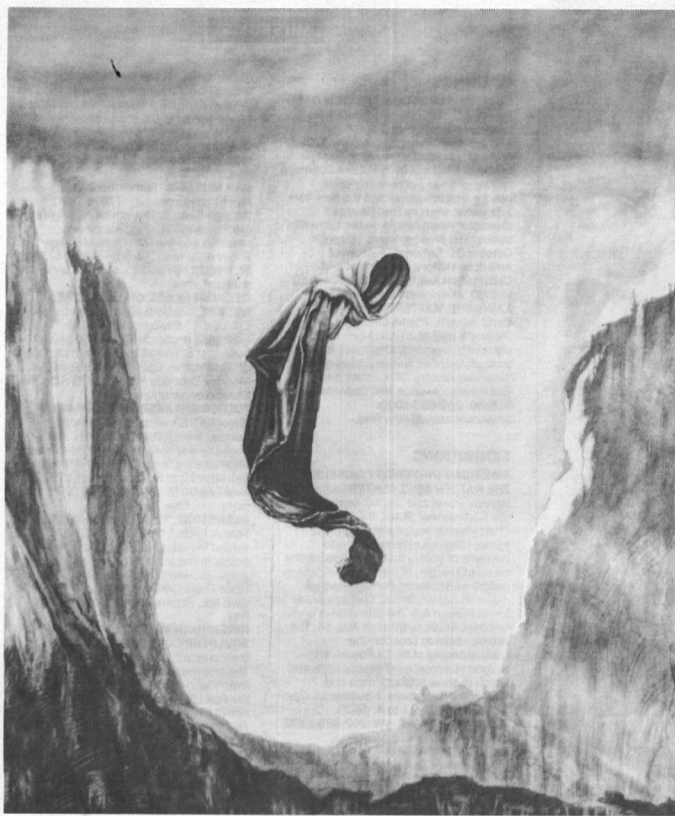


Weekend

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On Exhibit 19



FRANK MUJICA/ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS OF THE OAS

Cuban art that's in your face

Fifteen young artists display an awareness of the world around them — especially their big neighbor to the north

BY MARK JENKINS

To judge by "(Art)xiomas: Cubaahora: The Next Generation," contemporary Cuban art may not be outspoken, but it certainly isn't reticent. The 15 young Cubans represented in the exhibition at the Art Museum of the Americas are partial to conspicuous gestures.

They fill walls and even whole galleries with installations, paintings, sculptures, video animations and photos. Objects hang from the ceiling, or ascend toward it. In one darkened room, Mabel Poblet arranges a tangle of red, white and blue threads, impossible to stroll through without getting entangled. But then that's true of much of this in-your-face art. (At the show's opening, the space was the setting for a performance in which Poblet appeared nude.)

Even the simplest pieces are

grand in scale. Grethell Rasúa's photograph of a Cuban prima ballerina's ankles, feet and bloodied toes is much larger than life-size. Frank Mujica's handsome pencil drawing is not merely on canvas rather than paper; it's a diptych that stretches across a pair of towering panels.

Cuba has not accepted membership in the Organization of American States, and this exhibition was organized by the cultural wing of Spain's government, not Cuba's. The show arrived in Washington as part of the celebration of the centenary of the museum's Cuban-bred founding director, José Gómez-Sicre (1916-1991).

Many of the pieces reflect on Cuban identity, but not from an insular perspective. The artists, all born during the 1980s, are clearly aware of the wider world — and its art market. Their ideas, materials and techniques show a familiarity with what's on display

in New York, Berlin and Hong Kong.

Thus the artworks that contemplate Cuba often do so in the context of its big neighbor to the north. Poblet uses a plastic architectural model and video projections to overlap images of the capitol buildings in Havana and Washington, more alike than different. Lisandra Ramirez's "They Coming" dangles a score of mobiles that feature collages of balloons, space shuttles and celebrities, including American actors, fashion models and politicians.

Imperialist notables from an earlier era are yanked from their usual context in Adrian Fernandez's enlargements of details from postage stamps that depict Spanish conquistadors. Adislen Reyes makes folding fans from Cuban and American newspapers to unite "two ideologies on the back of a single fan." Alex Hernández's "Natural Selection" offers 11 eagles, but 10 of them are not

If you go

(ART)XIOMAS: CUBAAHORA: THE NEXT GENERATION

Art Museum of the Americas, 201 18th St. NW. 202-370-0147. museum.oas.org.

