



THE ART NEWSPAPER

# Major work by late Cuban printmaker Belkis Ayón a no-show at Venice Biennale because of war in Ukraine

*The work is held at the Ludwig Museum in St. Petersburg, making it "impossible" to be shown in the Biennale's main exhibition*

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*A part of Belkis Ayón's La consagracion (1991), shown in the 2022 Venice Biennale's main exhibition The Milk of Dreams*

A major work by the late Cuban printmaker Belkis Ayón is not on show at the Venice Biennale because of complications prompted by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The piece, entitled *La consagración* (1991), was due to go on display at the entrance to the main exhibition in the Arsenale (The Milk of Dreams, 23 April-27 November).

The work is housed at the Ludwig Museum located at the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg (in 1994, the German collectors Irene and Peter Ludwig donated an important collection of 20th-century art to the Russian institution). According to the Biennale organisers, because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February, "it was impossible to show the work here". A Biennale spokeswoman says: "An image of part of *La consagración*—a visual reminder of the work that could not be included—is in the same room where it was supposed to be installed."

According to the wall caption in the Biennale exhibition, the altar-like work was created the year Ayón graduated from the Instituto Superior de Arte in Havana. "The epically scaled series already demonstrates the young artist's deftness as both a storyteller and a printmaker, as well as her preoccupation with mysterious religious fantasies," the text adds. *La consagración* (1991) was shown at the 10th Berlin Biennale in 2018.

Ayón, who died in 1999, has been institutionally overlooked but is currently undergoing something of a renaissance; she was recently the subject of a retrospective at the Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid which "delted deep into her short but prolific career, framing it inside the artistic and sociocultural context of 1990s Cuba".