

The Back Room

The Back Room: Bet on Betrayal

This week: why artists leave their galleries, a Cuban art gem hits the block, a mega-gallery bankrolls a literary mag, and much more.

Naomi Rea, September 30, 2022

Every Friday, **Artnet News Pro** members get exclusive access to the Back Room, our lively recap funneling only the week's must-know intel into a nimble read you'll actually enjoy.

This week in the Back Room: why artists leave their galleries, a Cuban art gem hits the block, a mega-gallery bankrolls a literary mag, and much more—all in a **6-minute read (1,660 words)**.

Work of the Week

Belkis Ayón's *Desobediencia*

Date: **1998**
Seller: **Howard Farber**
Estimate: **\$50,000–70,000***
Selling at : **Christie's New York**
Sale date: **September 30**

This collograph by the late Cuban printmaker Belkis Ayón has been consigned by the major Miami-based collector Howard Farber and his wife Patricia as part of a trove of works in Christie's Latin American art sale. Farber became enamored with Cuban art after a trip to Havana in 2001 organized by the Met. His collection is one of the best private holdings of Cuban art from the mid-1980s to today.



Ayón's work has been enjoying new relevance following a retrospective earlier this year at the Reina Sofia museum in Madrid. Her work also figured prominently in the Arsenale's entrance to the main exhibition of the 2022 Venice Biennale. In May, around the time of the Biennale opening, a work by Ayón sold for \$107,100 at Phillips, a record for the artist at auction and more than triple its \$30,000 high estimate.

Populated with mouthless figures performing a ritual inside a vortex of mysterious ciphers and a network of roots, *Desobediencia* depicts the origin myth of a secret society of Afro-Cuban men called Abakuá and the legend of a princess who betrayed her male counterparts by discovering the secret of their knowledge. Specialist Marysol Nieves remarked how it “beautifully encapsulates the themes that preoccupied the artist's brief but exemplary career—Afro-Caribbean culture and mythology as a source for exploring themes of knowledge, power, and belonging.”

It was executed the year before Ayón died by suicide at age 32, and Nieves said the work is one to watch as “works by Ayón are in high demand at present among collectors as the artist has been garnering much critical and market attention.”

*Final auction results:

OUTSIDE CUBA INSIDE: PROPERTY FROM THE FARBER COLLECTION OF
CONTEMPORARY CUBAN ART
Belkis Ayón (1967-1999)

Desobediencia

Price realised
USD 214,200

Estimate
USD 50,000 – USD 70,000

Closed: 29 Sep 2022

