



EDUCATOR RESOURCE GUIDE

WILD NOISE / RUIDO SALVAJE

ON VIEW FEBRUARY 17 - JULY 3, 2017

Wild Noise / Rudio Salvaje features a selection of contemporary Cuban art from the 1970s to the present. The exhibition considers how Cuban artists have grappled with issues of identity, community, and the quotidian experience born from the island's social and political history. In a space where Cuba's historical figures dialogue with the country's Afro-Cuban traditions, and humorously conceptual works find an engaging counterpoint with experiments in video and performance, the artworks illuminate the dynamic tensions and poignant contradictions between Cuba's past, present and future.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed as a supplementary resource for educators. It highlights artworks from five artists along with contextual information, discussion questions and activities to expand upon some of the exhibition's key themes and concepts. Our goal is to help you integrate the exhibition themes across disciplines. The guide can be used on its own in the classroom, as preparation for a museum tour, or back in the classroom as a post-visit lesson.

Note: This guide uses inclusive language. "They/them" is used as a singular gender-neutral pronoun. The Bronx Museum serves as a safe and welcoming space for all gender identities.

Please share any questions or comments you may have about this guide by emailing education@bronxmuseum.org. We greatly value your feedback!

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

TIMELINE OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Many of the artworks in *Wild Noise* reflect upon the island's history. To provide a context for understanding Cuban art, this timeline includes significant historical events from the pre-conquest era to the twenty-first century.

COLONIZATION	1000 BCE – 1492	INDIGENOUS PEOPLES LIVING IN CUBA Cuba is inhabited by three indigenous peoples: the Taino, the Guanahatabey, and the Ciboney.
	1492	COLUMBUS LANDS IN CUBA Spanish navigator Christopher Columbus claims Cuba for Spain during his first trip to the Americas.
	1511	SPANISH CONQUEST OF CUBA Conquistador Diego de Velazquez de Cuella conquers Cuba and its people under, establishing colonization that persisted until the 19th century.
	1526	START OF SLAVE IMPORTATION Slaves from Africa are imported to work the sugar cane and tobacco plantations.
	1868-1878	TEN YEARS WAR Cuba fights for their independence from Spain and ends in a truce.
	1886	SLAVERY ABOLISHED Slavery is abolished following the Ten Years War.
INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC / DE FACTO U.S. PROTECTORATE	1895 – 1898	CUBAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE José Martí leads a new fight for Cuban independence, final months led to the Spanish-American War.
	1898	SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR U.S. declares war on Spain. Declaring defeat, Spain cedes Cuba to the U.S.
	1902	CUBA BECOMES AN INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC However the constitutional Platt Amendment allowed the US to intervene in Cuban affairs.
	1933	SERGEANT'S REVOLT Following President Gerardo Machado's dictatorship, Sergeant Fulgencio Batista leads a military coup to overthrow him. Batista becomes Cuba's de facto leader, running the country through a series of puppet presidents.
	1940	CUBA ADOPTS A NEW CONSTITUTION The 1940 Constitution reflects the ideals that inspired the 1933 revolution and includes highly progressive principals such provisions for public education, minimum wage, and health care.
	1940 – 1944	FIRST BATISTA PRESIDENCY Batista is elected president and retires after his term.
	1952	BATISTA'S COUP AND DICTATORSHIP By military coup Batista seizes power again and presides as president over an oppressive and corrupt regime.

CUBAN REVOLUTION	1953	FIDEL CASTRO LEADS FIRST ATTACK AGAINST BATISTA GOVERNMENT Though unsuccessful, the revolutionaries' attack signals the rise of the Cuban Revolution.
	1959	CUBAN REVOLUTION On January 1st, the 26th of July Movement, a guerrilla revolutionary organization led by Castro, ousts Batista. Castro becomes prime minister. In the following months, Castro consolidates his power by brutally putting down, imprisoning, and executing non-supporters.
	1961	U.S. BREAKS ALL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH HAVANA Following deteriorating relations, the U.S. closes its embassy in Havana, signaling a solid opposition to Castro's government and fear of a communist state in the western hemisphere.
	1961	BAY OF PIGS INVASION U.S.-sponsored paramilitary group of Cuban exiles invade the Bay of Pigs in an attempt to overthrow Castro's government. They were defeated by Cuban forces within three days.
	1961-1962	OPERATION PETER PAN In a mass exodus, over 14,000 unaccompanied minors from families opposed to Castro are relocated to the U.S. Among them was Ana Mendieta, whose artwork is featured in this exhibition.
	1962	CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS During the US-Soviet arms race at the height of the Cold War, the Soviet Union placed ballistic missiles in Cuba. After a 13-day confrontation, Russia declared that they would remove the missiles if the U.S. agreed to never invade Cuba.
	1965	CAMARIOCA BOATLIFT AND Airlift Castro allows Cuban to emigrate, launching boat-and-airlifts from the Camarioca port that continue into the early 70s. Over 200,000 Cuban emigrated to the U.S. via these "Freedom Flights."
SPECIAL PERIOD	1980	MARIEL BOATLIFT For a six-month period, Castro allows anyone to leave Cuba, causing mass emigration of Cubans seeking asylum in the U.S.
	1989	START OF THE SPECIAL PERIOD Collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent withdrawal of Soviet subsidies in Cuba lead to severe economic crisis that persisted throughout the 90s, the U.S.S.R. officially dissolved in 1991.
	2006	FIDEL TRANSFERS POWER TO RAÚL Castro undergoes surgery and temporary transfers presidential powers to his brother Raúl Castro.
NORMALIZING U.S. - CUBAN RELATIONS	2008	FIDEL CASTRO RESIGNS PRESIDENCY Raúl Castro becomes president and continues to hold office today. He has expanded the private sector and allowed Cubans to buy and sell homes and cars.
	2014	U.S. AND CUBA RENEW DIPLOMATIC TIES President Barack Obama announces that the U.S. will renew diplomatic ties with Cuba and loosen some trade and travel restrictions.
	2016	FIDEL CASTRO DIES AT AGE 90 He ruled Cuba for nearly fifty years. He leaves behind a mixed legacy as a ruthless dictator to his opponents and a revolutionary hero to his supporters.

CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

The five artists featured in this guide are part of the nineties generation of artists. We have highlighted defining aspects of the culture in which they worked.

SPECIAL PERIOD

The Special Period refers to an era of austerity in response to sudden and widespread economic strife brought on by the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. In the years since the revolution, Cuba's economy had become entirely dependent upon the Soviets. After the U.S. imposed trade embargoes, Castro turned to the Soviet Union, a fellow socialist nation, to ensure economic health and joined the Soviet bloc in 1972. By the 1980s the Cuban economy was wholly dependent upon trade with the soviet bloc. They exported sugar and tobacco subsidized by the Soviets, and imported low-cost petroleum from the Soviets. Imports were also guaranteed by Soviet credit. However as the Cold War cooled in the mid-80s, the Soviet Union moved towards radical economic and political reforms. By the end of the decade, they severed economic and political ties with Cuba.

Between the fall of the socialist bloc, Castro's steadfast commitment to communism, and the continuing U.S. trade embargo, Cuba abruptly found itself isolated and without economic support, plunging into a severe crisis. Nearly all shipments of food and fuel, supplies provided by the soviet allies, stopped suddenly. In 1989, the Cuban government declared a Special Period in Times of Peace, a euphemism that signaled belt-tightening measures. Without fuel, transportation, industries, and agriculture struggled to function, leading to food shortages, scarcity of basic provisions, daily hardships, and decreased quality of life.

90S GENERATION

The five artists began their careers during the Special Period. The first generation born in a post-revolution world of the late 60s, they missed the golden early years following Castro's rise to power. The exciting potential of a new utopia promised by the revolution had given way to disillusionment with its political ideology.

Their predecessors softened the ground for criticism of Castro's regime with political and socially engaged art. While the 60s and 70s stifled the arts with implied censorship by a government aligned with the Soviet bloc, the 1980s allowed the arts to flourish. The 80s generation of artists grew up with artistic encouragement in Castro's regime, learning high-quality arts instruction in the state's free schools. In allowing free expression, the arts provided a safe platform for dialogue about political ideas and artists increasingly questioned the status quo. However the end of the 80s ushered in heightened government control. Failing socialist power around the globe threatened Cuba's future prosperity, prompting increased censorship. Many artists emigrated to Mexico and the United States at the onset of the Special Period.

The 90s generation of artists emerged suddenly and unexpectedly, and persisted despite the vacuum left by this mass emigration. Cuban-born curator and art historian Gerardo Mosquera dubbed them "la mala yerba" or the bad weeds, referring to weeds that grow even in nutrient-poor soil. They were able to thrive in a bleak situation and overcome quotidian hardships. These artists went to the high-quality art schools in Cuba's revamped education system, Escuela Nacional de Arte (ENA) and Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA). To avoid censorship constraints artists used symbolism and veiled references as a safe and accepted loophole, allowing them to express their perspectives of Cuban reality without facing political repercussions.

Mosquera credits them with creating "a new Cuban art" for "post-utopian times." Their work addresses the question of the Cuban identity grappling with a complex history and tension between isolation, barriers, and love for their beautiful homeland.

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

ACTIVITY

Cuba is home to a rich multicultural community. Over the years the island's heritage has been shaped by a wide range of cultural phenomena including indigenous populations, Spanish colonialism, African slave trade, Chinese indentured labor, American tourism and commercialism, and Soviet communism. Conversely many people left Cuba in the second half of the twentieth century during Fidel Castro's rule and immigrated to the U.S., a short 90 miles away. The U.S. and Cuba have a lengthy relationship, positive and negative, but have undeniably impacted each other.

Introduce the concept of transculturation and migration by playing Cross the Channel. This activity helps students reflect upon the phenomenon of cross-cultural exchange over national borders.

1. Split the class in half. Each half stands on opposite sides, with a large empty space between them. The space is the Straits of Florida "channel."
2. Ask a series of conditional questions about individual identity starting with "Cross the channel if...." If the condition applies to the student, they "cross the channel," going to the other side of the room. For example, "cross the channel if you enjoy reading." Or "cross the river if you are wearing a blue shirt." You can instruct students how to cross the river as well. For example, "hop across the river if," or "backstroke across the river if...."

DISCUSSION

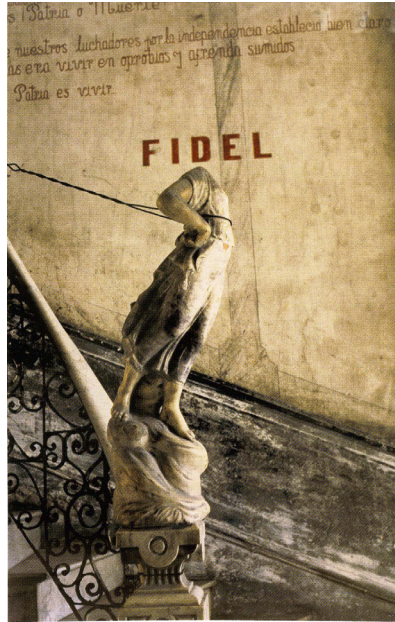
Once in a "traveling" mindset, students will make inferences about Cuba by looking at a world map.

