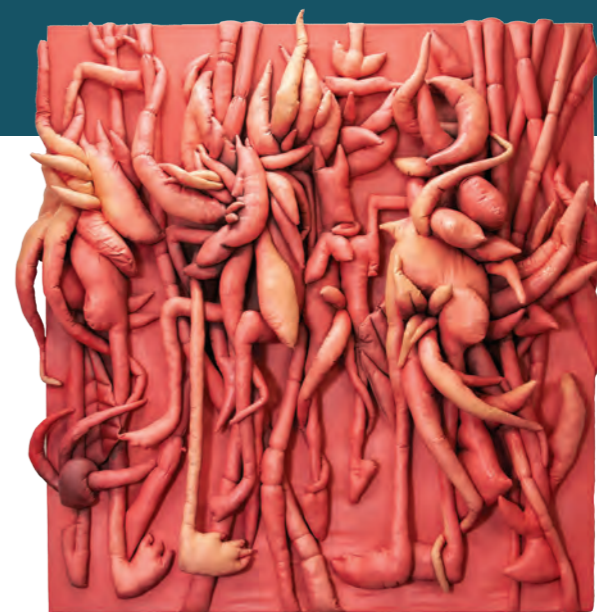


*Jungla carnal (Naked Jungle)*  
Elio Rodríguez Valdés, 2020  
Soft sculpture and acrylic



September 16–December 21, 2022

# El Pasado Mío / My Own Past

Afrodescendant Contributions to Cuban Art



THIS EXHIBITION proposes a new approach to Cuban art through a historical reconstruction built from and through the production of artists of African heritage.

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Africans and their descendants have been the creators of much of the material cultures of the Americas, yet their contributions are seldom acknowledged, identified, attributed, and studied. Many of the Africans who survived the Middle Passage and landed in Cuba and other colonies came from areas, communities, and cultures with a long and rich visual production. Against significant odds, they were able to reconstruct kinship networks and cultural practices in the colonies. Historical African knowledge, sensibilities, techniques, and visual cues found their way into colonial and modern visual cultures. Identifying these contributions is no easy task, but most scholars, curators, and critics, steeped in Western methodologies and chronologies of the visual arts, have not even tried. The exhibition provides a critical framework for deconstructing dominant narratives about Cuban art and tells stories that have been left out of

Cuban art the canon. The exhibition also incorporates key examples of contemporary art and artists who are addressing colonial history, identity, and slavery in their work and activism today.

By centering the visual production of Cuban artists of African descent from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present for the first time, *El Pasado Mío / My Own Past* seeks to highlight the racialized understandings that have informed the traditional canon, which is after all built around the notion of master pieces. “Master” refers not only to proficiency or skill, but also to dominance, control, and ownership, especially of enslaved human beings. We hope to invite new approaches, new questions, much-needed new research, by showcasing a group of artists who have never been exhibited together, including some who have received very limited attention from art historians, critics, and collectors. Prominent among

these is a group of ten female artists of African descent who have never shared the same exhibition space. The contributions of these artists cannot be boxed into any singular “black” style, theme, approach, or technique. Largely inspired by the legendary exhibition curated by Afro-Brazilian artist and curator Emanuel Araújo, *A Mão Afro-Brasileira*, in 1988, this exhibition contributes to wider efforts to overcome institutional neglect and to rewrite the art history of the Americas by calling attention to the production of its artists of African descent. We want to understand Cuba’s pasts through their lives, experiences, and artistic production. We are trying to get close to their own pasts.

The exhibition includes 52 pieces in different media and formats (painting, sculpture, installation, photography, and video) by 43 artists. It spans two centuries, from the 1820s to the present.

**H** Ethelbert Cooper  
Gallery of African &  
African American Art  
at the Hutchins Center



# the ARTISTS

(in chronological order by birth date)

## 1700s

**Escobar y Flores, Vicente** (1762-1834)

## 1870s

**Ariza y Delance, Maria** (1873-1959)

## 1880s

**Argudín Pedroso, Pastor** (1880-1968)

## 1890s

**Rivero Merlín, Emilio** (1890-1977)

**Loy, Ramón** (1894-1986)

**Peña, Alberto** (1897-1938)



*Flamboyán, carreta y bohío*  
(Poinciana Tree, Cart and Hut)  
Pastor Argudín, 1936



*Mi casa de campo (My Country Home)*  
Ruperto Jay Matamoros, 1981

## 1900s

**Lam y Castilla, Wifredo** (1902-1982)

**Ramos Blanco, Teodoro** (1902-1972)

**Gelabert, Florencio** (1904-1995)

## 1910s

**Matamoros, Ruperto Jay** (1912-2008)

**Nuez, Gilberto de la** (1913-1993)

## 1920s

**Diago Querol, Roberto** (1920-1955)

**Llinás, Guido** (1923-2005)

**Solis, Uver** (1923-1974)

**Rodríguez Cobas, Rogelio** (1925-2014)

**Cárdenas, Agustín** (1927-2001)

**Suárez del Villar, Mariano** (1929-1996)

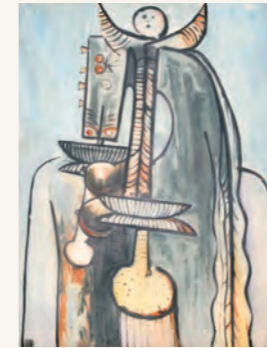
## 1930s

**Acosta León, Angel** (1930-1964)

**Guillén Landrián, Nicolás** (1938-2003)



*Muchacha con sombrilla*  
(Young Lady with Umbrella)  
Uver Solís, Ca. 1945



*Femme Cheval (Woman Horse)*  
Wifredo Lam, 1943

## 1940s

**Toscano Mora, Pablo** (1940-2003)

**Herrera Valdés, Adelaida** (1941-2015?)

**Queneditt y Morales, Rafael** (1942-2016)

**Mendive Hoyo, Manuel** (b. 1944)

**Choco (Eduardo Roca Salazar)** (b. 1949)

## 1950s

**Lescay Merencio, Alberto** (b. 1950)

**Valdés Borrero, Julia** (b. 1952)

**Soto, Leandro** (1956-2022)

**Peña, René** (b. 1957)

**Campos Pons, Maria Magdalena** (b. 1959)



*Untitled*  
René Peña, 1994

## 1960s

**Valdés, Juana** (b. 1963)

**Arenas, Manuel** (b. 1964)

**Alom, Juan Carlos** (b. 1964)

**Montalván Cuéllar, Andrés** (b. 1966)

**Rodríguez Valdés, Elio** (b. 1966)

**Ayón Manso, Belkis** (1967-1999)

**Esquivel Bermúdez, Alexis** (b. 1968)

**Mariño, Armando** (b. 1968)

## 1970s

**Arrechea, Alexandre** (b. 1970)

**Diago Durruthy, Juan Roberto** (b. 1971)

**Rivalta Oliva, Gertrudis** (b. 1971)

**Castillo, Liset** (b. 1974)

## 1980s

**Delahante Matienzo, Susana Pilar** (b. 1984)

**Martiel, Carlos** (b. 1989)



*Fantasmas de azúcar (Sugar Ghosts)*  
Rivalta Oliva Gertrudis, 2002

The Ethelbert Cooper Gallery of  
African & African American Art

102 Mount Auburn Street  
Cambridge MA 02138

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Cover Art: *Desperate Measures*; **Alexandre Arrechea**, 2019; UVI ink on wood  
Above: *Disobediencia (Desobediencia)*; **Belkis Ayón**, 1998; Set of 8 collagraphs, set 3 of 4