Dates: Through Aug. 7.

Admission: Free.

Frank Mujica goes big with his pencil drawing "Sin título (Untitled)," a diptych that stretches across two giant panels at the Art Museum of the Americas.

natural at all: They're outlines of stylized renderings from crests and seals, including the official U.S. version.

The eagles are inscribed in white on glass and mounted slightly away from the wall so their lines throw shadows. The gambit is characteristic of "(Art)xiomas," which contains many pieces that protrude into space and toy with viewers' perceptions.

This swagger can sometimes seem just a sort of artistic assertiveness training, but it's also meant to convey urgency. Adriana Arronte's "Migration" covers the walls around a staircase with dark-colored moths to symbolize human migrants and refugees — and the fear they can engender. Arianna Contino's "The Ascension" is a climbing wall of glass footholds, so that agile mountaineers can follow Jesus to heaven. The piece, however, is not keyed

CUBAAHORA CONTINUED ON 20

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On Exhibit 20



GRETHELL RASÚA AND HAROLD GARCÍA/ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS OF THE OAS

CUBAAHORA FROM 19

only to Christian tradition: Legends around the vertical pathway list the total adherents of the globe's biggest religions, and the number of deaths attributed to religious violence.

The threads of Poblet's installation represent the "chrysalis" of human experience, she writes, but they also suggest the body's internal conduits. Her piece complements Jorge Otero's "hand-knit" photos of working-class Cubans, which elegantly interlace strands of digital images to con-

Photographers Grethell Rasúa and Harold García have their subjects press items, such as this plant stalk in "Serie Mediadores que marcan experiencias," against skin.

struct realistic pictures, woven like the straw hats one of the subjects wears.

Where Otero painstakingly glues and reassembles photographic portraits, Rasúa and Harold García use photography to document the actual manipulation of bodies. They show flesh

that has been temporarily imprinted with the shape of objects — a medal, an amulet, a plant stalk — that have personal meaning to the person who pressed it against his or her skin.

Painter Roger Toledo does something similar with two sweeping landscapes, both of which are embossed with a repeated pattern, as if to dig beneath and look beyond the surface. If the art in "(Art)xiomas" is not bluntly political, it is actively engaged with the world it sees and represents.

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MUSEUMS

OPENINGS

CULTURE EXHIBITION PREVIEW CASE

Recent acquisitions representing the museum's Division of Culture and the Arts are displayed including the 2015 NCAA March Madness tournament brackets filled out by President Obama, a replica of Brian Setzer's signature orange Gretsch guitar and the New York Jets jacket worn by Fred Savage's character Kevin Arnold on the television series "The Wonder Years," through October 31. National Museum of American History, 14th Street and Constitution Avenue NW. Open daily 10 to 5:30. americanhistory.si.edu. Free.

LAUGHING MATTERS

Artifacts from Carol Burnett, Phyllis Diller and Miss Piggy are part of an exhibition that demonstrates voice of comedy in society, through October. National Museum of American History, 14th Street and Constitution Avenue NW. Open daily 10 to 5:30. 202-633-1000. americanhistory.si.edu. Free.

EXHIBITIONS

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY MUSEUM AT THE KATZEN ARTS CENTER

Bandits and Heroes, Poets and Saints; Popular Art of the Northeast of Brazil, through Aug. 14. Photographs, sculptures, paintings, prints, religious objects, toys and booklets of poetry that demonstrate the blend of cultures of Africans, indigenous people and colonial Portuguese that make up today's Brazil. Contemporary North Korean Art: The Evolution of Socialist Realism, through Aug. 14. The exhibit seeks to broaden the understanding of North Korean art beyond stereotypes of propaganda and kitsch to show sophisticated and nuanced expressive achievements. Open Tuesday-Sunday 11 to 4. 4400 Massachusetts Ave. NW. 202-885-1300. americanu.edu. Free.

ANACOSTIA COMMUNITY MUSEUM

"Twelve Years That Shook and Shaped Washington: 1963-1975," through Oct. 23. The exhibit focuses on the social, economic and political changes that affected the city during that time. Open daily 10 to 5. 1901 Fort Pl. SE. 202-633-4820. anacostia.si.edu. Free.

ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS

"(Art)xiomas," through Aug. 7. The exhibit presents contemporary Cuban painting, engraving, photography, sculpture, design and video. Open Tuesday-Sunday 10 to 5. 201 18th St. NW. museum.oas.org. Free.