1. Orient students to Cuba's location relative to their own. Find your location on a world map. Then find Cuba's. Look at what is between the two: states, U.S. border, and Florida Straits. Discuss how many people cross from Cuba to the U.S. along this pathway.
2. Look at Cuba on the map and draw conclusions about the country based on its geographic location. Consider: surrounding bodies of water, nearby countries, which continent its part of, and climate based on its closeness to the equator.
3. Based on geography, ask students what they think Cuba is like: what language is spoken there, what is the weather like, who are the people living there?
4. Ask students if there is any other information they know about Cuba: politics, businesses and industries, cultural practices, religion, and demographics.
5. Find the city of Havana on the map. Explain that it is Cuba's capital and largest city. Based on what you have discussed so far, ask students to compare Havana and New York City.

CARLOS GARAICOA

BORN IN HAVANA, 1967
BASED IN MADRID AND
HAVANA

**Untitled (Decapitated Angel),
1993**
Color photograph
76.5 x 53.5 inches
The Bronx Museum of the Art
Permanent Collection
Museum purchase



ARTIST

In a dialogue between past and present, Carlos Garaicoa investigates the urban landscape as a marker of the unfulfilled socialist utopia. His main subject of inquiry has been the city of Havana. He often presents the crumbling remains of neglected buildings as monuments and ruins to reflect on the ironic contradictions of Cuba's revolutionary political ideology and pursuit of the socialist utopia. He also creates urban proposals for an imagined future Havana, juxtaposing architectural fantasies alongside documentation of the city as it is. His artwork resists nostalgia for the old city and asserts a post-utopian vision of an urban space in crisis and the collapse of an ideal.

CONTEXT

Fidel Castro's revolution promised the Cuban people a utopian future. In the years leading up, Fidel emerged as the leader to overthrow Fulgencio Batista's dictatorship, eradicate government corruption, and reinstate the liberties guaranteed by Cuba's 1940 constitution. He clinched his reputation as a revolutionary through his speech "History Will Absolve Me" in 1953 while on the trial stand for a failed military attack. A charismatic leader in touch with the people's needs, Fidel called for a forthcoming freedom from imperialism, dictatorship, oppression and corruption and a new society guided by socialist principles and motivated by patriotism and solidarity with fellow citizens. However once in power Castro was not able to easily deliver on his promises due to a stalled economy. In fact during his reign, Havana's skyline hardly changed. Many architectural projects after the revolution were stopped and older buildings unmaintained due to a shortage of resources to fuel the socialist promise.

ARTWORK

The building, originally called La Mansión Camagüey, houses the famous paladar, or restaurant, La Guarida.

Untitled (Decapitated Angel) captures the interior of a crumbling early twentieth-century building in Central Havana. In the photograph, an elaborate banister culminates at the bottom of a once-grand marble staircase with a statue of a decapitated neo-classical angel. Just above the statue, almost as a stand-in for the missing head, appears the name "FIDEL" in red letters. Written on the wall behind the angel and beneath "FIDEL" is a faded revolutionary text signed by Fidel Castro. Garaicoa frames an ironic interaction between utopian ideal and dystopian ruin.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss what students see in the artwork.
Ask your students to make observations about the artwork and describe the condition of the sculpture, banister and walls - are they new or old, clean or dirty, bright or dull, crowded or empty?
2. Discuss what a monument is.
A monument is a structure that is created to commemorate or remind us of an important person or event. Monuments can help us tell a story about the history of a person or place. Ask students to identify the monument in this artwork and consider what it commemorates. What does the absence of the angel's head mean?
3. Discuss the relationship between the headless angel and the word FIDEL.
Consider the word's typography - style and appearance - and subject. What does the placement of the word suggest?
4. Discuss the concepts utopia and dystopia.
A utopia, literally "no-place," is an imaginary place in which everything is perfect according to one's ideals. A dystopia, literally "not a good place," is the opposite of a utopia, an imaginary place characterized by misery, fear, and disaster. Ask students to make a connection between the symbolic decapitation of the angel by Fidel and the notions of utopia and dystopia.

ACTIVITY

Students will expand upon Garaicoa's work by creating their own utopian and dystopian versions.

1. Ask students to select a human rights issue that resonates with them.
Ex: immigrant rights, racism, police brutality, health care equity, education equity, LGBTQ rights, economic inequality, etc. Tip: look at current events for ideas.
2. Next direct them to come up with a word or term that worsens the issue, for the dystopian version, and a word or term that improves the issue, for the utopian version.
3. Students then select two figures that symbolize the issue - one to accompany the dystopian version and another to accompany the utopian version. They can draw the figures themselves, print them off the internet, or cut them out of magazines or newspapers.
4. Bonus step: Students can find a corresponding text such as a speech transcript, written law, or article to serve as the background. Paste this layer onto the paper first.
5. Students paste the dystopian figure on one piece of paper and the utopian figure on another piece of paper. Then write the corresponding term near each figure. Remind them to play around with typography, placement and how the term and figure interact with each other.
6. When everyone is done, display each student's dystopia and utopia side by side and ask the class to walk around and view their peers work. As a group discuss what makes a dystopia and what makes a utopia.

LOS CARPINTEROS

MARCO CASTILLO
BORN IN CAMAGÜEY, 1971

DAGOBERTO RODRÍGUEZ
BORN IN CAIBARIÉN, 1969

ALEXANDRE ARRECHEA*
BORN IN TRINIDAD, 1970
*departed collective in 2003

BASED IN MADRID AND
HAVANA

**Embajada Rusa (Russian
Embassy), 2003**
Cedar plywood
118.5 x 43.3 x 43.3 inches
The Bronx Museum of the Arts
Gift of the Mugar Collection
with generous support from the
Jacques and Natasha Gelman
Foundation



ARTIST

In the early 1990s, artists Marco Castillo, Dagoberto Rodriguez and Alexandre Arrechea formed the collective Los Carpinteros (The Carpenters). The collective renounced the notion of individual authorship in favor of the older guild tradition of artisans and skilled laborers. The built environment has been a recurring theme in their work, questioning the relationship between buildings, social spaces, and political states. They merge architecture, design, and sculpture in unexpected and humorous ways through banal everyday objects, often straddling the functional and the nonfunctional.

