

OUR AMERICA AT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG SPOTLIGHTS COMPELLING WORK BY GIFTED LATINO ARTISTS FROM ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S BEST COLLECTIONS

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Our America: The Latino Presence in American Art is one of the most expansive exhibitions of Latino art ever presented in the Tampa Bay area. It features 75 works by 62 gifted modern and contemporary artists, drawn entirely from the illustrious collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C.

Our America opens Thursday, October 27, 2016 and continues through Sunday, January 22, 2017. Local sponsors are Bright House Networks; Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick, LLP; Telemundo Tampa; and the *Tampa Bay Times*.

The art is as diverse as Latinos themselves. Some works, including vintage posters, respond to political issues and the relationship of Latinos to the dominant Anglo culture. Others correct historical narratives, reclaiming the role of Latinos in the foundation and development of North America. Dr. E. Carmen Ramos, Curator of Latino Art at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, organized this traveling exhibition.

Latino artists have always been part of the American story, but they began to assert their presence more fully in the 1960s, during the Civil Rights era and the struggles of César Chávez and the United Farm Workers Union. Along with other minorities, Latinos have struggled for equality, which is often chronicled in the works on view.

A number of Mexican-American artists looked to the great Mexican muralists—Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros—and began producing murals in Los Angeles. They celebrated their Mexican heritage, as well as their bicultural roots. John Valadez's *Two Vendors* (1989), for example, looks like it would be at home in a mural.

Luis Jiménez (1940-2006) remains one of our most heralded sculptors for his dramatic use of painted fiberglass. His early, heroic *Man on Fire* (1969) recalls an anti-Vietnam War protest, but also conveys the Mexican-American spirit, which cannot be quenched. Margarita Cabrera's soft sculptures of appliances bring to mind women toiling in *maquiladoras* (factories) on the Mexico-U.S. border, but they also humanize and feminize objects of steel, aluminum, and plastic.

Puerto Rican artists have explored their ties to the island, as well as to the vibrant Nuyorican culture now spreading to cities like Orlando and Cleveland. Juan Sánchez's mixed-media work *Para Don Pedro* (1992), Marcos Dimas's painting *Pariah* (1971-1972), Sophie Rivera's photographic portraits, and Joseph Rodríguez's C-prints are prime examples.

The Cuban exile and dreams of a homeland loom large in the work of many Cuban-American artists. In her installation *El Patio de Mi Casa* (1990), María Brito, who lives in Miami, explores

the attempts of the exiled to establish a new home. María Magdalena Campos Pons mines the strong African dimension of Cuban, Latin American, and North American cultures in her photograph *Constellation* (2004).

Familia y fe (family and faith) have played a large role in Latino cultures and art, as exemplified by Muriel Hasbun's evocative photographs, Carmen Lomas Garza's telling works on paper, and Jessie Treviño's affectionate tribute to his brothers, *Mis Hermanos* (1976). Emanuel Martínez's *Farm Workers' Altar* (1967) resonates with memorials created in the home.

Like their peers, Latinos have been influenced by North American and European artists, movements, and styles. Olga Albizu's abstract *Radiante* (1967) radiates color and light, and the geometric paintings of Freddy Rodríguez, who was born in the Dominican Republic, have an infectious energy.

Our America places Latino art and communities squarely within the fabric of art history and the country at large. As photographer Joseph Rodríguez eloquently explains, "I come from a place of hope and that's where the tenderness comes in. I want the reader to see 'us' not 'them.' "

ABOUT THE CATALOGUE

The handsome 367-page catalogue includes striking reproductions, entries on the artists and their work, and illuminating essays by pioneering scholar Tomás Ybarra-Frausto and Curator E. Carmen Ramos. The hardcover is available for \$65 and the softcover for \$40 in the Museum Store.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Special MFA: Make and Take, Saturday, October 29, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.: Get ready for *el Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) by decorating a papier-mâché sugar skull (*calavera*) or a frame to commemorate a friend or family member. No registration necessary. FREE with MFA admission.