ARTHUR M. SACKLER GALLERY

"Painting With Words: Gentleman Artists of the Ming Dynasty," through Sunday. From the 1460s to the 1620s, Wu School artists were admired for their poetry, calligraphy and painting, known in China as the Three Perfections. "Body of Devotion: The Cosmic Buddha in 3-D," through Dec. 1. An installation of the cosmic Buddha, a 6th-century, life-size limestone figure of Vairocana covered with narrative scenes that represent moments in the life of the historical Buddha, as well as the Buddhist Realms

of Existence. "Turquoise Mountain: Artists Transforming Afghanistan," through Jan. 29. Artisans from the Murad Khani district of Old Kabul demonstrate their work and share their experiences. Open daily 10 to 5:30. 1050 Independence Ave. SW. 202-366-1000. asia.si.edu. Free.

DAR MUSEUM

"Remembering the American Revolution, 1776 to 1890," through Sept. 3. The exhibit highlights creative ways in which Americans remembered the war. Open Monday-Friday 9:30 to 4, Saturday 9 to 5. 1776 D St. NW. 202-879-3241. www.dar.org/museum. Free.

DECATUR HOUSE ON LAFAYETTE SQUARE

"The President's Neighborhood Exhibition," through Sept. 2. This exhibition relates the story of a pivotal historic preservation success in the heart of Washington. Open Sunday noon to 4, Monday-Saturday 10 to 5. 1610 H St. NW. whitehousehistory.org. Free.

FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY

"America's Shakespeare," through Sunday. Rare letters, costumes and books reveal how Americans have made Shakespeare their own. Open Monday-Saturday 10 to 5, Sunday noon to 5. 201 East Capitol St. SE. 202-544-7077. folger.edu. Free.

GLENSTONE

"Fred Sandback: Light, Space, Facts," through Dec. 1. The exhibit includes works from different points in the artist's career and displays drawings, wooden reliefs and sculptures. Open Thursday-Sunday 10 to 5. 12002 Glen Rd., Potomac. www.glenstone.org. Free.

HIRSHHORN MUSEUM AND SCULPTURE GARDEN

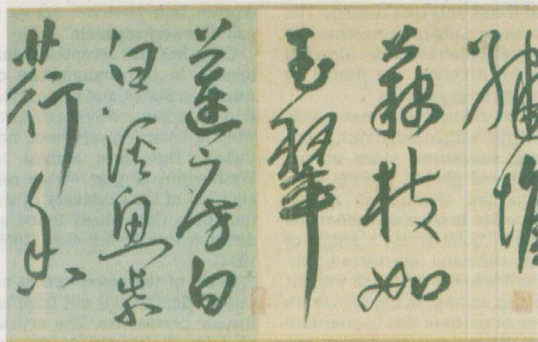
"Robert Irwin: All the Rules Will Change," through Sept. 5. The first museum survey devoted to Irwin's work from the 1960s, as well as the first U.S. museum survey outside his native California since 1977. "Bettina Poustchi: World Time Clock," through Oct. 2. The German artist created the "World Time Clock" over the course of eight years, traveling the globe and making a portrait of a public clock in 24 time zones. "Suspended Animation," through March 12. Artists Ed Atkins, Antoine Catala, Ian Cheng, Josh Kline, Helen Marten and Agnieszka Polska challenge conceptions of reality. "Linn Meyers: Our View From Here." A site-specific wall drawing stretching the circumference of the inner-circle galleries on the museum's second level. Open daily 10 to 5:30; sculpture garden open 7:30 to dusk. Seventh Street and Independence Avenue SW. 202-633-1000. hirshhorn.si.edu. Free.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, MADISON BUILDING

"Jazz Singers," through Saturday. Singers from the 1920s to the present are profiled in this exhibition, which includes photographs, personal notes and correspondence, video clips, musical scores, drawings and watercolors. Open Monday-Saturday, 8:30 to 4:30. 101 Independence Ave. SE. 202-707-9779. loc.gov. Free.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, JEFFERSON

EXHIBITS CONTINUED ON 21



REGENTS' COLLECTIONS ACQUISITION PROGRAM/FREER GALLERY OF ART

"Six Poems on the Lotus Marshes" by Wang Chong (1494-1533) is on display at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery as part of "Painting With Words: Gentleman Artists of the Ming Dynasty."