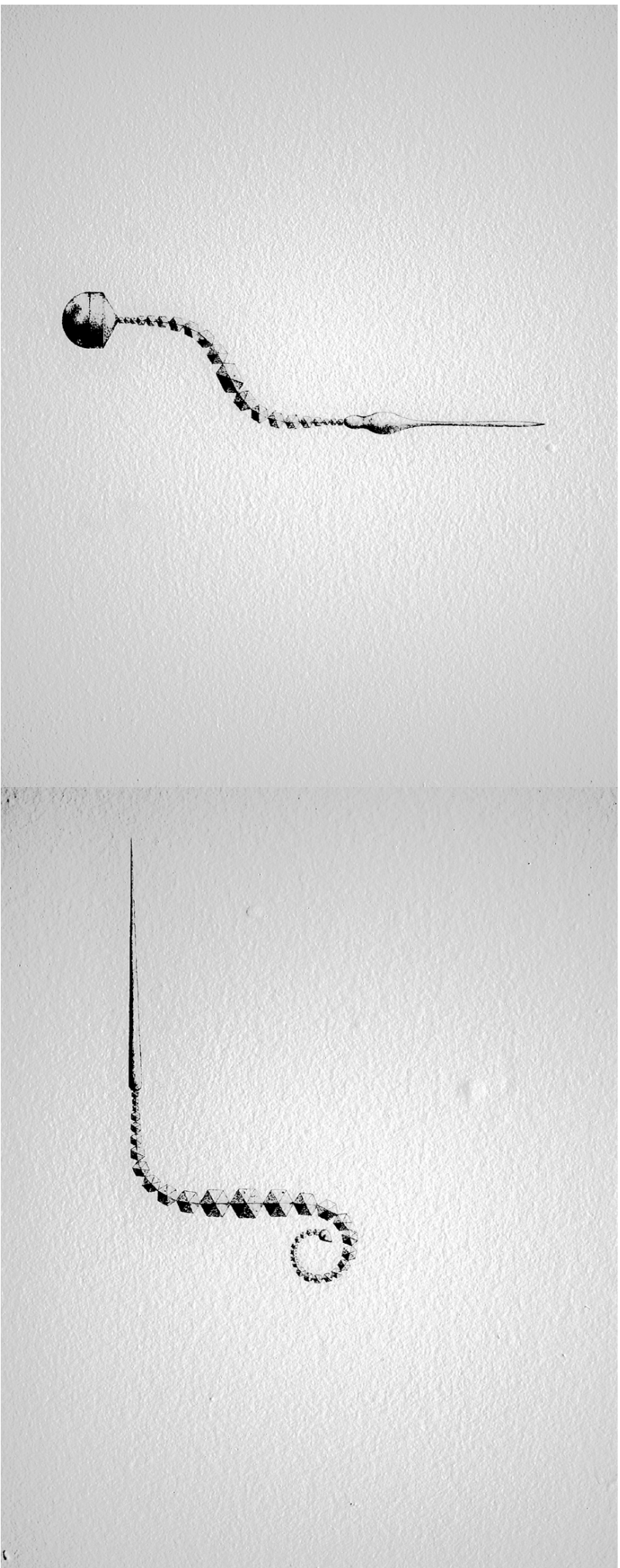
the drawings, it is related to what happened on the space. I am interested in what happened in the space and how the space became important, not the objects. When we enter a museum, we're looking for objects. We're looking for things on the walls, things on the floor, sculptures.

We don't consider the space. We don't look at our own interactions in the space, so that's what I induce you to experiment with in my work. This is basically a pretext to start conversations, to start an investigation in the space, to awaken your curiosity.

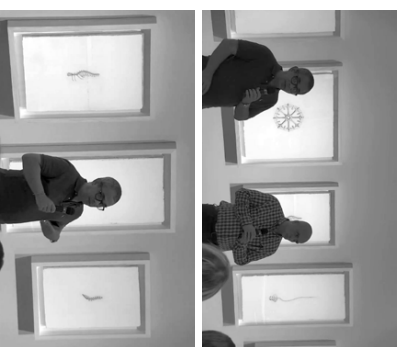
After you see the second drawing you want to see the third, to see if you complete a narrative you are noticing because it's a symbolic narrative that you can have and complete in the end. Sometimes, I mean in this case, it's very abstract, but other times I do landscapes, and the landscapes also have a lot of symbols within them. With the silhouettes of urban landscapes sometimes you recognize cities, sometimes you recognize statues, landmarks icons, and it's like a narrative of landscape, but, at the same time, the space you are in becomes a landscape, as well. When you start moving around and investigating the space, so, in this way, the piece is not the drawing; the piece really is the space and what happens in the space. What you see here is kind of like the archaeology of what happened at that moment in that specific space in Miami with John.

JE—I think in your work there are three key elements for me: there's the iconography, in this case you created an iconography of John's spine, the spine of a dancer who is moving in a wheelchair. So, there's that, images in your work that are like hints for the viewers to connect with the space, but there are two other elements, which I also think are important. There is the micro-detail in your images that serve to draw the viewers in closer, where they gain a different relationship to the work. Then, there is one other element that is very present, but that I have rarely heard you speak about. That is the element of horizontality. A landscape is horizontal by nature and in the case of this work with John it was also about horizontality because that's the way that the can move through space.

GN—The origin of this is curious even to me. I think the origin of this horizontality is coming from the idea of a man, alone in the middle of the ocean, with the water just up to his neck. So, this is basically the lowest a person can get in relation to the horizon. The horizon is just eye level, so half of your view is water and half of your view is pretty much the whole sky. I imagined this character in no boat, no other swimmers just alone. I imagined him having



GLORIA MONZA,
Specific Obstacles, 2012,
 eight graphite drawings
 on drywall,
 dimensions variable
 and performance,
 Galerías Fortabat's Art
 Foundation
 (Collection, courtesy CFO
 (Lezard)).



in interactions with other species, fish, in this case, animals from the ocean, so from that idea I started developing the idea of the horizon line and the landscape that is far away because the character is not on the shore, he is far away in the middle of the ocean, this character is in the midst of moving from one end of the horizon to the other, so that's why he's on the middle of the ocean, he's leading one shore and going to another shore. He could be an immigrant that could be related to the fathers who leave Cuba, but to me he is more like an imaginary character, more like an inmate after ego that is related to my own connection with the ocean. Relating to his surroundings by eye contact, not talking, not speaking, just looking at the animals, the same way the animals look at you.

My interest was in how the animals can communicate just by eye contact and other intuitive body language and how that can involve the character, the human. So, I was involved in that investigation with this metaphorical character that I created in my drawings and then that brought me to the landscape that was like a silhouette, a very small silhouette on the horizon line, and then from this horizon line I went to the wall, and I extended the drawing all around 360 degrees in the gallery. Then I created kind of a naquette of my fantasy of this character swimming in the middle of the ocean and the space of the gallery became a 360 degree horizon line and then you can move, you can swim from one end to the other. It's coming from that, it's coming from that idea of

the ocean. Many of my drawings are related to the ocean. They look like they're flying, but they are not really flying, they are floating. To me, they are floating because my connection, my personal connection is with the ocean. After that, my investigation into horizontally went in many directions related to concepts of design, architecture, and of the dynamic that every space contains within it. I do drawings not only for galleries or for museums, I have done drawings in bathrooms, walls in a ruined building with homeless people living there, incorporating all of that life, all of these contextual influences, with vines crawling on the wall, the vegetation participating in the space, animals having nests on

the wall, accepting all of that into this idea of horizontality or of the horizon line. The horizon defines a context. You can move from one point to the other and create a route or this pathway. I feel like it's also a reminder that we are human beings and we are standing on common ground in a way. Instead of a space for a unique and idiosyncratic experience, it's a space to share our horizontality.

GL—We have a couple more minutes, if anyone wants to ask a question?
 AUDIENCE MEMBER GL—So, would you lie on the floor when you were sketching the spine in various positions?
 GL—Yes, I would lie on the floor and stay there for some time. Each

of these drawings took me several hours to do. It was not simple.
 GL—I just wanted to end with what is sometimes a stupid question. Do you feel like a "Latin American" artist? Is that something that you think about when you make art?
 GL—to me, to be differentiated as a Latin American artist, it makes no sense. I know that if you study art you need to classify the artist, but I would like to be an artist, not a Latin American artist. You cannot erase my culture, I'm not going to be able to erase my culture, my original country, my origins, my influences, but it seems to me like the same as with the term Latinx. In the end, nobody asked us if we wanted to be called Latinx. It was scholars who decided

intellectually that they will call us Latinx or Latinx or whatever it is. To classify me as a Latinx, it is not meaningful to me.
 I'm Cuban, but I'm producing art in America, in an American way. At the same time, I have an idea what Latin American art is, and I am proud to belong to Latin American art. I'm proud of that. It's not something that I reject, but I wish that someday someone in America would call me an artist and not only me everybody else [in this exhibition] as well.
 GL—Gloria, thank you so much for being with us, today.
 GL—Thank you.



