

SANTIAGO RODRÍGUEZ OLAZÁBAL

Santiago Rodríguez Olazábal is one of the key figures in contemporary Cuban art to bring the symbolic, visual, and philosophical structures of Ifá into sustained dialogue with painting, drawing, and mixed-media practice. Born in Havana in 1955 and educated at the Academia Nacional de Arte San Alejandro, he emerged in the 1980s with a body of work rooted in Yoruba knowledge, ritual transformation, ancestry, and the cultural memory of Afro-Cuban religion.

An artist and priest of Ifá, Rodríguez Olazábal developed a distinct iconography through which divination, sacrifice, spiritual transmission, and the human figure become vehicles for broader reflection. His work moves between intimate works on paper and larger compositions, translating esoteric systems into public visual language without flattening their complexity.

Across four decades, his exhibitions have positioned Afro-Cuban thought at the center of international contemporary art discourse, with presentations in Havana, Madrid, Miami, New York, San Francisco, Vancouver, Brussels, and beyond.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 Oríkí. Canción de alabanza, Factoría Habana, 14th Havana Biennial, Havana, Cuba
La fuerza del tiempo, Galería La Acacia, Havana, Cuba
- 2021 Marks of the Night, Kloser Contemporary Art, Brussels, Belgium
- 2020 Detrás de los ojos, Galería Collage Habana, Havana, Cuba
- 2019 La noche puso sus ojos en ella, NG Art Gallery, Panama City, Panama
- 2018 Historias por contar. Porque hay cosas que se nos escapan, NG Art Gallery, Havana, Cuba
- 2017 Agua en las raíces, Galería Collage Habana, Havana, Cuba
Lo secreto, with Rubén Rodríguez, Galería Villa Manuela, Havana, Cuba
- 2016 Imoye, George Caleb Bingham Gallery, Columbia, Missouri, USA
- 2015 Adifafun Imole, Zona Franca, collateral exhibition, 12th Havana Biennial, Havana, Cuba
Registros. Colección Elena Velázquez, Galería Collage Habana, Havana, Cuba
- 2014 Como un barco en el océano, Galería Saro León, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain
Palabras, Galería Habana, Havana, Cuba
- 2013 El impulso de los ojos, Galería Museo del Ron, Havana, Cuba
Gúemilere, Rainhart Gallery, Brussels, Belgium
- 2012 Permanecer en la tierra, 11th Havana Biennial, Havana, Cuba
El impulso de los ojos, Galería Tristán, Trinidad, Cuba
- 2011 Olazabal, Pan American Art Projects, Miami, USA
- 2009 Orí. El Òrìsà personal, Galería Villa Manuela, Havana, Cuba
- 2008 Orí. El Òrìsà personal, Galería Tele Pinar, Pinar del Río, Cuba
- 2007 Pequeñas cosas, Galería La Casona, Havana, Cuba
- 2006 Onile. El espíritu sagrado de la tierra, Romerías de Mayo, Holguín, Cuba
- 2005 Onile. El espíritu sagrado de la tierra, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, Cuba
- 1994 Oba Ikuro, Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff Centre for the Arts, Alberta, Canada
Cheiros, Palazzo Colonnese Valeri, Vicenza, Italy
Hechizo, Galería Galiano, 5th Havana Biennial, Havana, Cuba
- 1992 Dibujar es un trauma, Galería Galiano, Havana, Cuba
Herencia. 1492–1992. 500 años, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, Cuba
- 1991 Blanco y negro, Galería Benito Ortiz, Trinidad, Cuba
Hálito de la tierra, with Fernando Gómez, Galería Galiano, Havana, Cuba
Obo Lowo Olorun. Todo lo dejo en manos de Dios, 4th Havana Biennial, Havana, Cuba
- 1988 La oración, Centro Provincial de Artes Plásticas y Diseño, Havana, Cuba

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1985 Okan to mi. Desde mi corazón, Centro Provincial de Artes Plásticas y Diseño, Havana, Cuba
1983 El hombre el mito, with Eliseo Valdés, Galería Galiano, Havana, Cuba

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2025 Descarga Cubana, di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art, Napa, California, USA
2024 La Habana Hoy, Artes de Cuba, Coral Gables, Florida, USA
Casa-Bienal / Mente sabia para crear, Casa de las Américas, Havana, Cuba
2021 Healing Power, National Museum of World Cultures, the Netherlands
Cantos de Griot, Domus Atrium 2002, Salamanca, Spain
2020 Transformation Decoded: Unimagined Possibilities, Arthaus Gallery, Pennsylvania, USA
2019 SCOPE Miami Beach, NG Art Gallery, Miami Beach, Florida, USA
Art Lima, NG Art Gallery, Lima, Peru
2018 ChACO, NG Art Gallery, Santiago, Chile
Meraki, NG Art Gallery, Panama City, Panama
Cuban Contemporary Exhibit, Sager Braudis Gallery, Columbia, Missouri, USA
Global Reflections, The Interchurch Center, New York, USA
2017 Art Madrid, Galería Collage Habana, Madrid, Spain
Art x Cuba: Contemporary Perspectives since 1989, Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany
2016 Drapetomania, African American Museum in Philadelphia, Philadelphia, USA
2015 Drapetomania, Cooper Gallery of African & African American Art, Harvard University, Cambridge, USA
Memorial ACTe, Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe
Cuba: Ficción y Fantasía, Casa Daros, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
2014 Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada
Drapetomania, The 8th Floor, New York, USA
Drapetomania, Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco, USA
Knokke Art Fair, Belgium
2013 A Journey from Paris to New York, Galerie Intemporel, New York, USA
African Roots, Center for Cuban Studies, New York, USA
2011 Los Angeles Art Show, La Casona Gallery, Los Angeles, California, USA
Polaridad Complementaria, City Gallery at Waterfront Park, Charleston, South Carolina, USA
Ajiaco. Espiritualidad en el arte cubano, Newark Museum, Newark, New Jersey, USA
PINTA London, Earls Court Exhibition Centre, London, UK

