

CARLOS ALFONZO

Carlos Alfonzo is among the most urgent painters Cuba has given to the American canon, an artist whose canvases hold ecstasy and dread in the same breath. Working in barely a decade of full production, he built a private iconography of floating forms, tarot-like emblems, and vessels suspended in luminous fields of color, drawing on Santería, medieval Catholic mysticism, Matisse, Picasso, and the inheritance of Wifredo Lam, and fusing them into a language that is at once ceremonial and wounded. His surfaces are generous and sensuous, yet beneath them runs a steady current of exile, desire, and mortality that sharpened into something close to prophecy in the Black Paintings of 1990 and 1991, made as AIDS closed in on him.

Trained at the Academia San Alejandro and the University of Havana, Alfonzo left Cuba in 1980 through the Mariel boatlift and settled in Miami, where he emerged as the defining painter of the city in the 1980s. His work was the subject of solo exhibitions at the Bass Museum of Art, the Lannan Museum, the Center for the Fine Arts in Miami, and Hal Bromm Gallery in New York, and of the retrospective *Triumph of the Spirit*, organized by the Miami Art Museum and shown at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. He was included in the 1991 Whitney Biennial, which opened after his death that year, and has since been reexamined at the Pérez Art Museum Miami and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami. He was a Cintas Fellow (1983) and received National Endowment for the Arts fellowships (1984 and 1990). His work is held by the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the National Gallery of Art, the Hirshhorn Museum, and Pérez Art Museum Miami, among others.

Born in Havana, Cuba, 1950. Died in Miami, USA, 1991.

Education: Academia de Bellas Artes San Alejandro, Havana, 1973 (painting, sculpture, and printmaking); University of Havana, 1974 (art history).