William H. Chandler
udhcnrum

Plural Domains:
In, Of, From Latin America
Panel Discussion with artists
AMALIA RÍCA, ALICE MICHEL,
AND JOSÉ GABRIEL FERNÁNDEZ,
MODERATED BY DR. JOSÉ FALCONI

CHANDLER AUDITORIUM,
HAM MUSEUM OF ART, UNIVERSITY
OF FLORIDA, GAINESVILLE.
FEBRUARY 24, 2022

ERIC SEGAL— Good evening. Thank you so much for joining us, here this evening for a really exciting artists panel. My name is Eric Segal. I am the director of education at the Ham Museum of Art. I've been looking forward to this program for a long time, since the exhibition *Plural Domains* opened. It's a wonderful exhibition. I'm sure you've had a chance to see it. I invite you to come visit before it closes in April, if you have not. Tonight, there are quite a few introductions, so I'll be brief, but I just wanted to let you know that this evening's program is made possible by the Ham Eminent Scholar Chair in Art History

(HESCAH) program. HESCAH is organized out of the school of Art and Art History with the participation of the museum and is a wonderful program that was founded by David and Marianne to bring together the museum and the school. It really works that way and that's why we're here tonight.

I'm just going to introduce briefly Jesús Fuenmayor, director and curator of the Gary R. Libby University Galleries, at the School of Art and Art History. It has been such a pleasure to work with Jesús throughout this project, presenting *Plural Domains* at the Ham. Jesús is a visionary curator, an advocate of contemporary artists and he will be introducing the program proper this evening, so please join me in welcoming Jesús.

JESÚS FUENMAYOR— Hello. How are you all this evening? Thank you, Eric, for your introduction. I want to thank all of the people who have helped us in the organization of this event and the exhibition *Plural Domains: Selections from the Centros Fotovisuales Foundation: Colloquia*. I want to thank especially all the people on the staff here at the museum. Lee Anne Chesterfield, Alice Roman, Eric Segal, and all the people on the

staff who were so helpful with the organizational details of putting this ambitious project together.

I would like to introduce Dr. José Falconi who is the moderator of our event today. The goal of this event, since the beginning was to bring the artists of the exhibition into conversation with our community in our university, in our town, so I hope that at the end of the presentations that you feel motivated to create a dialogue with the artists and the moderator.

To create the atmosphere for this dialogue, we have brought in Dr. José Falconi. Welcome Dr. Falconi.

JOSÉ FALCONI— Thank you very much, Jesús. For me, it's an enormous pleasure to be here. Seeing real people, it is always gratifying to get together, and I thank Jesús for this opportunity. I would like to thank the Ham Museum for bringing us all together. I also want to thank the university for the incredible hospitality I have received. For me, it's an amazing, immense privilege to be here.

Amalia Ríca is going to be joining us over the internet, and she will be the first presenter. After Amalia, Alice Michel will follow and, finally,

José Gabriel Fernández will speak. I will leave it now with Amalia who will start giving her presentation.

As you can see these are three great artists, we have the privilege of having here. Please join me in welcoming Amalia Ríca.

AMALIA RÍCA— Thank you for having me here virtually. Thank you, Jesús for inviting me, and thank you to the university. I have made a little presentation that contextualizes my work that is in the exhibition. So, first I'm going to go a little bit backwards in time and then forward to the present day.

This work is called *Sorry for the Metaphor*. The title comes from a phrase in a book by Roberto Bolaño who was an amazing Chilean writer. I don't know how relevant that is, but it's always funny to pinpoint when one feels like Latin American artists. *Sorry for the Metaphor* was a series that I started in 2005 when I had moved from Buenos Aires. I'm originally from Patagonia. I was born in Neuquén in the north of Patagonia in Argentina, and I moved to Buenos Aires to study art there, then I got a scholarship to study in Amsterdam.

I was quite young and when I got there, for the first time, I realized



that I was an Argentinian artist. Somehow, before, I just thought I was an artist. One of the things that I realized was that I felt this huge sense of responsibility that my work should speak to its time. I thought that as an artist I needed to speak for my time, that we had, as artists, a political role to play. I quickly realized that Europeans viewed this as a very romantic idea.

I basically had this desire to say things and to be understood, but I had a realization that that was a romantic notion of what being an artist was, so I took this picture.

This is a picture of me in the Black Forest in Germany, with a megaphone in my hand. I tried to talk to trees. I was interested in the overlapping of historical romanticism and this idea of finding a voice as an artist.

The next work that I chose for this idea also contains within it this idea of finding a voice as an artist. It is called *Endymion's Journey*. It consists of a big print of the desert that I would stand by with a book and every now and then I would just come and bang the book against the print. Accompanying the print, the following was said:

"Then there was the young explorer Joseph Ritchie, to whom Keats gave

a copy of his newly published poem *Endymion*, with instructions to place it in his travel park, read it on his journey, and then throw it into the heart of the Sahara Desert as a gesture of high romance. Keats received a letter from Ritchie, dated from near Cairo in December 1818. Endymion has arrived thus far on his way to the Desert, and when you are sitting over your Christmas fire will be joggling (in all probability) on a camel's back over those African sands immeasurable. After this there was silence. Joseph Ritchie never returned."

Richard Holmes, *The Age of Wonder*, Harper Press, 2008

The reason I loved encountering this passage is because it reflects the idea that as an artist you may have something to say, but all you can do is throw it out there. You never know how it is going to be received or if it will reach its intended destination.

Next, I have included in my presentation this work called *Islands*. We're looking at very early work by the way, it's a work that I did while I was in Holland. It is a slide projection, and it is a sequence of images that show this character stepping in the snow and drawing the picture of a palm

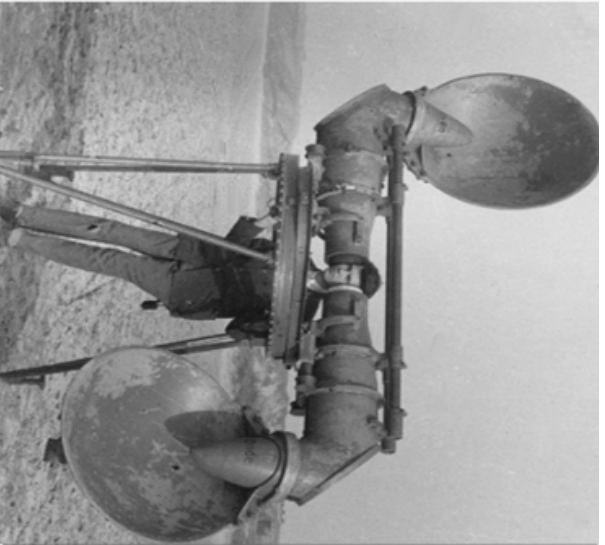
tree. I decided to include it after *Endymion's Journey* because it plays to that idea of an exotic landscape and the nostalgia that comes with displacement but also with having a preconceived idea of what places look like.

When I first moved to Holland a lot of people thought "oh, she's Latin American she must be suffering here in Holland with all this cold" and "she's very used to warm weather" but I am from Patagonia where it is often extremely cold. I like thinking about clothes, like this, but also, I've always been interested in images that act as words. The image of this island, what is it like to look at it, and what do people get from it, alongside this anxiety that people seem to have around contemporary art. The idea that art should be understood somehow, so questions of whether we have things to say as artists and whether art is a communicative act have been at the core of my practice for a long time.

For a while I was focused on what it is like to send a message, and then I became interested in the idea of reception. I realized that we don't just have everything pre-thought and then speak it, but that



xxxx View of the exhibition
Plural Domains:
xxxxx



ALL IN VITA,
starts off "Installation view, The Power Plant, and related documents, courtesy the artist."

It is in the process of speaking that one is, as it were, making thinking or making thoughts: in that traditional idea of communication where there is a sender, a medium, and a receiver, the receiver seems to be quite passive but, actually, none of the message, not the medium, would exist without a receiver. I started thinking about that, and did this work, titled *Reconstruction of an Antenna (as seen on TV)*, which also has a caption: It is a homemade television antenna, and it has this text that goes with it, which says: "Shows in which wearable pop stars compete to win the backing of the viewing public are a staple of TV channels around the world. Afghanistan is no different. Afghan star was first aired in 2005 and it soon became a national phenomenon. By the time the final of the third season was broadcast, 11 million people tuned in. Each finalist had their ardent fans, one man drove for 14 hours to collect posters promoting his favorite singer, while another sold his car to raise funds to campaign for one of the contestants. But watching television is not scarce in Afghanistan, with barely electricity subject to regular power cuts. *Afghan Star—The Power*

of Pop, a documentary by the British filmmaker Havaan Marik, shows one young fan constructing and wiring a homemade television antenna in order to get a signal. The program's success highlights the return of western pop culture to the mainstream in Afghanistan, where music was banned by the Taliban in the 1990s. Viewers voted for their favorite singer by mobile phone. For many, this was the first time they were asked to express their preference in a public forum." The sculpture itself was just a homemade television antenna.

This brings me to a work that is part of the same series as the piece that is here in *Plural Domains*. It is basically this giant wall that you see here and that has little holes cut out of it and once you get closer you realize that there are cans covering the holes from the inside of the structure. Those cans are connected by string to other cans on the other side of the structure in the way that some of us used to play as kids using these tin cans as telephones.