CONTEXT

After the revolution, Cuba and the Soviet Union developed close ties, united by common political philosophies and against the threat of the western capitalist bloc during the Cold War. Alienated by the U.S.-imposed trade embargo, Cuba's economy also demanded significant support from the Soviets, relying on their trade networks, subsidies, and credit. Because of this, the Soviet Union assumed an imperialist presence on the island.

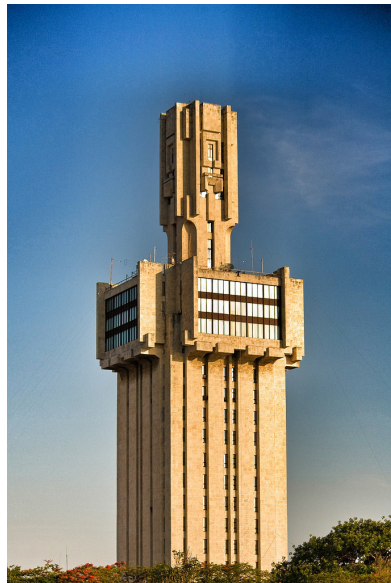
In the mid-80s, the Soviet Embassy opened in Havana. The architect Aleksandr Rochegov, the People's Architect of the U.S.S.R, built the embassy in the modern constructivist style typical of Soviet architecture, combining advanced technology with communist ideals. Towering sinisterly over the surrounding green landscape and well-guarded by Soviet troops, it stood as a concrete symbol of Soviet power. In fact it was one of the most powerful and guarded buildings in the city because of Cuba's strategic importance to advance Soviet interests in the entire Caribbean and South American regions. Some say it represented "a dagger in the heart of American" or a syringe injecting communism in light of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. After the U.S.S.R. collapsed in 1991, many signs of Soviet imperialism vanished. Today the embassy - renamed the Russian Embassy - looks relatively quiet, no longer hyperactive with an excess of troops or diplomatic advisors.

ARTWORK

"If your house was the city, your furniture would be the buildings, the flats would be your drawers, and you would be something that you would keep along with your most familiar, important and intimate secrets inside those drawers." - Los Carpinteros

Images of the Soviet Embassy in Havana

In *Embajada Rusa* (Russian Embassy) Los Carpinteros present a wooden rendering of the widely-recognizable Soviet Embassy in Havana. This scaled-down version of the building is cut from cedar the artists found in the countryside and sawed, planed and sanded by hand back in their studio. Small identical rows of unobtrusive drawers cut into the sides of the structure, a reference to archival files of documentation. The piece translates the menacing building into functional furniture, yet at the same time calls attention to the sweeping surveillance practices borrowed from Moscow during three decades of intimate Cuban-Soviet relations. By simultaneously transforming and referencing the original building, Los Carpinteros playfully comment on how revolutionary ideals become diverted through the misdirected ambitions of bureaucratic regimes.



DISCUSSION

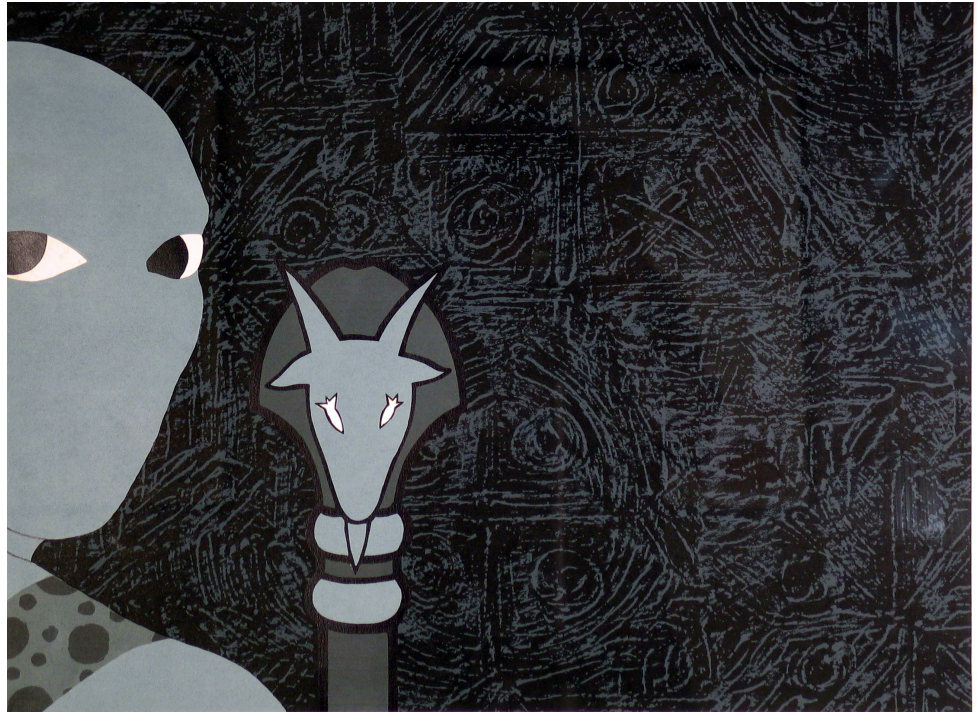
1. Ask students what the sculpture resembles.
Explain that the sculpture was inspired by an actual building, the Russian Embassy in Havana. Compare and contrast the sculpture of the building with the actual building. Remind students to consider materials, size and height, and function (residential, stores, office space, etc).
2. Discuss how the Soviet Embassy was a symbol of power in Cuba.
Discuss how and why the Soviets exerted tremendous influence in Cuba. Consider how this changes the understanding of the artwork. Do they see power reflected in the artwork too? Why or why not?
3. Consider Los Carpinteros' sculpture as a piece of furniture.
Inform them that this work is not only art; it is also a piece of furniture. Challenge them to figure out what makes it a piece of furniture. Ask them if the furniture aspect affects the symbolic architectural power.
4. Ask students why they think the drawers are there and what might be inside them.
Consider the denotative and connotative interpretations of the drawers. What are drawers used for, and what do you keep your drawers? Explain how the Soviets practiced extensive secretive surveillance. What do drawers have to do with secret information gathered by surveillance systems? How are these drawers a reminder of Soviet power in Cuba? What does this have to do with the idea of the Soviet Embassy as a symbol of Soviet power?