Coffee Talk with Nan Colton, Wednesday, November 9: *In Every Mind is a World*, Nan Colton portrays the great Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, who has influenced Latino artists, as well as others around the world. Refreshments at 10 a.m., Ms. Colton's performance at 10:30, and a general docent tour at 11:15. FREE with MFA admission.

Book Club @ the MFA, Thursday, November 10, 6:30 p.m.: The Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Díaz draws us closer to the themes in *Our America*. Díaz teaches writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and is a past recipient of the MacArthur "Genius Grant." Presented by Keep St. Pete Lit and the MFA. FREE with MFA admission, which is only \$5 after 5 p.m. on Thursday.

Our America Family Day, Saturday, November 12, 10:30 a.m.-3 p.m.: Experience the food, music, and artistic traditions of the three largest Latino cultures represented in *Our America*: Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, and Cuban-American. Hands-on activities, live music, and food to buy and sample will be part of this vibrant day for people of all ages. FREE with MFA admission.

MFA: Make and Take, Saturday, December 3 and 17, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.: Many Latin American and Latino cultures create *milagros* to request divine help or to express gratitude for answered prayers. They can become works of art in their own right. Turn to your own experience for your *milagro*. FREE with MFA admission.

The Contemporaries Lunchtime Lecture, Monday, December 5, noon: Noel Smith, Curator of Latin American and Caribbean Art and Curator of Education at the USF Contemporary Art Museum in Tampa, will illuminate works and themes in *Our America*. Ms. Smith has special expertise in Cuban art. \$5 (lecture only), plus MFA admission; \$10 (lecture and lunch) for Contemporaries members; \$15 (lecture and lunch) for nonmembers of The Contemporaries. **Lunch reservations must be made by 3 p.m. the Friday before the lecture.** Please visit mfastpete.org.

Wayne W. and Frances Knight Parrish Lecture by Dr. E. Carmen Ramos, Thursday, December 8, 6:30 p.m.: Dr. Ramos, Curator of *Our America*, joined the Smithsonian American Art Museum in 2010 to strengthen and expand its major collection of Latino art.

Previous projects include *BLACKOUT: A Centennial Commission* by Paul Henry Ramirez (2010), a site-specific exhibition at The Newark Museum, and *Cut, Build and Weld: Process in Works* by Chakaia Booker (2010) at the Visual Arts Center of New Jersey in Summit. She co-curated the fifth biennial at El Museo del Barrio in New York in 2007 and has developed exhibitions about Mexican popular arts and works by Franco Mondini-Ruiz and Freddy Rodríguez. She is writing a monograph about Mr. Rodríguez that is part of the *A Ver: Revisioning Art History* book series and is organizing *Tamayo: The New York Years*.

Dr. Ramos holds her BA in art history and psychology from New York University and her MA and PhD in art history from the University of Chicago. Her research interests encompass modern and contemporary Latino, Latin American, and African American art.

The Parrishes donated many of the Museum's most significant pre-Columbian objects, which are displayed in a gallery named in their honor. Mr. Parrish was a successful publisher of aviation magazines, and Mrs. Parrish was Director of the U.S. Passport Office from 1955-1977. FREE with MFA admission, which is only \$5 after 5 p.m. on Thursday.

OUR AMERICA NATIONAL SUPPORTERS

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ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

The MFA at 255 Beach Drive N.E. has a world-class collection, with works by Monet, Morisot, Rodin, O’Keeffe, Willem de Kooning, and many other great artists. Also displayed are ancient Greek and Roman, Egyptian, Asian, African, pre-Columbian, and Native American art. Selections from the photography collection, one of the largest and finest in the Southeast, are now on view in a gallery dedicated to the medium.

Hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, until 8 p.m. on Thursday, and noon-5 p.m. Sunday. **Admission is only \$5 after 5 p.m. on Thursday.** Regular admission is \$17 for adults, \$15 for those 65 and older, and \$10 for students seven and older, including college students with current I.D. Children under seven and Museum members are admitted free. Groups of 10 or more adults pay only \$12 per person and children \$4 each with prior reservations. The MFA Café is open from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday. For more information, please call 727.896.2667 or visit mfastpete.org.