This is a work that I like to think of as a work about how complicated it is to talk to one another. It's called *Switchboard*. It is a work that feels like maybe it's inviting participation, and it feels simple, but, actually, as soon as you try to use it you realize that the act of communicating with one another is made very complicated by not knowing which can you or the person you are in conversation with might be talking through or listening into. The immensity of the wall doesn't allow you to know, and there's all this negotiation of trying to find the can that is connected to them just to say something very simple like hello. It is an invitation to feel in your own body how complicated it is to talk to one another and how much we are willing to try.

I will now show you a work called *Eaststrapping*. This work uses a similar idea of something stuck to the work to represent listening. I became interested in the figure of the listener, but I wanted to create works that weren't necessarily an auditory experience but a visual experience. I became interested in the little gesture of someone holding a glass against the wall to eavesdrop on their neighbor. I made this work which are all these glasses that are picking up on that gesture.

This is a work called *Impressive Listening*, again it has to do with listening and it features replicas of hearing aids. I think of them as tributes to listening. This is a cast of someone's inner ear and then carved in stone, and in this exhibition at the Power Plant in Toronto, it was paired up with these big cardboard structures that you see here.

The play on scale is that the hearing aids obviously are smaller than these big giant structures, but they are a lot bigger than the real size hearing aids. Whereas these acoustic radars, as they're called, are replicated in a smaller form than they naturally are. These acoustic radars were experimental listening devices that were developed in between wars to be able to predict airplane bombing. Obviously, they seem very whimsical to us now. They didn't really work, they didn't help predict bombing, but they did contribute a lot to the development of radar technology. I made these replicas almost like props out of cardboard. This is a material that absorbs sound. Thus, it speaks to the failure of this experiment even before it took off.

Just so not to bore you with only these concerns about what it's like to be an artist, and what it's like to try to communicate as an artist, I thought I would show you a niche, small, and limited body of work that I did a couple of years ago. The work is related to the dream of the utopia of inter-species communication. This work that you see, here, it's called *please open Harry*. The hands you see in the image are signing that phrase "Please open, hurry" in American Sign Language. It is a work that did as a tribute to a signing ape. Her name was Washu, and she was a chimpanzee who was being raised by an American family who communicated with her in sign language. This was part of an experiment to see if you could teach sign language to a chimpanzee, and this is what she used to sign every morning to her caretakers when they came to open her cage. She would say "Please open, hurry."

The language experiments were ultimately considered a failure. Even though there is a lot of documentation of apes signing up to 200 words, it always seems that whenever animals come close to acquiring language, the frontier of what it means "to speak" is moved. The standards of what it means "to speak" are shifted higher and higher, so that we can make sure that we remain the only animals that can access a new language. We have become so proud of this idea that we communicate, but whenever we have approached other species in thinking how they are capable of communicating we constantly frame the communicational act being in our terms. So, with these apes in captivity there are obviously ways in which they were incredibly intelligent beings who could communicate with one another, yet most of the effort has gone into us teaching them a form of language that we can understand and we impose on them. I'm going to end there because I'm conscious of time, and I'm sure there will be an opportunity for questions later.

At that point I decided to not traditionally work in movies anymore and started researching to create my own images. This is the name of this project, it's called, in Portuguese, *Em Profundidade (compreendendo) IN DEPTH (UNDERMINES)*





those unpopulated ordinariness, in the ground. This silent occupation is still in these landscapes, and it stays. It's something that has an origin: in the past but that remains in the present tense, in the sense that is still here with us occupying space on earth.

One of the first references that drew my attention to the space of minefields was this image shot by the photographer Robert Capa. He is an almost mythical figure: one of the most well-known photojournalists of all time, the founder of the Magnum Agency in New York. The last image that he ever took was in a minefield, following the taking of this photograph, he stepped on a landmine and died. What struck me is that this image captures a horizon—which is here represented—that Capa himself never reached. So, in between where the stands, seconds later after this click, and that horizon, it was the last instance of his life.

Another interesting account of people attempting to go across minefields came from the book called *Bata dos Tigres*, Bay of Tigers in English, written by a Portuguese journalist, Pedro Rosa Mendes, who was sent as a

journalist to cover the civil war in Angola. As he found himself in Angola in this situation of being a foreign journalist, especially a Portuguese person in Angola a former Portuguese colony, the former Portuguese colony, the limitations to his positioning in that land and in that situation. So, he decided not to do the newspaper piece and just go into the minefield, cross it, and write an account of it. These are two quotations from the book to the first one reads "On every inch of this ground is the last instance of my life. I can contemplate it as far as the eye can see," it's a loose translation I did from Portuguese. And the second one says, "Who died, stayed," or "Who died, remained," for me what was interesting here was this inversion between looking at a spatial perception of time, and on the other hand this temporal perception of space. Because if you step on a mine and you die, it means that your time is over, your life has ended. It's a question of duration, but in terms of a minefield, if that happens to you in that spatial setting what it really means, and what it meant for Capa for instance, is that he saved. Capa never went on to the depth of that field, himself.

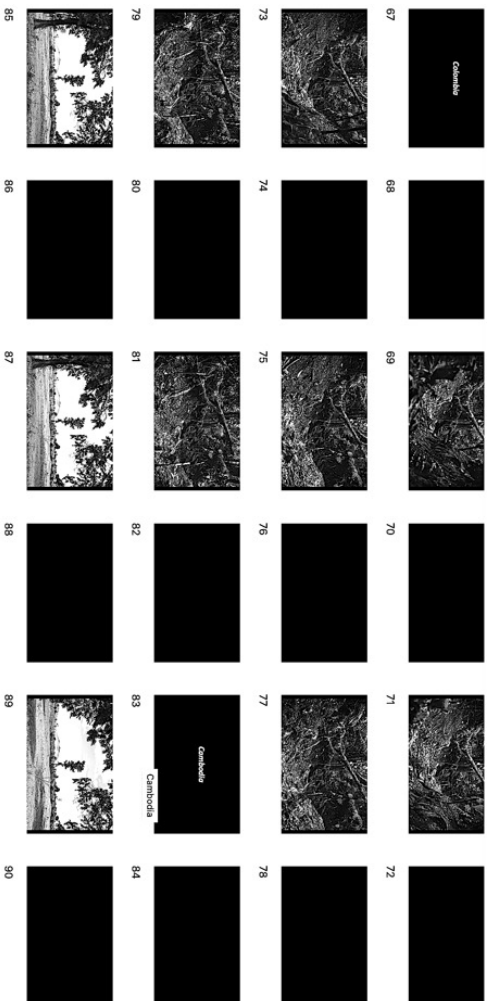
So, for me as a photographer and looking at these references, especially the Capa image, what I was wondering is what if I were to try to continue this exploration from where Capa himself—I mean symbolically—could not go further. What does it mean to walk across such a landscape, which is not only inaccessible but also spatially impenetrable? How is it that we can step into it? And what is it that you see?

In my work the way this is articulated relates to the intrinsic principles behind photography. For instance, where you stand outside of the frame, on the ground, is your point of view. How far, or how close you are to a given subject matter, is the focal length of the elected tool that you have in your hands, in my case being a photographer, that is the lens. And what is the magnification size of your chosen object, what size will it be in the image that you are able to capture, from the vantage point where you stand. These elements (where you stand, what you see, and then the resulting image) are behind each photograph. It doesn't matter if it is a very sophisticated, constructed professional image or an iPhone image. It's always there. They are not always, necessarily,

elements which have to be activated but they can be. The work is developed in the intertwining of all these principles in relationship to this space. The positioning, where one steps on the ground, is the most critical element. Meaning that if you step from here to there, it could be the difference between life and death.

The series *Em Projunidade* (*campos-miúdados*) was developed across different mined areas in different continents, these are gestures that I had to visit to do the work. The first one was Cambodia, which has many minefields as remains of the Khmer Rouge dictatorship.

The second one was Colombia which is the work that we have here at the show. The mine area is particular and different from all the others that I encountered in other places in the sense that it is in the jungle. The mines there are remnants from the FARC. The FARC, the drug traffickers, they're really masters of the jungle. This rugged, closed off terrain presents a different logic than the logic of war, which is a logic of conquering terrain as we see in Cambodia a logic of defensive exclusion. It proved most difficult to access.



The other [minefield] was Benin, which is remains of the war in Yugoslavia. And then the last one was Angola, which is the most mined place on earth. That's a result of 40 years of independence wars and then civil war.

What I'd like to do is to show you all of the series. We will see each image in the series, one by one. There will be a black slide in between them. In this way I can still preserve the interval between each one of the images.

Something that you will notice is the number of images that belong to each series is not always the same. That's intrinsic to the kind of access that was possible in each one of the terrains. So, in Angola, for instance, we will see fifteen images because from all the minefields, it's the one that I was able to walk further and produce the greatest number of points of view.

And in Colombia, which is our work here, because of such difficult conditions and the problems of explosives in the jungle it was where it was the least possible to really advance through. So, in Colombia there were only seven points of views and only seven images and in Bosnia we are going

to see nine images.

The final set of slides show how the photos are meant to be installed and viewed to give an example of how the work is supposed to be displayed. All the images are hung side by side and with a little spatial interval in between them. That's why when we look at them here, we have the black slide in between so we can preserve that space in between them.