Lived and worked in Miami, USA, from 1980.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 Carlos Alfonzo: Late Paintings. Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, USA.
- 2020 Carlos Alfonzo: Witnessing Perpetuity. LnS Gallery, Miami, USA.
- 2017 Carlos Alfonzo: Painting. Fredric Snitzer Gallery, Miami, USA.
- 2015 Carlos Alfonzo: Clay Works and Painted Ceramics. Pérez Art Museum Miami, USA (through 2016).
Carlos Alfonzo: Sculpture and Drawing. Fredric Snitzer Gallery, Miami, USA.
- 2006 Carlos Alfonzo: Extreme Expression, 1980-1991. The Freedom Tower, Miami, USA.
- 1999 Carlos Alfonzo: Paintings and Works on Paper, 1987-1991. George Adams Gallery, New York, USA.
- 1997 Carlos Alfonzo: Triumph of the Spirit, 1975-1991. Miami Art Museum, Miami, USA; traveled to the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., USA (1998).
- 1993 Carlos Alfonzo: Major Works. Osuna Gallery South, Miami, USA.
- 1991 Carlos Alfonzo: Images from a Series Dedicated to Friends with AIDS, 1990-1991. Center for the Fine Arts, Miami, USA.
- 1990 Carlos Alfonzo: Recent Sculptures and Works on Paper. Osuna Gallery, Washington, D.C., USA.
Carlos Alfonzo: Sculpture, Paintings and Works on Paper. Greene Gallery, Coral Gables, USA.
Carlos Alfonzo: New Work. Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach, USA.
- 1989 Carlos Alfonzo. Lannan Museum, Lake Worth, USA.
Carlos Alfonzo: Paintings, Sculpture, Works on Paper. Greene Gallery, Coral Gables, USA.
Carlos Alfonzo: New Paintings. McMurtrey Gallery, Houston, USA.
- 1988 The Art of Carlos Alfonzo. Frances Wolfson Art Gallery, Miami-Dade Community College, Miami, USA.
Carlos Alfonzo: Paradise. Hal Bromm Gallery, New York, USA.
Carlos Alfonzo. Greene Gallery, Coral Gables, USA.
Carlos Alfonzo: Development of an Artist, 1976-1988. Bacardi Art Gallery, Miami, USA.
Carlos Alfonzo: Paintings. Osuna Gallery, Washington, D.C., USA.
- 1987 Carlos Alfonzo. Osuna Gallery, Washington, D.C., USA.
- 1985 Carlos Alfonzo: New Paintings. McMurtrey Gallery, Houston, USA.
- 1984 Carlos Alfonzo: Drama. Galería Ocho, Miami-Dade Community College, Miami, USA.
- 1978 La tarde y sus dibujos. Various venues, Cuba.
- 1977 Experimentos de Carlos José Alfonzo. Museo Nacional, Havana, Cuba.
- 1976 Como una vieja estampa. Galería Amelia Peláez, Havana, Cuba.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2019** Unquiet Harmony: The Subject of Displacement. Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, USA.
Where Oceans Meet. The Freedom Tower, Miami, USA.
About Face: Stonewall, Revolt and New Queer Art. Wrightwood 659, Chicago, USA.
A Tongue to Utter and Ballerinas (1988), installation. Lowe Art Museum, Miami, USA.
- 2017** Fast Forward: Painting from the 1980s. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA.
- 2007** Power of Ten. Miami Art Museum, Miami, USA.
- 2006** Masters of Latin America: From the Joan and Milton Bagley Collection. Boca Raton Museum of Art, Boca Raton, USA.
Geometry and Gesture. Art Museum of the Americas, Washington, D.C., USA.
- 2005** Rampa: Signaling New Latin American Art Initiatives. ASU Art Museum, Tempe, USA.
- 2000** Cuban Art of Three Generations: Alfonzo, Azaceta and Bedia. Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock, USA.
- 1999** Saints, Sinners and Sacrifices: Religious Imagery in Contemporary Latin American Art. George Adams Gallery, New York, USA.
- 1995** Phallic Symbols: Images in Contemporary Art. Life Gallery, New York, USA.
- 1994** Significant Losses: Artists Who Have Died From AIDS. The Art Gallery, University of Maryland, College Park, USA.
Latin American Art in Miami Collections. Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, Coral Gables, USA.
- 1992** Cuba-USA: The First Generation. Traveling exhibition organized by El Fondo del Sol, including the National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C., and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, USA (through 1993).
Cuban Masters. The Americas Collection, Coral Gables, USA.
Approaching the Quincentenary: Latino Art 1982-1992. Traveling exhibition, Goucher College, Baltimore, USA, and other venues.
- 1991** Biennial Exhibition. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA.
AVA 10 (Awards in the Visual Arts 10). Traveling exhibition, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., and other venues, USA.
ArtPark at FIU. Art Museum at Florida International University, Miami, USA.
Eulogy. Gallery North, Miami-Dade Community College, Miami, USA.
New Latin American Painting. Arnold Herstand & Company, New York, USA.
- 1990** The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s. Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, New Museum of Contemporary Art, and Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, USA.
- 1987** Hispanic Art in the United States: Thirty Contemporary Painters and Sculptors. Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, USA, and traveling.

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- 1991** Awards in the Visual Arts 10 (AVA 10), Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., USA.
- 1990** Artist Fellowship in Painting, National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D.C., USA.
- 1984** Artist Fellowship in Painting, National Endowment for the Arts, USA.
- 1983** Fellowship in the Visual Arts, Cintas Foundation, New York, USA.

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

- Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA.
- Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C., USA.
- National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., USA.
- Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., USA.
- Art Museum of the Americas, Organization of American States, Washington, D.C., USA.
- Pérez Art Museum Miami, USA.
- NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale, USA.
- Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, USA.
- Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum, Miami, USA.
- Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, Coral Gables, USA.
- The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, USA.
- Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, USA.
- Miami-Dade Public Library, Miami, USA.
- De la Cruz Collection, Miami, USA.
- The Margulies Collection, Miami, USA.
- The Farber Collection, New York, USA.