BELKIS AYÓN

BORN HAVANA, 1967
DIED HAVANA, 1999

BASED IN HAVANA

Untitled (Head with Goat), 1991
Silkscreen on paper
19.375 x 27.5 inches
The Bronx Museum of the Arts
Permanent Collection
Gift of José Alonso and Anna
Suarez Burgos



ARTIST

Belkis Ayón was an Afro-Cuban printmaker whose work centers on the fraternal secret society Abakuá. Originating in Nigera's Cross River region, Abakuá was carried to Cuba by African slaves in the 19th century. During her high school years, Ayón became interested in the mysterious traditions of Abakuá and was drawn particularly to its founding myth about Sikán, the only female figure. The story tells how Sikán is sacrificed for inadvertently discovering the brotherhood's sacred secrets and failing to keep them to herself; her death gives rise to the Abakuá. Ayón used these myths as a foundation to develop a unique and contemporary iconography.

In many ways Ayón parallels the mythical figure. She too was a woman delving into the exclusive male society and testing the limits of their closely guarded secrecy, breaking the pattern of male control of knowledge and power. Ayón's artwork also inserts a feminist narrative into the brotherhood. She physically traced her own silhouette for the figurative representations, including male figures, in her works, and often placed female characters in the roles restricted to men in the Abakuá society. Sikán, the most prominent character throughout her work, functions as the artist's alter ego and channel for her personal experiences: "I see myself as Sikán, in a certain way an observer, an intermediary and a revealer...a transgressor, and as such I see her, and I see myself." Ayón took her own life in 1999, to the complete shock of her family and friends, and it remains a mystery today.

CONTEXT

According to the Abakuá founding story, the princess Sikán trapped a fish by chance one day while drawing water from the river. Surprised, Sikán heard the fish roar loudly. This bellowing from the fish, Tanze, was the mystical voice of Abakuá, and Sikán was the first to hear it, indicating that she was the chosen one to hear the sound of the sacred. Because women were barred from the society, she was sworn to secrecy. She did however tell her fiancé about it, and the society condemned Sikán to death for revealing the secret knowledge.

ARTWORK

This silkscreen work features a figure in the foreground against a patterned dark background. Like most of Ayón's work, the composition is flattened and the color palette muted, primarily in shades of gray. The frame captures just the figure's head and shoulder looking back at us, the viewer. The face is devoid of all facial features except the black gazing eyes. The figure holds a staff ornamented with the head of a goat with two fish for eyes.

Based on Ayón's oeuvre, we can assume the figure is Sikán. The goat, a sacrifice in Abakuá rituals, is commonly represented with Sikán; its fish eyes reference Tanze, the fish who spoke to Sikán; and the figure's lack of mouth, which is common in Ayón's artwork, references the brotherhood's tradition of sacred secrecy. Art historian Cristina Figueroa explains that "these figures can look at you but cannot speak...so you have to interpret what they're trying to say through the expressions in their eyes."

DISCUSSION

Our dominant cultural norms have traditionally identified gender as female or male. This identifies roles along the gender binary – people are either female or male. The gender binary directs people towards fixed expectations in dress, behavior, sexual orientation, names and pronouns, and more. When people go against these norms, others may view them as disruptive and react with prejudice. However gender is not a fixed identity and is not defined by physical anatomy. We can instead understand gender identity along a non-binary spectrum with diverse ways to define gender. Gender is a personal expression and individuals can decide for themselves how they define their own gender. People may identify as male, female, something in between, both male and female, neither male or female, something completely outside the gender binary, and more. Gender identification is also fluid and can change throughout a person's life.

1. Discuss expressions of gender identity.

Make a list of physical characteristics often used to identify people as traditionally male or female. Why are these not true indicators of someone's gender? List some examples of breaking traditional signs of gender, such as a person wearing a beard and eye makeup or a person wearing a dress and closely cropped hair. Explain that people define and express their own genders in their own way, and it is not limited to male and female. Because gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others. The best way to identify one's gender is ask them, rather than guess based on physical and behavioral characteristics.

2. Consider the gender identity of the figure in this artwork.

By just looking, can you tell if this figure is a man or a woman, and why or why not? Does it matter that this figure's gender is ambiguous?

3. Observe other symbols in the artwork to learn about the figure's identity.

What symbols from Abakuá are in this work and what do they mean? What can we infer about the character based on these symbols?

4. Discuss why Sikán does not have a mouth.

What is unusual about Sikán's face? What facial features are missing? If you don't have a mouth, what can't you do? What does it mean that she doesn't have a mouth? Consider the connection between Sikán's story and her lack of mouth in this artwork. Explain that Sikán's lack of mouth is a visualization of her voicelessness.

5. Consider how the voiceless can communicate and express themselves.

Since she does not have a mouth, how does she communicate with us, the viewer? What does the story of Sikán and her voicelessness

suggest about the role of women in a world dominated by men? What are some examples of other people who are considered voiceless - marginalized groups? Why are they voiceless, and how can they speak? As an example, consider 1) the lunch counter sit-ins during the 1960s civil rights movement or 2) Senator Elizabeth Warren reaction to the Senate's formal silencing of her on February 7, 2017.

6. Bonus question: What is the difference between the voiceless and the unheard? Ask students to respond through discussion or by writing a paragraph.