In doing, and then I guess we can leave questions open for conversation, an aspect of this work which is new to me is that it's both the visual result that we see here and also has this performance aspect to it. Because it's an action that is twofold, that of my own body and the body of the photographer outside of the frame going across, growing, within these inaccessible impenetrable spaces, and striving to be able to offer points of view, not of it, above it, but from within. And second, is the visual result of it, which is what you see in the exhibition.

[Presents the entirety of *Em Projunidade* (*campos-miúdados*), Ongoing since 2014 in silence]



ACE VENT,
In Depth (Landmines),
2015, seven digital
photographic prints,
433 x 288 in
[140 x 73 cm] each,
Galerie Fontaine Art
Foundation Collection,
photo Emily Watkins,
courtesy of the Ham Museum
of Art.



Eloise R. and William H. Chandler
Art Museum

JOSÉ GABRIEL FERNÁNDEZ—
Good evening, everyone. It is a pleasure to be here sharing a little bit of nomadry in these troubling hours. I want to thank Jesús Fleumayor and the great team here at the University of Florida University Galleries and the Horn Museum for putting this great exhibition together. I'm going to start showing this image of my work that is in the exhibition. It is my intention in this presentation to show the process by which I arrived at such seemingly abstract, minimalist, and adromatic language in my recent work. I came to it through one of the least abstract cultural traditions.

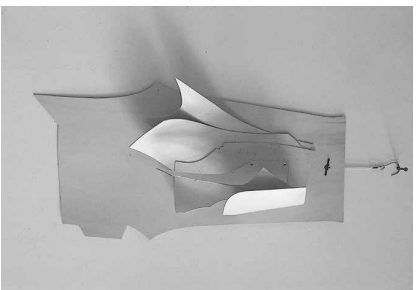
I became a bullfighting aficionado in the nineties. I traveled extensively through Mexico, Spain, and Venezuela doing research and doing courses in bullfighting. I was really into it, and one of the great things that really interested me was the body

of the matador because of the juxtaposition among issues of masculinity, sexuality, homosexuality, eroticism, and androgyny. One of the things that I did at that time was to purchase a *traje de luces*, which means suits of lights, worn by the matador at the corrida. This is one of the examples of what I did. I worked with a seamstress, and we took down a lot of the sequins, decorations, and silver threads and inserted embroidered red eyellets as a representation of penetration and desire. The title of this piece is *Anatomy of Desire*. It references some motifs of Catholic iconography that accompanies this tradition.

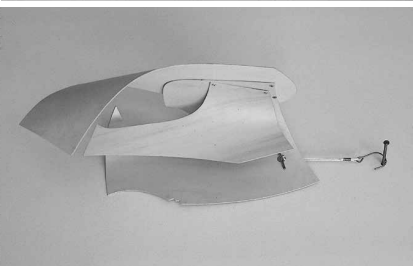
The seamstress and I then took another dress, and we took it all apart in order to produce the stencils, the patterns of the dress, and proceeded in 1990 to make a work titled *Armatario de Luces* (Armoire of Lights). The idea of this work was to include the elements, tools of the trade and clothing the matador takes with him on his journeys. Basically, the matador is a traveling artist, and the idea of the armoire was for it to include all the elements: the mulleca, the traje luces, etc. The next step was to figure out what to do with these flat surfaces. I started to find ways of bending them to animate them in some sort of forms. I produced a series of works bending layers of thin plywood that hung from a nail, and you can already see in these works that there already is a constructivist tendency in the development of this body of work.

This work titled *Anatomy of Fate*, went on a different trajectory. As you can see, it is a totally different material. It is made of stainless steel mesh, which is here used to represent the matador's dress as armor. On the surface of this mesh, we silk-screened some of the motifs that I took from the previous dress to represent blood droplets. It's as if the dress the matador wears, is his own tattooed skin.

Around the same time, at the end of the decade, I produced a work titled *Still Life*, and here you can see a table that I made, partly covered in gesso. The table becomes the body of the matador. There's a very highly charged homoerotic component to this work. It was partly inspired by a line from a poem by Garcia Lorca, "Lament on the Death of Ignacio Sanchez Mejías" who was a very famous Spanish bullfighter, where Garcia Lorca talks about the drops of blood that were left on the sand when Sanchez Mejías was killed by a bull. I felt two circles of wood revealed on the surface of the table that worked both ways, as the flesh that is being penetrated by the horns while



Suit of Lights, 1999. Plywood and aluminum rivets. 53 x 22 x 8"



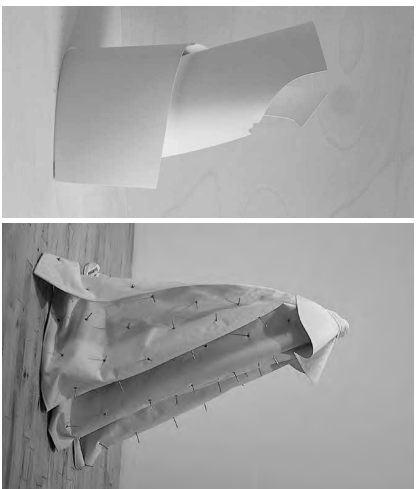
Suit of Lights, 1999. Plywood and aluminum rivets. 32 x 19 x 9"



Anatomy of Fate, 1997 (detail). Silk-screen ink on stainless-steel mesh cloth, paper and wood. 27 x 12 x 8"



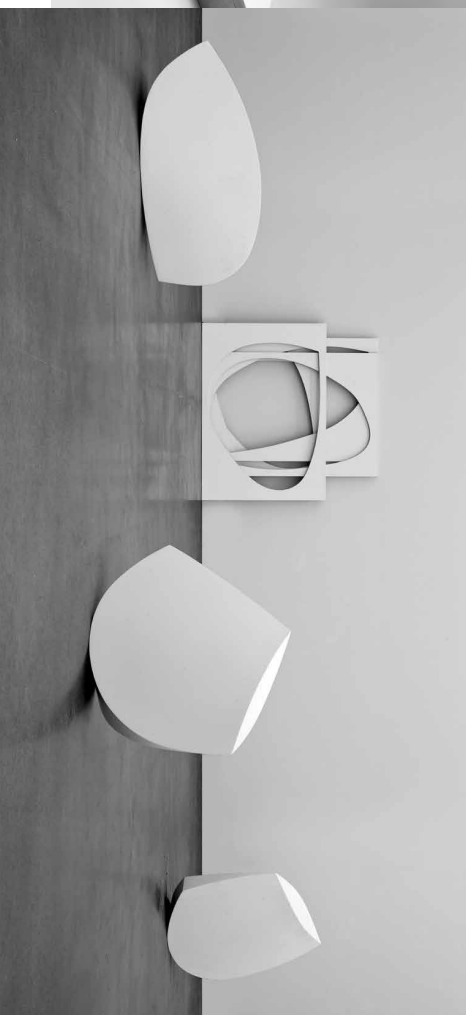
Still Life, 1999. Gesso on wood and bull's horns. 28 x 47 x 22"



Figure, 1999. Gesso on plywood and aluminum rivets. 17 x 16 x 11" **The Raised Mirror, 1998.** Canvas, muslin and rivets. 40 x 33 x 30"



Untitled 2007/2014. Acrylic gesso on gypsum cement and resin. 4 x 16 x 12



Tablet No. 2, 2006. Gesso on MDF. 67 x 22 x 3"

at the same time representing the blood stains in the sand.

I continued permutating the suit of lights and it gradually became disembodied. This other work, also titled *Still Life*, was made of muslin cloth covered in resin. It gives the work a spectral quality, which is an aspect that I continued exploring in later years. With other works, also, I'm using the patterns to create these kinds of constructivist

sculptures. **Figure, 1999**, makes specific reference to the Talin monument (Vladimir Tatlin's *Moment to the Third International*).

Later, I brought from Mexico a bullfighter's cape, which my seamstress and I took apart and duplicated it in canvases to produce a work titled *The Raised Mirror*. I used this title because the only way the matador can kill the animal in a bullfight, is by diverting its gaze from the body and gaze of the bullfighter. This is what happens in the myth of Perseus and Medusa. The only way that Perseus could kill Medusa was by deflecting her

gaze with his mirrored shield. In other words, the cape of the bullfighter is his shield and mirror he employs in order to distract the attention of the bull. The pattern produced by the shape of this cape became very important in the works that developed subsequently. You can start seeing how my work started to develop more minimalist and toward abstraction.

