

ERNESTO LEAL

Ernesto Leal is a Cuban multidisciplinary artist whose practice moves across painting, drawing, installation, performance, photography, and video. Born in Havana in 1971 and trained at Paulita Concepción and San Alejandro, he emerged in the late 1980s within the orbit of Arte Calle and developed one of the most sustained language-based practices of his generation within contemporary Cuban art.

Across canvases, interventions, performances, and text-driven installations, Leal investigates how spoken and written language are used, misused, appropriated, fragmented, and reassembled. His work treats language as image and social material, linking conceptual rigor to visual poetry, institutional critique, and unstable meaning. His work has been presented at LACMA, documenta fifteen, the 7th Istanbul Biennial, Pérez Art Museum Miami, the Bronx Museum, and the National Museum of Fine Arts in Havana.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 SINTAXIS, The Bonnier Gallery, Miami, FL, USA
- 2022 Gramatical, Elvira Moreno Gallery, Bogota, Colombia
- 2018 Triple-Lenguaje, Tasneem Gallery, Barcelona, Spain
- 2014 Word Cloud: Which are the most repeated words in Cuban art?, Cristo Salvador Gallery, Havana, Cuba
- 2013 Four Confused Messages, Museo de Arte Pinar del Rio (MAPRI), Pinar del Rio, Cuba
Forced Institutionalization, Cristo Salvador Gallery, Havana, Cuba
- 2011 Psicofonias (Instituto Superior de Dobleagentes), Espaidos, Sala Muncunill, Terrassa, Barcelona, Spain
Titles, Tasneem Gallery, Barcelona, Spain
- 2009 Dysfunctions of Language, Habana Gallery, Havana, Cuba
- 2006 Higher Institute of Doubleagents (Audiovisuals Department), ICAIC Cultural Center, Havana, Cuba
- 2004 Document, with Luis Gomez, La Casona Gallery, Havana, Cuba
- 2003 Foto Septiembre. Styrofoam Words, Nina Menocal Gallery, Mexico City, Mexico
- 2001 Civilians in Shock, with Manuel Pina, Habana Gallery, Havana, Cuba
- 1999 With Silencer, Fototeca de Cuba, Havana, Cuba
- 1998 Chemical Screens, Sicardi-Sanders Gallery, Houston, TX, USA
Ten days without speaking, Project Obsessions, Wifredo Lam Center for Contemporary Art, Havana, Cuba
- 1997 The stone falls, Sicardi Gallery, Houston, TX, USA
Discussion with Betara Desa, with Juan Jose Olavarria, Farish Gallery, Rice University, Houston, TX, USA
Title: Ernesto Leal, Teodoro Ramos Blanco Gallery, Havana, Cuba
- 1996 The uncreated, Aglutinador Space, Havana, Cuba
- 1995 The Double (17 exercises), with Juan Jose Olavarria, Visual Arts Development Center (CDAV), Havana, Cuba
- 1990 Revolution is involution, artist's home, Cerro, Havana, Cuba

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 CUBA REVISITED: Twenty Years Later, Jonathan Ferrara Gallery, New Orleans, LA, USA
To the Bitter End, Documenta 15, Kassel, Germany
- 2019 Mente Perdida, as part of La era Hans Hacke ha terminado, Procesual Art Studio, Havana, Cuba
- 2018 Malditos de la postguerra, Aglutinador Space, Havana, Cuba
On the Horizon: Contemporary Cuban Art from the Jorge M. Perez Collection, Perez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL, USA

- 2017 Art x Cuba: Contemporary Perspectives Since 1989, Ludwig Forum fur Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany
- 2016 Growing up in Neverland, Scarfone-Hartley Gallery, University of Tampa, Tampa, FL, USA
Cuba. Tatuare la storia, PAC - Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan, Italy
- 2015 Welcome/Goodbye, Torrione Passari Arte Contemporanea, Bari, Italy
Contaminacion, National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba
The Spaces Between: Contemporary Art from Havana, Bildmuseet, Umea University, Sweden
La Llegada al Fracaso, 12th Havana Biennial, Parque Morro-Cabanas, Havana, Cuba
Sovereignty (Post-Zone), Cristo Salvador Gallery, Havana, Cuba
Nano, 12th Havana Biennial, Teodoro Ramos Gallery, Havana, Cuba
Pulso; Coleccion Efimera, 12th Havana Biennial, Gallery L, Havana, Cuba
De Facto, Xoho, Havana, Cuba
- 2014 Cuban Virtualities, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA
Late Summer Exhibition, Tasneem Gallery, Barcelona, Spain
Odeon 2014, Odeon Space, Bogota, Colombia
Las Otras Narraciones, Wifredo Lam Center for Contemporary Art, Havana, Cuba
A este lado del paraiso, National Library of Cuba, Havana, Cuba
Pan y Circo, Ruinas de circo, Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA), Havana, Cuba
Diga lo que quiera, nadie sabra quien lo dijo, Aglutinador Space, Havana, Cuba
The Spaces Between: Contemporary Art from Havana, Belkin Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada
- 2013 Me encantaria dejar la calle, Cristo Salvador Gallery, Havana, Cuba
Estampa Arte Multiple, Matadero, Madrid, Spain
Arranjos Experimentais Audiovisuales de Latinoamerica y Espana, CINUSP, Sao Paulo, Brazil
Video Cubano, College of New Jersey Art Gallery, Ewing, NJ, USA
Cuban Virtualities, Tufts University Art Gallery, Boston, MA, USA
Turn On, National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba
The Removed Fragment, Tasneem Gallery, Barcelona, Spain
- 2012 SH Contemporary Art Fair, Shanghai, China
Revolution Not Televised, Bronx Museum, New York, NY, USA
Herejes del vacio, Habana Gallery, Havana, Cuba
India Art Fair, NSIC Exhibition Complex, New Delhi, India
- 2011 Imagecity: Selections from Video Cubano, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA, USA
Pinta, Earls Court Exhibition Centre, London, UK
With hands and feet, Torrance Art Museum, Torrance, CA, USA
Ya se leer, Wifredo Lam Center for Contemporary Art, Havana, Cuba
- 2010 The Collector's Eye: Peers Works from the collection of Fernando Castro, FotoFest, Houston, TX, USA
Digital Ocean, Sala Puertanueva, Boti Foundation, Cordoba, Spain
Profane Expressions, David Castillo Gallery, Miami, FL, USA
Recent acquisitions, Rubin Foundation, New York, NY, USA
Biennial Portugal Arte 10, Lisbon, Portugal
Text to speech, Bonelli Lab, Mantova, Italy
- 2009 Crossing cultures, Reininhaus, Graz, Austria
Confluencias II. Inside Art Cuba, National Hispanic Cultural Center, Albuquerque, NM, USA
Data, Servando Gallery, Havana, Cuba
HB, Pabexpo, Havana, Cuba