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- 2010 Cuban Avant-Garde: Contemporary Cuban Art from the Farber Collection, Katonah Museum of Art, New York; Lowe Art Museum, Miami, Florida, USA
Contemporary Drawings from the National Gallery of Canada, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada
New Décor, Hayward Gallery, London, UK
- 2009 HB Arte Contemporáneo Cubano, 10th Havana Biennial, Havana, Cuba
The Kaleidoscopic Eye: Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Collection, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan
Automatic Cities: The Architectural Imaginary in Contemporary Art, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, San Diego, USA
- 2008 Cuba: Art et Histoire. De 1868 à nos jours, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal; Groninger Museum, the Netherlands
Surrounded by Water: Contemporary Cuban Art, Boston University Art Gallery, Boston, USA
Psycho Buildings: Artists Take on Architecture, Hayward Gallery, London, UK
- 2007 New Dimensions, John Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco, USA
Estuaire Nantes–Saint-Nazaire, Saint-Nazaire, France
New Economy, Artists Space, New York, USA
- 2006 Arte de Cuba, Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, São Paulo; Rio de Janeiro; Brasília, Brazil
Nuit Blanche, Paris, France
- 2005 Contradicciones y convivencias: Arte de América Latina 1981–2000, Museo de Arte Miguel Urrutia, Bogotá, Colombia
51st Venice Biennale, Latin America Pavilion, Palazzo Franchetti, Venice, Italy
The Hours. Visual Arts of Contemporary Latin America, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland; Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
- 2004 MoMA at El Museo: Latin American and Caribbean Art from the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
Recent Acquisitions: Contemporary Sculpture, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA
- 2003 Rest in Space, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, Germany
4th Mercosul Biennial, Porto Alegre, Brazil
- 2002 Shanghai Biennale, Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai, China
Drawing Now: Eight Propositions, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
XXV Bienal de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil
- 2000 Playground & Toys, Art for the World / Hendrik Christian Andersen Museum, Rome; New York, USA
7th Havana Biennial, Havana, Cuba
- 1998 The Edge of Awareness, PS1, New York, USA; SESC Pompeia, São Paulo, Brazil; Triennale di Milano, Milan, Italy
Contemporary Art from Cuba: Irony and Survival on the Utopian Island, ASU Art Museum, Tempe; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, USA

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- 1997 New Art from Cuba: Utopian Territories, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery / National Gallery, Vancouver, Canada
Trade Routes, 2nd Johannesburg Biennale, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 1996 Mundo soñado. Joven plástica cubana, Casa de América, Madrid, Spain
A Dentro/A Fuera: New Work from Cuba, Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff Centre for the Arts, Alberta, Canada
- 1995 New Art from Cuba, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London; Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Carlisle, UK
Havanna / São Paulo. Junge Kunst aus Lateinamerika, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, Germany

AWARDS

- 2014 Knokke Art Fair, Special Award for Most Original Work, Knokke, Belgium
2007 Award for Artistic Merit, Instituto Superior de Arte, Havana, Cuba
2005 Onile. El espíritu sagrado de la tierra, Visitor Award, The Vatican
1992 4th Biennial of Ankara, International Gold Award, Ankara, Turkey
1990 Salón Nacional de Paisaje, Prize, Galería Guantánamo, Cuba
1987 Encuentro Grabado '87, Experimental Award, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, Cuba
1986 Ara Oko, Medal Son of the City of Guanabacoa, Havana, Cuba
1986 Salón de la Ciudad, Drawing Award, Centro Provisional de Artes Plásticas, Havana, Cuba

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

- Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, Cuba
- Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Wifredo Lam, Havana, Cuba
- Casa de las Américas, Havana, Cuba
- Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany
- Grafikmuseum Stiftung Schreiner, Bad Steben, Germany
- Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno (CAAM), Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain
- Daros Latinamerica Collection, Zürich, Switzerland
- National Museum of World Cultures, Leiden, the Netherlands
- Watch Hill Foundation / Von Christierson Collection, UK
- Memorial ACTe, Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe
- Pan American Art Projects, Miami, USA
- Museo de Arte y Diseño Contemporáneo, San José, Costa Rica

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- Art x Cuba. Contemporary Perspectives since 1989. Exhibition catalogue, Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, 2018.
- Cuba - Ficción y Fantasía. A selection of Cuban art from the Daros Latinamerica Collection. Exhibition catalogue, Daro Latinamerica, Zürich, 2015.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- Santiago Rodríguez Olazábal. Pequeñas cosas. Exhibition catalogue, La Casona, Havana, 2007.
- Onilé. Una exposición de Santiago Rodríguez Olazábal. Exhibition brochure, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, 2005.
- Njami, Simon. Santiago Rodríguez Olazábal. La tercera puerta. Madrid, Arte y Naturaleza, 2005.
- García de Santiago, Alba María. Santiago Rodríguez Olazábal. Obras 1981-2004. Madrid, Arte y Naturaleza, 2005.
- Revue Noire. Volume 2, numbers 6-10. Paris, 1992-1993.