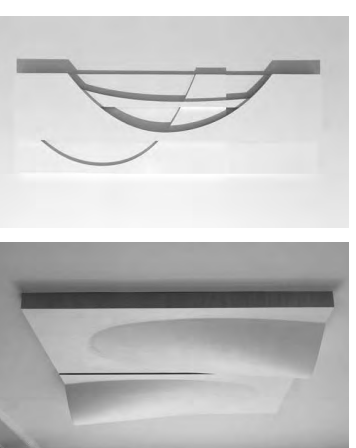
The first two works that I made were sculptural. They used the cape's pattern to refer to the Modernist tradition. Also with the same patterns, I produced a series of drawings where I was tracing over and over many times with a very fine pencil the shapes in different juxtapositions. I then wondered how I could translate these drawings into a sculptural context, and I made this sketch, here, which is based around the idea of using the same shapes. I'll show you the result. Here are all the shapes juxtaposed in the drawings. In thinking about how to translate those into a sculptural context, I decided to use large

pieces of gessoed plywood surfaces where the actual surface of the plywood would be the paper, and then the inner side of the different layers of the plywood would become the drawing. The next question that I asked myself was, how could I make something out of these shapes that has volume? Essentially, how do I make a solid sculpture from the negative spaces cut into the plywood? I made a number of small pieces in plaster derived from the negative of those shapes. I created these large-scale sculptures in three-glass resin and polyurethane. These works are still tied to the bullfighting body of work that I was doing previously, that is where the basic shapes come from, but if you were to only look at the title and the works, without any background information, you wouldn't know they have any relationship to that tradition or to that body of work. They're obviously also informed by my love of modern sculpture and Cycladic sculpture, which you will see throughout the rest

of the presentation. There is in these works an aspect of gravity that I enjoy. It is almost like they are about to rest on the floor, the way a cape starts to gently rest on the surface.

These two works are titled *Chicuztina* and *Serpentina*. They are designed to rock gently and you can see what I was telling you about the particular relationship to Cycladic sculpture. Later, I became interested in the relationship between light and shadow, darks and highlights, and how highlights and shadows can actually make the work seem immaterial. In this work, for example, you can see how the shadow becomes an integral part of the work, and it becomes material at the same time as the rest of the work is trying to be immaterial against the surface of the wall. These are the last two pieces that I did in that series, in which the layers became much thinner because the intention was to actually be able to hang the works and give the illusion that they are drawn onto the wall, as if they were draw-

ings composed of just highlights and shadows. I also found ways of stretching these shapes and to continue the same process of trying to find volumes that will be born out of the shapes. This is a small example of what I was making at the time. These two works are titled *Erotes*. *Erotes* is a word that comes from Greek mythology. The *erotes* were demi-gods of love and desire, especially of homosexual desire. They were winged gods. At the same time, I was making a lot of drawings and pictures of sails and boats in Maine, and that was part of the inspiration behind these shapes. They resemble sails but at the same time the wings. This is another example of an *Erotes*, where I was using the parts of the shapes that were scraps in my studio. They started in small pieces, and then I brought them to a larger dimension. Transparency is also an important part of these works. As the line travels around the planes and comes in and comes out, the highlights and the shadows on



Erotes, 2011. Acrylic gesso and plywood on MDF. 47.5 x 61 x 5" **Resolera (background).** From left: *Serpentina*, *Veronica* and *Chicuztina*. "Contingent Beauty," MFAH, TX, 2015.



Resolera, 2003. Gesso on plywood (5 leaning panels, 1" thick ea.), 68 x 71 x 8"



FALCONI—What a privilege to be able to be speaking to these great artists; I think that anybody who says that artists are not doing research that is clearly a matter of other artists because what we have been seen today implies that a lot of research goes into these artworks, which seems to me pretty remarkable.

I would like to engage in conversation between all of us. I have some questions, but I would like to hear from you first.

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE—My name is Sergio Vega. First of all I wanted to congratulate artists for organizing the event on one hand, but also for the selection of these three artists [participating on the panel discussion]. I was familiar with the works of two of you, but one of the things was the notion that the three of you seem really interested in a kind of liminal space that could be [defined] from a conventional philosophical perspective like the space between immediate and transcendence, the creation of the communication between the emission and reception, and the

message in between, the space of seduction that the cape of the bullfighter embodies, the liminal space between the horn of the bull and sword of the bull fighter, and the implicit negotiation of desire.

In your case [Alice Miceli's work], the liminal space is represented by the impossible landscape that is the encounter of death. I am interested in how it is that you construct that possibility of transcending that cognitive space through the body and through the experience of your work, but then another thing that came to my mind, is the fact that we are dealing with a collection of Latin American art, and you are from Latin America, and probably we have all come from the absurd experience of having to justify what we do in relation to Latin America, which is, as we know, a colonial construct that we still deal with and, in a way, are cursed by, but that is also part of our reality. How is that exploration of liminal space related to Latin America or how is the fact that they are from Latin America related to the need to construct that liminal space?

FALCONI—That [answer] itself is a liminal space. **MICELI**—I totally agree with Amalia. There is not a straightforward answer, I am going to try to answer it personally which is not something that in general I bring to the discussion of the work. Consciously, I wouldn't say I am striving to be making work from the point of view of someone of Brazilian heritage as a Brazilian artist; I don't do that. On the other hand, the way you grow up, your first experiences of nature, whatever the construction of the concept may be, it is always, in the whole history of a person's life, completely informed by your sense of place, and geography, and not only geography but geopolitics behind the place where you are from, I would only be able to speak from myself, but in the case of being Brazilian or Latin American, it is a peripheral space. Growing up a woman, a gay woman in Brazil, belonging to a sort of marginalized group, which has this trauma of country, which has this trauma of country, which has this trauma of not wanting to perceive itself as a peripheral but that's what it is, can give you this slightly shifted perception of things because of the fact that we are not the center

always be a foreigner in, I can say, however, that it crosses our practices.

MICELI—I totally agree with Amalia. There is not a straightforward answer, I am going to try to answer it personally which is not something that in general I bring to the discussion of the work. Consciously, I wouldn't say I am striving to be making work from the point of view of someone of Brazilian heritage as a Brazilian artist; I don't do that. On the other hand, the way you grow up, your first experiences of nature, whatever the construction of the concept may be, it is always, in the whole history of a person's life, completely informed by your sense of place, and geography, and not only geography but geopolitics behind the place where you are from, I would only be able to speak from myself, but in the case of being Brazilian or Latin American, it is a peripheral space. Growing up a woman, a gay woman in Brazil, belonging to a sort of marginalized group, which has this trauma of country, which has this trauma of not wanting to perceive itself as a peripheral but that's what it is, can give you this slightly shifted perception of things because of the fact that we are not the center

of the world. You are always a bit dislocated and that can give you an interesting point of view. At least, that informs my interest in looking at marginalized spaces and their histories.

FERNANDEZ—In my case, I became a Latin American artist in the United States, and I became for the first time Hispanic here, in this country. There were contradictions and issues that I tried to understand as much as I could because of the way I consider myself, I am multiracial and multilingual, multicultural, and I never had a label until I came to the United States. Apart from that, my journey through the world of the Carriás, wasn't a conscious decision of that being part of my heritage. It was more an exploration of my sexuality. When I was doing that body of work, it caught the attention of the New York art gallery world, because I was being somehow a token of that kind of Hispanic cultural heritage. I didn't have a problem with that, but I wanted to make a point that it wasn't about searching for my roots or my cultural traditions in Venezuela, it was just about my homosexuality.

FALCONI—I have a question for each of you. I want to speak with

Amalia, the work for me is so incredibly consistent in looking at the process of communication. There is almost a sort of display of the way in which communication happens. Ears, I believe, someone saying something and someone receiving a message. What the works basically do is reveal that basic level [of communication] and collect that into an sculptural work, which is something that I find fascinating and incredibly interesting. I would like to say that something similar to that is happening in the work of the other two artists, here. For me the temporal is so important in both of your work. In the case of Alice, there was a tone creptation when you passed those images. You could feel that tension. The way that you display them with that particular separation, which was something that you were very insistent on, because that separation is basically time presented in a physical way. Which is something that is also happening in the case of José Gabriel, with all these movements: the veronica, the media veronica, when the caps move, which are basically movement in time, and you try to coalesce it and all of the sudden you find a sculpture. What Sergio's question had to do with

liminal space, they were showing the failure of a medium, in the case of photography, you can't see the [hand] mine... I mean, is this a photograph of a mine or of something else? It is the same with the veronica, you see the movement and all of the sudden you have it there. I would like to shift the discussion now from Latin Americanness to temporality, to look at the temporal aspects of your work. I would like you to elaborate and tell me if I am on the right track or not, about the temporal in the physical sculpture work.

FALCONI—I started in a terrible art school, a very academic one, and I studied sculpture. It was a very traditional thing, we learned how to carve stone and model busts of people and standing figures, and it was like lifting heavy weights in the department, and it was always a joke. As a reaction, my practice became really immaterial at the beginning of my artistic life. At a certain point, I returned to the object because I think objects need us and also can exist without us. So often in my work there is the notion of activation of an object, you have a sculpture, that functions as sculpture, that no one

is using or activating. If no one is showing a book against the wall, if no one is using the cans, if no one is saying anything into the concrete podium, it doesn't matter, you haven't missed anything, but there is always the possibility of using the sculpture for something else, so they have this kind of interdependency. The notion of time is something that at least is supposed to be permanent in sculpture. There is also this sense that you are being able to turn time on and off by defining it by what is being said.

FALCONI—Alice I would to hear your consideration on this regard, on the way you display the works, because is very different seeing it spatially, instead of seeing in them one after the other, how time is manifested spatially. That was something that for me resonated a lot in your work. I think there is something to be said about that, you cannot see as photographer the time, the moment you see the mine, you are gone.