- 2008 Red, Valle 70, Havana, Cuba
V Contemporary Art Salon, Visual Arts Development Center (CDAV), Havana, Cuba
Show Off, Pierre Cardin Space, Paris, France
Ghost posters, 23 y 12 Gallery, Havana, Cuba
- 2007 Homing devices, USF Contemporary Art Museum, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL, USA
Vostok, Centro de artes plasticas y diseno, Havana, Cuba
- 2006 The Doubtful Strait, Limits, Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MADC), San Jose, Costa Rica
Personal project, National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba
Off line, Hispano-American Culture Center, Havana, Cuba
- 2005 Contact and mediation: Poetics of the digital in Cuban art, Dunlop Art Gallery, Regina, Canada
Barro de America, Marta Traba Gallery, Sao Paulo, Brazil
- 2004 Biennial Barro de America, Lia Bermudez Maracaibo Art Center, Maracaibo, Venezuela
Havana Inside Out, Jonathan Ferrara Gallery, New Orleans, LA, USA
- 2003 Virus, San Francisco de Asis Convent, Havana, Cuba
Utopia/Post-Utopia, Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, New Paltz, NY, USA
- 2002 No Place, IFA Gallery Bonn; IFA Gallery Stuttgart; IFA Gallery Berlin, Germany
Made in Cuba, Jonathan Ferrara Gallery, New Orleans, LA, USA
- 2001 7th International Istanbul Biennial, Egofugal, Istanbul, Turkey
The End of the Eclipse, traveling exhibition organized by Fundacion Telefonica
Shifting Tides, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA, USA; Museum of Contemporary Photography, New York, NY, USA
- 1998 From One Island to Another Island, Visual Arts Development Center (CDAV), Havana, Cuba
Arte'BA 98, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- 1997 The Art that Never Stops, Wifredo Lam Center for Contemporary Art, Havana, Cuba
- 1996 V International Cuenca Biennial, Museum of Modern Art, Cuenca, Ecuador
- 1995 Contemporary Cuban Visual Arts, Belem Cultural Center, Portugal
- 1991 Born in Cuba, Ateneo de Valencia, Venezuela

PUBLIC ART AND PERFORMANCE

With the group Arte Calle (Street Art):

1987-1989

- There is nothing (mural), Vibora, Havana, Cuba
Art at the cemetery gates, Zapata Street, Havana, Cuba
Building for growing, Plaza Vieja, Havana, Cuba
At the other side of the street, Taller de serigrafia, Havana, Cuba
Easy shopping (performance), Havana Harbour, Havana, Cuba
From Cuba, its nature (performance), Prado Street, Havana, Cuba
Street Art Laboratory, Sala Villena, UNEAC, Havana, Cuba

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- Ernesto Leal at Tasneem Gallery, 2011-2024. With an essay by Rosa Martinez. Tasneem Gallery, 2025.
- Mirada de curador, Corina Matamoros, Letras Cubanas, 2009.
- El observatorio de Linea, Elvia Rosa Castro, Ediciones Union, 2008.
- Collectivism After Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination After 1945, Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette, University of Minnesota Press, 2007.
- Mythologies personnelles. L'art contemporain et l'intime, Isabelle de Maison Rouge, Editions Scala, 2004.
- Co-editor, LOQUEVENGA, Cuban visual arts publication, 1994-1997.

AWARDS

- Second Prize, 5th International Cuenca Biennial, Drawing section, Cuenca, Ecuador, 1996.

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

- Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA, USA.
- Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, SUNY New Paltz Foundation, New Paltz, NY, USA.
- Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis, MN, USA.
- Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, Cuba.
- Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.
- Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation (CIFO), Miami, FL, USA.
- Perez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL, USA.
- Private collections in the United States, France, England, Belgium, Spain, and Brazil.