ACTIVITY

In this activity, students will trace their own silhouettes and create self-portraits including only their eyes.

1. Trace each student's silhouette. Tape the piece of black paper to a blank wall and position a light source (overhead projector, desk lamp with adjustable arm, flashlight or cellphone flashlight). The student stands in front of the light source so their silhouette is on the paper. A second student then traces the first student's silhouette on the paper in pencil or white pencil, leaving an outline for the self-portrait.
2. After each student has their silhouette tracings, direct them to cut out their silhouettes and paste them on a white sheet of paper. The result will be a black figure on a white background.
3. Students then add images of their eyes only. Ask students to consider what they want their self-portraits to express about themselves and how they can convey this in their self-portrait's eyes. Challenge them to capture their own identity in just the eyes so their self-portraits can be identified. They can work directly on the black paper portraits or on a separate sheet of paper; if working on a separate sheet, students will cut and paste the eyes onto the silhouettes. Students can make the eyes surreal or abstract rather than realistic. Play with the eyes' shape, color, placement on the face, as well as what is inside the eyes. They can use a variety of media: drawing and coloring materials, colored and patterned paper, textured paper, beads, pompoms, sequins and other decorative supplies.

JOSÉ ANGEL TOIRAC & MEIRA MARRERO

JOSÉ A. TOIRAC
BORN IN GUANTANAMO, 1966

MEIRA MARRERO
BORN IN HAVANA, 1969

BASED IN HAVANA

The Twelve, 2012
Pencil, red wine, and gold leaf
on cardboard
12 pieces; 21.75 x 14.875 inches
The Bronx Museum of the Arts
Purchased with funds from the
Ford Foundation

ARTIST



Partners José A. Toirac and Meira Marrero explore Cuban cultural and political iconography by appropriating images from magazines, books, newspapers and television programs produced by the government. They use the official images from the public domain, which have been approved by the government censors, and translate them into paintings. By presenting these images in new contexts outside of their original sources, Toirac and Marrero try to uncover the “zones of silence” in official history and invites the public to “read” them in a new light. They often use icons, like political leaders and commercial brands, to subvert the dominant historical narrative and suggest social criticism. By using appropriated media images, the artists create multiple layers of the artwork’s meaning, purposefully making the viewer’s interpretation uncertain and allowing them to tread between political criticism and censorship. Their work has been subject to censorship and some have not been permitted to be shown in Cuba.

CONTEXT

The Cuban government has long been accused of human rights abuses, including unfair trials, limits on freedom of speech, and political imprisonment. A political prisoner is someone imprisoned because they have opposed or criticized the ruling government. Generally non-violent political activity, political dissent, is considered an illegitimate reason for imprisonment. After seizing power by military coup, Fulgencio Batista revoked many political liberties and imposed tight media censorship to suppress dissent and authorized the secret police to carry out wide-scale violence, torture, and public executions. After ousting Batista, Fidel Castro systematically eradicated his opponents with execution sentences from unfair trials, and accusations of arbitrary imprisonment, prisoner abuse, and repression tactics have continued into contemporary times. To this day freedom of expression is restricted by government control of nearly all media outlets.

ARTWORK

The Twelve presents a dozen monochromatic portraits rendered in gold leaf and red wine. The subjects are political prisoners who were killed under the dictator Fulgencio Batista’s regime. In February 1959 the magazine *Bohemia* published an article about the bodies of political prisoners found in a morgue after Batista had fled the country just weeks before on December 31st, 1958 at the dawn of Castro’s revolution. Photographs of twelve corpses that remained unidentified ran alongside the article. Toirac saw these photographs and, struck by the exact number of unidentified bodies, translated them into this artwork. In the artist’s

Bohemia was a highly popular publication celebrated for its political journalism and commitment to justice. Although it had been a principal voice opposing the Batista regime, it was turned into a promotion of the socialist ideal under Castro's government.

own words, the work "refers to the Twelve Apostles [the primary followers of Jesus whose mission was to spread Jesus' teachings, in Christian tradition] and what they represent: those people who, although they died, we remember today because of the important legacy they made to humanity."

There are several layers of meaning at play. The artwork memorializes the unidentified people while reminding the viewer that these twelve prisoners were a small number of "human beings who lived, died, and today we no longer remember," paying tribute to a never-told legacy. By appropriating the photographs into a new apostolic context, Toirac and Marrero present the corpses behind the veneer of the biblical martyrs' mythical image. The artwork also highlights the continuity of political suppression of dissent and repression of free expression. Castro came to power on the promise of restoring civil liberties, and instead unleashed his own set of repression tactics. Toirac and Marrero satirically change the discourse of Fidel's hardline message without even mentioning him.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss how the Twelve Apostles are reflected in the artwork.
Challenge students to find two indications that refer to the biblical figures: the number of portraits and use of gold and red wine. Consider their symbolism and how the apostles are associated with preaching, holiness, and martyrdom.
2. Discuss the actual subjects of the portraits.
Discuss the term "political prisoner" and the similarities between the apostles and political prisoners. Why would the artist associate the apostles and these political prisoners? How does this artwork criticize Batista's and Castro's governments?
3. Discuss how the identity of the actual subjects is veiled.
Just looking at the artwork, one would not know that the subjects are twelve forgotten anonymous political prisoners. Why are their identities not explicit? Are the images' meaning apparent?
4. Discuss the role of censorship - explicit and implicit - in Cuba and its impact on the arts.
Explain what censorship is and how the Cuban government has suppressed expressions of dissent by restricting freedom of speech. Ask students to consider how and why the artist is influenced by censorship. Why is this artwork deemed acceptable by the censors? Why do you think Toirac and Marrero feels it is important to remember these anonymous dissenters?
5. Discuss the importance of the agency of people to speak their minds.
Why does restricting artists limit freedom of expression? Why is it important for artists to be able to speak their mind?