MICELI—The moment that you feel the mine it's a little bit too late, I think it would be interesting to relate that to my previous work



that was about Chernobyl Exclusion Zone. That work was about a kind of impenetrability, which is really physically invisible, which is the gamma radiation that still to this day not only haunts but actually embodies physically, the whole substance of this area. The problem of that work was how do we look at it, by what means, in this kind of reality, in which that space is completely pervasive but never really perceived by our senses in any way. That work dealt with a problem of visual impenetrability. With what kind of images might it be possible to touch this invisibility? Once I finished Chernobyl, I was still intrigued by this idea of the impenetrable spaces, by different kinds of landscapes, different kinds

of contamination issues, they ask different questions. For me, the next obvious step was then try to look at this other kind of impenetrable space, where what is inaccessible is not the visual, itself, but the actual space that I would like to cross. In that case the space of mine fields. So, of course, you cannot see the mines, not that mines are not physically invisible, truly, like radiation is, what you cannot penetrate is the actual space. For me as a photographer, coming from the background of documentary film and photography, that was really exciting because that space we can actually see and the depth of field is a construction of photographs. There is a depth of the actual land that you see that is that. It seems that we talk about

Chernobyl as if it were an event firmly in the past. But the victims and the consequences of Chernobyl they exist in present tense, we see them today and will continue to see them forever, because the actual time frame of radiation contamination, is not on a human scale. It is really global in time. It would be at least 600 years until the radiation goes down to a level where humans could come back, and the consequences for all kinds of life are constant. It is a kind of event that, like the landmines, remains a long time after the conflict ends. They remain in the present tense.

FRANKOZ— My trajectories through art school is the opposite of Amalika. I went to a very non-

traditional art school. During the first decade of my art career and throughout my schooling I did mostly time-based work and very ephemeral pieces. Over the years as I was moving forward, I went through a whole period of creating installations that in some way reflected the process of time, in the intrinsic narration that was taking place in those installations, and then I started moving into the bulfighting. Then, moving into the more kind of traditional, if you like, type of sculptural that I produced also implied learning how to do something. I mean, when I did those two cars that I showed you, I had never done a cast sculpture before, or a painting, or anything of that nature. As I moved forward, what I realized is that in

that arch of time, from the years of my formation as an artist to today, those issues of impermanence and ephemerality and spectrality that were present in my very early work, which I have been trying to attain through a whole different practice.

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE:

My name is Jane. I have a question related to the minefield one and Chernobyl. With the landmines, the way that it was designed a path, it was presumably a safe path, but I didn't know if the mines were set up in any kind of pattern because I thought that the way that you displayed your images not only presented the time of stepping through as you move forward but maybe also that how things are

positioned versus this problem of unplanned, unexpedited ordinance. **MICHEL**—There are different processes involved. All of the mine fields I went through are in the early process of demining. I went there in collaboration with the demining organizations from governments as in Cambodia or NOC like it was the case in Colombia. All of the mine fields that I showed you are in the early process of mapping, which is a long protocol of locating the mines to the best of their capabilities, because it's never one hundred percent safe. It's as safe as it can be in terms of where the explosives are. That's step one. Once the field is all mapped there is this whole discussion of what to do with

all these bombs. And yes, there are not only landmines, there are different things like cluster ammunition, which is something the States have used extensively in Afghanistan, which are bombs that are dropped from the planes, and they explode in the air into many different submunitions which stay on the ground. It is a particularly cruel weapon because these little submunitions have very bright colors, meant to attract kids curiosity. They are not only meant to create an impenetrable space, but to create this atmosphere of fear, and everlasting occupation of land. For example, in Cambodia, these types of weapons are a problem for their economy because they have so much land that is fertile but is full of these

ARTIST MICHEL
In: *Depth (Landmines)*,
2015, seven digital
photographic prints
433 x 288 in (110 x 73 cm)
each, Curson Foreman Art
Foundation Collection,
The Horn Museum
of Art and Craft (installation
view and detail).



ammunitions. I would not walk across any of the minefields that I showed you without mapping because that would be suicidal. They were all in different stages of early mapping. In the case of Colombia there was not map and the only thing that we could use to guide us were those little markings that you saw in the photos of the jungle with little color ribbons. When you see at least that there are some marks like those color ribbons, that you start to negotiate what kind of path may be possible. That's why in Colombia it was so tricky, and it was only possible to do those seven steps that we see here in the photos exhibited in the museum.

changed towards this desire to project light and design and this flat 2D image? Then, for all of you, how has your practice, and your focus changed as you progressed throughout your work?

REASAKAZOZ—Yeah, mutations and permutations. I think that I briefly mentioned during my presentation that as I was moving away from the narratives that were intrinsic to the work that I was doing as part of installations, and the works became more decentered, more formal, if you like. They gradually became autonomous. They separated from the source material, the cape, and all sort of that.

However, pretty much everything that I've done from that time on has its origin in that particular source material. It's like it's been generating iterations and permutations, but I'm not interested anyone in making a visible, recognizable reference. MUEL—It's wonderful how the interest evolves in our work. From all of my recent projects and to this day an aspect of my work usually deals with landscape, the problem of landscape, of landscape

representation, landscape, of course, is a subject matter in the history of art. It is interesting because really what is this thing called landscape? What aesthetic cognitive operation is behind that? When we look at fragments of nature and then decided to call it landscape, it is, of course, a solely human experience.

There are many common threads. I think that generated a lot of anxiety for a while, and then I just decided to go with it. I've been lucky, and I've been making work for a long time.

There is a way of thinking about change that doesn't have to do with progression. It's just a constellation of thoughts and then ideas, and I make things five years later that relate with questions that I started ten years before and that I project into the future. There are loose ends that I leave all the time that I go back to. What you saw today, it's almost like an exercise in myth making. I think I'm showing this work in that exhibition, let me just pull three works to explain alongside it. It is never a progression. I don't think of the development of my work in terms of a linear process, but I accept that there's an area of interest that I have and eventually there is air of familiarity between the works.

QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE
LAWRENZA ALVARADO: Thank you all for speaking. I enjoyed all of what you all had to say. I wanted to ask, speaking from the lens of the matador series, I thought it was interesting how you said that you worked through what I believe you said were permutations and transformations. I wanted to ask, as your practice has continued, how much of it is still focused on the matador, and how much has

been very different from itself. There aren't many common threads. I think that generated a lot of anxiety for a while, and then I just decided to go with it. I've been lucky, and I've been making work for a long time.

There is a way of thinking about change that doesn't have to do with progression. It's just a constellation of thoughts and then ideas, and I make things five years later that relate with questions that I started ten years before and that I project into the future. There are loose ends that I leave all the time that I go back to. What you saw today, it's almost like an exercise in myth making. I think I'm showing this work in that exhibition, let me just pull three works to explain alongside it. It is never a progression. I don't think of the development of my work in terms of a linear process, but I accept that there's an area of interest that I have and eventually there is air of familiarity between the works.

FALCON—Wonderful, Amalia? MUEL—For me my work has always

say something?

FUENMAYOR—José Gabriel, Amalia, and Alice all make work that is challenging to look at only through the lens of Latin American art. What does it mean for you [Falcon] to be here sharing with us your ideas on this topic?

FALCON—Well, first, this topic of "Latin-Americanism" so to speak, often causes discomfort. One of my latest essays on this issue had to do with exactly that, with having to label themselves and represent something they do not feel completely attached to. This is something that needs to be said. There clearly is a discomfort with the word "Latin American" functions to pigeonhole, label you, and make it seem as if you should only be addressing certain subjects, problems, and issues.

Alice is doing work about the world, about landscape. Amalia is concerned with the nature of communication. These topics have nothing to do with Latin America, per se. There is a way in which you can utilize the label effectively because we all have a label, in some way, at some point. If a gallery in New York wants you because of this label, well, why not? We all have to live off something.

but at some point the label becomes straight jacket and has become a problem for the artists. Yes, they do acknowledge they come from a tradition. They do acknowledge that tradition came from a place. We all come from somewhere, you know? And we all have moved somewhere else. We need to strive for new ways of understanding what is a cultural production of a region. We need to understand that maybe there are other matrices we have not observed.

Amalia just said she goes to Holland and hears on you must be suffering so much because of the cold, when she is from down in Patagonia. I mean, that is that is quite remarkable. That already tells you everything you know, I don't think it's a problem with Latin Americans. The problem lies in how the global system has basically pigeonholed us in certain aspects. I think we are fighting against that to some degree in order to be able to get out of that positioning that only caters to stereotype. It doesn't open up into a larger conversation without the asterisk. Without the little thing that says, well, we're Latin American artists. There is a larger landscape that we should be able to inhabit without running into these limitations.

VEDA—Well, you know, we've been in this boat for a while. I remember when I got the invitation to the exhibition opening at the Museum of Modern Art of *Latin American Artists of the Twentieth Century*. In the invitation it said, "please dress colorful!" At that time my work was concerned with Dante, the Italian poet, so they wanted Dante to become a parrot for that evening.

FALCON—I will say, this might be a little bit complicated but the truth is that all of this has been enhanced by especially now the way in which the United States understands multiculturalism, the way that the United States understands cultural distinctions. That is a model that doesn't fit Latin America well. The real problem is there are two different syntaxes, there are two different ways of understanding what you should do with your identity in cultural terms. We might need to maybe not look that much toward the United States.

