

The Farber Foundation



## Cuban Roots: 6 Artists to Watch

*Curator Amy Galpin picks next-generation Cuban artists working in North America*

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In summer 2017, *Cuban Art News* published a story on "[US-Born Cuban – 6 Artists to Watch](#)." Two years later that article is still circulating, and we realized that it was time for an update.

For a fresh look at the next generation of US Cuban artists, we turned to curator Amy Galpin of the [Frost Art Museum](#) in Miami.

Galpin's current exhibitions at the Frost—*CUT: Abstraction in the United States, from the 1970s to the Present* and *Spheres of Meaning: An Exhibition of Artists' Books*, on view through August 25—include young Cuban American artists. Her research for the shows took her to artists' studios in South Florida and beyond.

In selecting artists for this article, Galpin broadened the category of "Cuban American" to include not only US-born artists of Cuban descent but Cuban-born, US-trained artists based in North America.

Here, in no particular order, are her picks for emerging Cuban American artists to watch.

**Cristine Brache.** Born in Miami, of Cuban and Puerto Rican descent, Brache currently lives in Toronto. But she was an active presence in Miami earlier this year with *Cristine's Secret Garden* (2019), an installation at Locust Projects. A dreamlike re-envisioning of her childhood home and its front yard, the work also takes inspiration from the Santería shrines on her neighbors' lawns—"a unique facet of Miami's cultural landscape," as Brache put it.

For Galpin, *Cristine's Secret Garden* "evoked the history, the lure, of a white picket fence, a garden," and the maternal figures in the artist's life. "There are these interesting evocations—altars dedicated to her mother, her grandmother, and her sister," Galpin said.

"I walked away feeling really affected by the installation, and it returns to my mind with frequency."

Brache has had shows with Fierman Gallery in New York City and Puerto Rico. A [capsule review in the \*New Yorker\*](#) called her 2017 solo exhibition in New York a "deceptively demure show" that explores an identity "full of contradictions."

**María de los Ángeles Rodríguez Jiménez.** Born in Holguín, Cuba, Rodríguez Jiménez arrived in New Orleans with her family in 2004. She earned a BFA from New York's Cooper Union in 2015, and is currently completing an MFA in painting at Yale.



A view of "Ojalá," the recent solo exhibition by María de los Ángeles

Rodríguez Jiménez at David Castillo Gallery  
Courtesy mariadelarj.com

Rodríguez Jiménez "[mixes painting and sculpture](#)," said Galpin. "Her work evokes, in an abstract way, the human body—the notion of dress or fashion, very much imbued with Afro-Cuban ritual."



María de los Ángeles Rodríguez Jiménez, "Ojalá," 2019  
Courtesy David Castillo Gallery

Rodríguez Jiménez herself cites her relationship with Afro-Cuban Lukumi traditions as an influence, particularly in her choice of colors to work with. [Ojalá, her first solo exhibition with David Castillo Gallery](#) in Miami, just closed in late June.

“She’s someone I think has a big career ahead of her,” said Galpin.

**Nicole Salcedo.** A first-generation Cuban American, Salcedo was born and raised in Miami. After graduating from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, she returned to Miami to work. Her art is deeply connected to nature, Afro-Caribbean religions, and other belief systems as sources of healing.

“I find myself personally very drawn to the drawings,” Galpin said. “There is such an intriguing sense of detail and a little bit of whimsy in the works, and yet a serious rigor.”

**Juan Travieso.** Born in Havana, Travieso graduated from New World School of the Arts in Miami and recently earned an MFA in painting from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. He lives and works in the New York City area.

Using animal imagery, Travieso depicts environments in a state of fracture, often through geometric abstraction. His work touches on themes of environmental damage and biological loss.

“He’s thinking about the environment as a precious resource,” Galpin said, “but also using it as a metaphor for his own mortality—the fragility of life and his lived experiences, coming from Cuba to the United States. And then making a parallel with the fraught environment as well.”

**William Osorio.** A native of Holguín, Osorio studied painting and sculpture at the School of Fine Arts there. Based in Miami, he [shows with LnS Gallery](#), which presented *Inside Out*, a solo show of his work, in spring 2018.

“He’s making some psychologically intense portraits, mixing painting and collage,” said Galpin. “He applies paint thickly, broadly. He overlays abstract elements over figurative portraits. He’s definitely an old soul.”

**Alicia Rodríguez Alvisa.** Born in Havana, Rodríguez Alvisa works in Havana and Boston, where she recently earned a BFA from the School of the

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, at Tufts University. Her photography has been exhibited in the Boston area at AREA Gallery, Bromfield Gallery, and in Medal Award Galas at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Much of Rodríguez Alvisa's work "deals with her own body, and her body is muscular," said Galpin. "There's a video of her doing weight-lifting and talking about the transformation of the body."

The video, said Galpin, "works against a traditional idea of what a female body should look like. She's talking about her own experience of being an immigrant, being a Cuban woman in the US, while she's weight-lifting. It's a triptych video, and it's pretty dynamic."

In her performance art, Rodríguez Alvisa becomes "Strong Arm," (Brazo Fuerte), a genderless bodybuilder who talks about gender, race, and identity in the contemporary art world, while lifting weights in high heels.

"I was delighted to see *iDale con todo!* (Give It Your All), a performance and installation she did during the Havana Biennial," Galpin said. "It felt really fresh." In all aspects of her work, Rodríguez Alvisa is "talking back to these traditions of Western art history about the presentation of the female body."