SANDRA RAMOS

BORN IN HAVANA, 1969
BASED IN HAVANA

Horizontes, 2012
Book with accordion foldout
panels
14.25 x 10.75 x 1 in (closed)
The Bronx Museum of the Arts
Permanent Collection
Purchased with funds from the
Ford Foundation



ARTIST

Through her work Cuban-born Sandra Ramos explores her personal relationship with her native homeland to address the broader question of identity and quotidian life in Cuba. Many of her works feature familiar literary characters, notably Lewis Carroll's Alice, to build context within her work. Ramos' Alice is a self-portrait of the artist who undertakes her own adventures in a nonsensical and puzzling world. Instead of Wonderland, she explores Havana, New York, and other cities around the world. By remaking her own image into that of Alice, Ramos pointedly comments on the surrealistic aspect of every-day life in Cuba and migration experience. The fundamental theme of her work reflects on reconciling collective history of an idealized nation and reality from personal experience, pointing to the complexities of a Cuban identity.

CONTEXT

In 1961 Castro instituted broad travel restrictions barring most Cubans from leaving the country to prevent mass emigration. Any citizen wishing to travel abroad had to obtain an exit permit and a letter of invitation. The steep cost, equaling about fifteen months-worth of the average state salary, was a significant impediment. Moreover exit visas were rarely approved, and were often used to deny the right to travel to those critical of the government. Although travel restrictions were loosened by President Raúl Castro in 2013 - Cubans now need only a Cuban passport to exit - discouraging barriers remain. Obtaining a Cuban passport costs twice as much under Raúl's regulations, or about five months' salary, and the government retains broad powers to deny exit visas to those who express dissent.

Despite restrictions, since the years since Fidel took power many Cubans have emigrated from their homes, often to the U.S. as political refugees. Immediately following the revolution, hundreds of thousands from the upper and middle classes left, fearing the impact of Castro's communism. Between 1966 and 1995, the U.S. considered any Cuban who made it to U.S. soil or territorial waters a political refugee and granted legal residence. Between 1965 and 1973, over 200,000 Cubans emigrated to the U.S. on "Freedom Flights," and over six months in 1980 a mass emigration of another 125,000 left for the U.S., per Castro's allowance.

The migration experience has been a double-edge sword. Although happy to leave pressing hardships in Cuba, many emigrants grappled with the pain of homesickness, uprooting, and separation of families and friends. Displacement leaves a confusing reality of belonging to multiple homes/worlds and a conflicting experience of love of homeland, despite of and with all its challenges. Meanwhile those who stay in Cuba are isolated not only by the country's travel rules but by its foreign policies in a global community.

ARTWORK

Tip: See other examples from the artist's passport series here: www.sandraramosart.com/catalog/event/mixed2012.

Horizontes, an accordion-folded book, is one in a series of artworks resembling oversized passports. The artist superimposes passport images from her friends who left Cuba against images of the cities to which they moved - in this case New York City. Passport images in this particular book identifies Alejandro Sanchez, a student born in Cuba. The interior pages are filled with identification information (date of birth, height, photo I.D, etc) and visa stamps set against the Manhattan skyline. A closer look at the visa stamps shows that Sanchez received a nonimmigrant visa from the American Embassy in Havana. With the right to travel abroad granted by the passport and visa, he was admitted to the U.S. via Key West, Florida, later departed from New York City the year his visa expired. The juxtaposition between the travel visas and New York horizon alludes to the impact Cuban migratory laws and the restrictions of entry and exit to the country have left on people. Tackling the bureaucratic hurdles and emotional toll of emigration and exile, the work refers to the recurring desire to cross the borders of the island, positioning the island's isolation against the need for displacement.

DISCUSSION

1. Ask students how passports document who a person is and where they have been.
What happens to a person's passport when they travel from one country to another? Who issues passports and who receives them? Explain that a passport is a document that allows the holder to travel abroad.
2. Observe the artwork to learn about the different information recorded in a passport.
Who is the owner of the passport? What is his nationality and where does he live? What do the stamps on the visa pages mean? Where do you think he traveled to?
3. Discuss the symbolism of the passport pages' Manhattan skyline.
What seems out of place about this passport? Why do you think the artist used the New York City skyline as the background of this passport? What do you think the experience of going from Cuba to New York City is like?
4. Explain that it has been very difficult for Cubans to receive permission to leave the country.
How might a passport have a different kind of meaning for Cubans? Consider how much time, effort, and resources are required to obtain a passport and an exit visa.
5. Discuss the terms immigration, emigration, and migration.
What is the difference between them? Why do people leave their home countries? What do you think the experience of leaving your home for a new country is like? Have you or any of your family members moved from one country to another? Make a list of the positive experiences, like a new job opportunity or reuniting with a family member, and negative experiences, like feeling homesick or being separated from friends.

AFTER YOUR VISIT

FAMILY EXTENSION

As part of their homework, ask students to talk with their families about their family histories, memories, and identity. To get started, students can use the following questions:

- Where did our family come from, and how did we get here? Did our family come from another country? Why did they decide to move?
- What family customs and traditions do we have? Who started them and why do we continue them? Do we have any new customs and traditions?
- What are some family stories or memories that have been passed down over the years? Are there stories that everyone in our family knows and repeats?
- Are there any items in our home important to our family? These could be photographs, home decor, letters, etc.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Inspired by Sandra Ramos' work, students will create their own passport booklets that tell each of their stories about where they have been, where they are, and where they want to go.