Thank you so much! I really want to think that everyone here and in the virtual sphere for staying with us and to thank everyone for the conversation. Thank you, jesus, so much, not only for the incredible show, that you have curated, but also for bringing us here and for thinking very creatively and finding these specific artists who will actually work together very well. Muchas gracias. Thank you.



Amalia Pica,
If There Were Could Talk,
2021, wood, iron, canvas, screen,
paper, glass, string,
146 x 45 x 15 x 39 x 8 cm,
Idea, Curatorial, and
Creative Foundation Art
Foundation Collection,
courtesy University
Collection.



Plural Domains: Lessons

A Gallery Talk by JESUS FUMENAVOR
 HARM MUSEUM OF ART, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, GAINESVILLE.
 JANUARY 22, 2022

exhibitions internationally. From 2017 to 2019 he was the chief curator of the 34th Cuenca Biennial, which was titled *Living Structures: Art as Plural Experience* and before that he was an independent curator and director of the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation (CFA) in Miami from 2012 to 2015 and was director and curator of The Purificio Caracas from 2005 to 2011. Were really so lucky to be able to present this exhibition at the Harm and, today, to have Jesus to lead us through it, so please join me in welcoming Jesus.

JESUS FUMENAVOR Today, we are dealing with Latin American art and we are going to be showing Latin American art to a public that perhaps doesn't know so well what Latin American art is or what Latin American art looks like. Most of the time, when you say Latin American art to people who do not know so well what is currently happening, they have fixed ideas of what Latin American art is. I would say stereotypes in some cases. Some people think, Latin America, oh well, they should be painting parrots and palm trees, right? Or, maybe, artists are doing something committed socially like Diego Rivera's murals or surrealists like Frida Kahlo's painting, but that is not the case.

Latin American art forms a very diverse universe. What you get in Tijuana at the border with the US and what you see in Patagonia is so different. There are many different cultures, so what I want to do as a curator bringing this small selection in this exhibition was to spotlight a group of artists and start a conversation about the diversity, the plurality, which exists in Latin American art. That is why the name of the exhibition is: *Plural Domains*. What we did in terms of diversity was to bring as many artists from different places as we could. Here, in the exhibition, you can find artists from Brazil, Argentina, Cuba, Mexico, Uruguay, and more. Also, many of these artists from Latin America are part of the Latin American diaspora, so many of these artists are living abroad. Richard Garrett is living in Florida. You have artists living in London, artists living in Paris. That is also an important element of the show that you see that the works are informed by many different layers of cultural relations. This generation of artists is a very cultivated and are highly educated. They went to the best art schools,

They are intellectuals, and this is part of what it means to be a contemporary artist.

Contemporary art is not so much about trying to make something beautiful for the eyes. Contemporary artists are more for doing what they do for the brain, for the intellect. They are critical. They tend to try to say something about society. They think in terms of what it means to be working in a particular context at a particular time.

The diversity of today's present context in Latin America is in some way represented here. About a third of the artists in the exhibition are women, which is the same proportion that you find in the CFA's collection overall. Many artists are of Afro-Caribbean descent. There are artists of Afro-Brazilian descent. There are artists from many different cultures, but also from different class levels in society. Every one of these artists has so much to say. Their work is informed by all of their diverse life experiences.

What I wanted to do, today, is something that I don't usually do, I am going to organize my presentation around a central theme. I don't usually do that with this particular exhibition because this show is about plurality. If I narrow that scope, if I say that this show is about race or colonialism or history or whatever, then it's like imposing my vision on to what the artists are doing. It seems to me like a way of limiting the possibilities of plurality and diversity, but I am going to do it for you, here and now. I'm going to do this only for you, and then after we finish you have to forget everything I have said.

What I want to do today is focus on the pedagogical aspect of several works in this exhibition. I'm going to show you the educational aspect of each work and the specific learning process that each work guides the viewer through.

Let's start with this work by Jorge Mendez Blake. Mendez Blake is from Mexico. He works between Guadalajara and Mexico City. This piece teaches what I call the 'horizontal lesson' because it is a work that, in a way, is a portrait of the crisis that accompanies the process of being an artist. Every artist has to face the same very complex and very difficult process of creating something new. This may sound simple, but it is not. It is a complicated and loaded process.

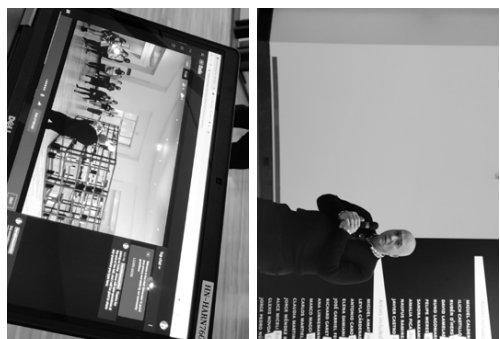
What Jorge Mendez Blake did, here, was to create what he calls the anthology of emptiness, an anthology being a collection. This work, and many others in the show as well, is the result of a long process of research. Through his research Blake built a collection of 150 to 160 quotes from writers explaining their frustrations trying to find something new and original to say. I'm going to read one example collected from the writings of Nicanor Parra who was an important twentieth-century poet from Chile. He says "I have got nothing left to say. Everything I had to say has already been said countless times."

What you are seeing, is the artist in the moment of existential crisis. A creatively frustrated artist who doesn't know what to say, and he's telling you about what he's going through. What Blake has done that is interesting with this work is to introduce the doubt and frustration of the creative process, as the subject in his own process of producing new work. The quotes collected here are amazing, and I would recommend reading them all. That's the reason why we placed that bench over there, so you can take one of the books, read them, and contemplate the quotes individually alongside Blake's work as a whole.

I also think it's important to have this installation here where visitors are likely to arrive at it first. This is the way I want people to see Latin American contemporary art, as something that is contemporary in the same way that any other artist from any other place is also contemporary. It is difficult to tell what is Mexican about this installation. There are no parrots. There are no palm trees. There are no bright colors. Yet, it is of Latin America.

Ok, so let's go behind the wall over here. The title of this piece is *Classroom: to learn what cannot be learned, or an unstable school*. This was made by an artist from Colombia. He's based in Bogotá. His name is Nicolás Paris, and he has a theory. He thinks that he can make people think differently through art. This is something that for most people, if they think that it is possible, they assume it is on an individual, case by case, basis. This is not what Nicolás is proposing. Nicolás claims that this is something that can be a collective kind of experience.

What he is imagining is that this space that he is constructing, it's



Jorge Mendez Blake, *Black Pavilion / Open Library*, 2013. Inked media, 3073 x 477 x 80 in. [5499 x 496 x 203 x cm]. Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation, courtesy Harm Museum of Art.



NICHOLAS HARRIS.
Classroom in Bern, what
can you do in a room
(for an installation titled), 2019
Oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm,
which cardboard supports,
printing, acrylic, gouache,
furniture, and shared time,
dimensions variable,
Cremes Foundation Art
Foundation Collection,
country: Bern Museum of Art.



do. I think this is an interesting practice because most people think that aesthetics do not have the potential to do something so radical as to decolonize but it does. This work makes it clear that the arts give the aesthetic experience this power of transforming something that was used to oppress other people into something that can be used to educate and liberate, that has this discourse about how to relate to the history of colonization.

The next work we are going to look at is concerned with how we visually represent history, specifically, how we represent the history of revolution and wars of independence. It is titled *Arzhibe Technologies*. The artist who created this piece, Miguel Amat, is Venezuelan, and he was looking into Venezuelan history.

In the early nineteenth century Venezuela fought many battles against the Spanish crown to liberate itself from Spanish control. What Miguel did was to find the exact places where the history books said battles took place, and he photographed them. Each one of these images you see here has as its title the name of a battle from the Venezuelan war for independence.

are multiple planes of glass in this work until the viewer walks right up to it and perhaps tries to touch the "glass," revealing that there is nothing there.

How is it that these two traditions can come together in one single piece? If they are so opposite to each other? Perhaps, the artist is encouraging us to question creating naturalistic illusions and the twentieth-century modern tradition of abstraction are truly so contradictory to each other? Mostly, it has to be said, contemporary artists are not looking for answers, they are looking for questions. They make space available for questioning. When you see contemporary artworks, ask many questions but don't expect definitive, singular responses. That is one of the difficult, but, ultimately, rewarding aspects of contemporary art: let's move to the next work.

The name of this piece is very long. The title is *Artificial Horizons Rigide Instrumens. The Space Between Double Grid Certainly*. It is long, but at the same time, the title is very literal. The artist, Manuela Ribadeneyra, is from Ecuador, and she's based in London.

the lesson taught by this work I like to call the "anti-colonial lesson"

What Manuela did was to study the navigation instruments of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century golden age of European exploration and colonialism and reproduce many of them here. So, then if the work consists of tools from the age of colonialism, why do I say that this is an anti-colonial proposal? I say that because what Manuela, at the end of the day, is doing is bringing these tools that were used in the fifteenth century to colonize and is removing the functionality from the tools. These tools are not functioning anymore. She has transformed them into something else. She has transformed these tools into sculptures, into objects that now have an aesthetic functionality only. They can no longer be used for navigation, so through art she has nullified the potential of the instruments to colonize.

reality through illusion. This is why Renaissance artists developed the use of linear perspective. The technique of linear perspective was an excellent tool for producing representations of space that seemed to match what the eyes see.

The other tradition found here in Galan's work that is often considered to be opposed to the Renaissance tradition is that of twentieth-century abstraction. What abstract modernist artists wanted was to remove external reality from art and claim that art could create its own reality.

Twentieth-century abstractionists are trying to get you to experience the work itself, not what the work is representing or what the work is replicating. There is no reference outside of the work that you need to understand. A purely abstract work has its own self-referentiality.

This work by Galan you can see, here, has this minimalist, abstract appearance with an emphasis on color and light. In this sense, it is like the works of Robert Rauschenberg or James Turrell. It creates this abstract atmosphere, but, at the same time, Galan has also constructed a work of illusion that tricks the eye. It looks like there

here, so you can come back once we finish the tour and go through what I call the "space lesson" in this tour.

Let's move on to the next work in the tour. This work teaches what I call the "perception lesson."

When you walk into the show this is the third of the three large installations with which you are confronted. Mendez Blake addressed the existential crisis that can accompany the creation of art. Nicolas Paris taught us lessons about how to learn from being in the space of art. This one, Marius Galan's *Spectacles (3 Spectacles)* is teaching us a lesson about perception that combines themes from the origins of western artistic expression in the Renaissance and contemporary art of the present day.

I think many contemporary artists are often trying to encourage the viewer to engage in an experience that is visually interesting, at least intriguing, which at the same time, forms an intellectual experience. Galan is trying to do this by bringing together two opposing artistic traditions. One is the Renaissance tradition of illusion, of trying to replicate

poetic. Remember the title of this piece is a *Classroom*, right? So, there is a lesson that we're learning with this. It says, "There is a garden in your pocket. There is a garden between your fingers. There is a garden behind your ear. There is a garden at your feet. How many rivers feed into a blue pencil?" These guidelines are trying to push the limits of the way you think.

Another of the guidelines I really like is called *Collective Geometry*. In it, the artist asks you to look around and try to make shapes of the space between us. He asks you to form shapes from the public space that exists between us and to collect those spaces. I think that the beauty of this guideline is that he is taking the geometrical structure of the piece and he's playing that structure in the spaces between you and everything else. He's asking you not to just look at the piece, but to let the piece inspire your perception of the space all around you. What you see in the piece that is structured by geometry, those strange elements that do not seem to have any reason to be there, can be found somewhere else. You are being asked to find what is in the piece outside of the piece. There are another ten or twelve guidelines in

These guidelines are really interesting and, I would say, even



MARCUS CAVALI,
3 Sections, 2011.
Mixed media,
150 x 200 x 270 in.
881 x 304 x 376 cm
Carnegie Foundation for
the Advancement of
Learning, New York
City, NY

But these works are not just those individual images. After consulting the history books, he also asked the people who lived nearby where they think the battle took place, and he photographed all the different possible locations. Finally, he looked at nineteenth-century representations of the battles in paintings and murals. He realized that the locations described by historians, the locations described by locals, and the landscapes depicted in the paintings did not always correspond to each other. So, what he did, then, was scan all of these pictures that he took in the places and elements of the painting, and he superimposed them all one atop the other. What we see here is not one single landscape, but we have multiple landscapes that all match certain accounts of the battle, merged into single images. This volcano at the top of this image, here, was taken from a painting. It is from the biggest mural in the Capitol in Caracas. It was something completely invented by the painter. That volcano is not supposed to be in this landscape, it's supposed to be in a completely different place, but since it is featured in other important stories related to Venezuelan independence, the

artist put together all these stories in one single painting. By pointing out these incongruities in the historical tradition, Miguel is revealing how people construct history. He is emphasizing in this work how history is something that is constructed from many different points of view, yet often appears as one cohesive form, and that in the production of that single historical narrative, certain viewpoints are often elided, misrepresented, and/or minimized. This work presents a lesson about the nature of recorded history.

ES—Ok, that was great. We have so more minutes if you have any questions?
AUDIENCE MEMBER 1—Can you speak some about the very interesting piece also in this exhibition that is partly made from human skin?
JC—That is a work titled *Ayudá Marfil*, Carlos. Carlos Maril is an artist who studied with two performance artists who are known for their use of shock strategies. These artists try to scandalize, try to shock people, to call attention to certain issues that they think people are not addressing in a

sufficient manner. Carlos is Cuban, he's Afro-Cuban which is a difficult position to be in in that country, and he is queer. With this work, he is calling attention to the difficulty that he and others have faced for having African heritage and being queer in Cuba. He also wanted to talk about the military honor his father received for fighting for the Cuban army. The Cuban army invaded Angola in the 1970s and he fought. Carlos is someone who is critical of the Cuban government because it is homophobic. It is well known that they arrested homosexuals at the beginning of the revolution in the 1960s. Also, traditionally there has been very little, if any, Afro-Cuban representation in the government. Carlos wanted to create a connection between his Afro and queer identity and bring attention to the problems of Cuban government. So, what he wanted to do was to create this symbolic performance where he receives a medal for his hardship like his father's medal. He made his body the material for that medal. He found a surgeon who was willing, and they took a piece of his skin, preserved it,

and placed it in a medal. That's his award for surviving while being African and gay in Cuba. When it was presented in Miami, everybody was asking what's happening here? Why is this guy taking a piece of his body to make art? You know, not everyone is willing to take a piece of their skin and transform it into an artwork, so that garnered a lot of attention for him and the plight of those like him. That was his goal, and he accomplished it.

ES— Please join me in thanking Jesus for his talk, today, and I'm sure he would be glad to chat with you about other works on view informally. Thank you, Jesus.

CONTRIBUTORS

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is a professor of art and human rights at the University of Connecticut, as well as the president of Cultural Arts, Inc., an NGO which promotes civic engagement and creativity through artistic education. From 2001 to 2011, Falconi was the art forum curator at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard University, curating more than thirty shows of cutting-edge Latino and Latin American artists in an academic setting. From 2011 to July 2017, he was an associate of the Department of Art History and Architecture at Harvard

JOSÉ GABRIEL FERNÁNDEZ

University, where he received his doctorate in romance languages and literatures in 2010, and his post-doctorate the following year in the history of art and architecture under the supervision of Prof. Thomas Cummins. His latest academic publications include *Portraits of an Invisible Country: The Photographs of Jorge Mario Múnera (2010)*, *A Singular Plurality: The Works of Darío Escobar (2013)*, *The Great Swindle: A Project by Santiago Montoya (2014)*, and *Adlum / To be used: The Works of Pedro Reyes (2017)*. His monograph on Mexican artist Fija Camil, *There are no Friendly Fires*, will be published in 2022. In the United States, Falconi has been appointed lecturer in the Department of Art History and Architecture at Brandeis University (2014-2020), at Boston University in the spring of 2016 and in the School of Fine Arts at the University of Connecticut in the spring of 2021. In Latin America, he was "honorarium" Visiting Professor of Aesthetics at the University of Chile (Santiago de Chile, 2015 and 2016), "International Professor" at the National University of Colombia (Bogotá, 2013), visiting professor at the Center for Latin American Studies "Manuel Galich" at the Universidad San Carlos of Guatemala (2016), and Distinguished Visiting Professor at the University of Costa Rica (2017).

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is a curator with more than thirty years of experience focused on international modern and contemporary art. At present works as Program Director and Curator at the University Galleries (UG) of the University of Florida, Gainesville. From 2017 to 2019 was the Chief Curator for the *14th Cuernavaca International Biennial* in Cuernavaca, Ecuador. Previously, held positions as Director and Curator of the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation in Miami (2012-2016) and as Director and Curator of *Perifoneo Caracas* (2005-2011). He is the curator of the exhibition *Piety, Dominus, Selected Works from the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation Collection*, on view at the Harn Museum of Art and in Europe, including at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the PS Contemporary Art Center in New York, the Museo de Arte Moderno in Rio de Janeiro and the Museo

Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid. He has had solo exhibitions at the Huxley-Pailor in London in 2019, at Henrique Faria Fine Art, New York in 2021, at the Sisa Mendoza in Caracas in 2010, at the Galleria Melina in Monterrey, Mexico, and Scharf Gallery in Houston in 2003. His work has been featured in major exhibitions of Latin American contemporary art and is represented in major private and public collections. Among the group exhibitions he has participated in include *The 14th Biennial of Cuernavaca* in Cuernavaca, Ecuador in 2018, *Contingent Beauty in Contemporary Art from Latin America* at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston in 2016, *Post-Kinetic: Conceptualism and Geometry in Venezuela* at Kale Gallery in Miami in 2011, *Correspondence: Contemporary Art from the Collection Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, Beaud and Weil Galleries* at Wheaton College in 2010, and in 2008 *Jump Art: Venezuelan Contemporary Art* in New York.

ACARUMILADE, CLASSIFY: PRESSURE, DIALOGUE, ROBERTO ORTIGÓN ARCHIVO FROM THE CAROLINA AND