1. Give each student a blank paper booklet that is at least six pages. You can either take two pieces of paper, fold them in half, and staple at the crease (8 pages) or follow "How to Make a Six-Page Book" directions at www.laurenstringer.com/uploads/2/5/6/4/25641572/make_a_six-page_book_out_of_one_sheet_of_paper.pdf.
2. On the cover, ask students to write their family names at the top; draw a family symbol or coat of arms in the middle; and write "passport" at the bottom.
3. On the first inside page, tell students to add the basic identification information: name, place and date of birth, nationality, and a brief physical description (i.e. hair color, eye color, height, weight).
4. On page two, direct students to either paste a photo of themselves or draw a picture of themselves to make a passport portrait. Beneath the portrait, students add their signature.
5. The remaining pages are "visa pages" where students will include "stamps" or symbols representing where they come from (page three), where they are (page four), and where they want to go (page five). Ask students to consider the following for each page:
 - Page three: where you come from, your family history, where your ancestors came from
 - Page four: where you are now and who you are now, what makes up your identity
 - Page five: where you want to go and who you want to be
6. Next, direct students to design their own "passport stamps" - symbols - that visually convey their responses to the above prompts, and add them to the "visa pages." Remind them that in actual passports, stamps symbolize instances when the holder has crossed a country's border, recording their paths. Students' stamps will similarly symbolize points from the course of their own lives. Encourage them to be creative with their stamp designs!
7. After students are finished with their passports, pair them up. Each pair swaps passports and tries to interpret their classmate's "stamps."

Tip: See examples of passport stamps for inspiration.

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passport_stamp
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallery_of_passport_stamps_by_country_or_territory
- <http://www.globalhopkins.com/passports/pports2.htm>

WRITING EXTENSION

As a class, discuss the concept of national identity: What factors define national identity? Who decides what the national identity is? How is national identity expressed? Considering that national identity is a collective phenomenon, what is the relationship between an individual and their nation's identity?

Then ask students to write an essay about the national identity of the U.S. responding to the following questions:

- What was the national identity at the start of the country? Since then, what has changed the national identity?
- What is the national identity today? Is it changing? Why? How can you tell? What is the impact of current events on national identity?
- What are some of the challenges of national identity specific to the U.S.? What is the relationship between multiculturalism and American national identity?
- How does national identity create unity, and how does it create division? Is national identity necessary in today's world?
- What is your opinion of current national identity? What do you think should be defining aspects of it? How can you preserve or advance these aspects?

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

The discussions and activities in this guide align with the following New York State Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for English Language Arts. Please note that we may substitute “text” for “work of art.”

READING

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

LANGUAGE

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.2 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials as appropriate.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.6 Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

WRITING

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

SCHEDULE A GROUP VISIT

To begin scheduling a tour, please fill out the Tour Registration Form online at www.bronxmuseum.org/education/schedule-a-tour. If you are scheduling a tour on behalf of a school, please fill out the Tour Registration Form for Schools. Once you submit the form, our staff will contact you to follow up with the details. When your visit has been confirmed, you will receive a confirmation email. Note: To ensure we can accommodate your group, all guided and self-guided tours must be scheduled in advance of your visit.

TYPES OF TOURS

GUIDED TOUR

Gallery tour of current exhibitions led by a Museum educator

Duration: 60 minutes

Rate: \$100 per tour group (flat rate)

Accommodates 25 participants maximum (including chaperones)

Available Mondays – Sundays from 11:00am to 6:00pm, Fridays until 8:00pm

GUIDED TOUR PLUS

Gallery tour of current exhibitions + art-making workshop led by a Museum educator

Duration: 90 minutes

Rate: \$150 per tour group (flat rate)

Accommodates 25 participants maximum (including chaperones)

Available Mondays – Sundays from 11:00am to 6:00pm, Fridays until 8:00pm

SELF-GUIDED TOUR

Explore the exhibitions in a small group at your own pace.

Duration: 60 minutes (recommended)

Rate: Free

Accommodates 10 participants maximum (including chaperones)

Available Wednesdays – Sundays from 11:00am to 6:00pm, Fridays until 8:00pm

FEE WAIVER PROGRAM

For organizations lacking funding resources, we offer scholarships to cover the cost of tours. To request a fee waiver, write a short letter on official letterhead stating why your group is unable to cover the cost of a tour and how participants would benefit from a guided visit, and email the letter to education@bronxmuseum.org.

CANCELLATION POLICY

In order to reserve your tour we will need to have a credit card on file. This applies to all guided tour bookings, including those that receive a fee waiver.

In the event that you need to cancel or change a visit, please e-mail education@bronxmuseum.org at least one (1) full business day in advance and your credit card will not be charged. Canceling or requesting to reschedule your appointment less than a full business day in advance will incur a charge of the full tour amount. This policy is in place to avoid last-minute cancellations. We are able to accommodate a limited number of tours and are doing the best to honor all tour requests.

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ABOUT THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

By providing an open forum for discussion and experimentation, the Education Department at the Bronx Museum works as a catalyst for ideas and dialogue. We promote engaging and transformational art experiences with the goal of connecting the viewer's personal experience with relevant areas in contemporary culture.

ABOUT THE BRONX MUSEUM

The Bronx Museum of the Arts is an internationally recognized cultural destination that presents innovative contemporary art exhibitions and education programs and is committed to promoting cross-cultural dialogues for diverse audiences. Since its founding in 1971, the Museum has played a vital role in the Bronx by helping to make art accessible to the entire community and connecting with local schools, artists, teens, and families through its robust education initiatives and public programs. In celebration of its 40th anniversary, the Museum implemented a universal free admission policy, supporting its mission to make arts experiences available to all audiences.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Wild Noise/Ruido Salvaje is organized by the Bronx Museum and by Corina Matamoros and Aylet Ojeda Jequín, Curators of Contemporary Cuban Art at El Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (MNBA) in Havana, as part of a multi-year collaboration between the Bronx Museum and the MNBA to foster artistic and cultural exchange between Cuba and the United States. The partnership was launched in 2015 with *Wild Noise: Artwork from The Bronx Museum of the Arts and El Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes*, a groundbreaking exhibition of works from the Bronx Museum's collection presented at MNBA in Havana.

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