Cuban Art in the 20th Century
CULTURAL IDENTITY AND THE INTERNATIONAL AVANT GARDE

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CURATOR

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(below) René Portocarrero, Ciudad (City), 1954, mixed media on board laid down on canvas, 13 ¾ x 17 ¾ inches. Private Collection, Miami, Florida.

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EDUCATION PACKET
Cuban Art in the 20th Century: Cultural Identity and the International Avant Garde

TEACHER PACKET

How to Use This Packet

This packet contains information that will be useful for classroom lessons about Cuban geography, history, culture and art, and will serve to help teachers prepare their students for field trips to the FSU Museum of Fine Art to experience the current exhibition, Cuban Art in the 20th Century: Cultural Identity and the International Avant Garde. The packet includes an overview of Cuban history, an introduction to the exhibition and summary of Cuba’s various art historical periods, as well as biographies of all the major Cuban artists. Finally, lesson plans that apply this material to a classroom setting are also provided for you.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cuban Geography, History and Culture ........................................................................................................... 3

Cuban Art in the Twentieth Century ........................................................................................................... 7

Artists Biographies ....................................................................................................................................... 15

Composition in Visual Art: *The Case of Amelia Peláez* (K-5 Lesson Plan) ........................................... 24

Geometric Abstraction (6-12 Lesson Plan) ................................................................................................. 27

Artist Research Project (6-12 Lesson Plan) ................................................................................................. 31

To Schedule a Field Trip
Please contact Teri Abstein at (850) 645-4681
Cuba is the largest island in the Caribbean, located only 93 miles from the United States. It was discovered on October 28, 1492 by Christopher Columbus, who claimed it for Spain. Called “the Pearl of the Antilles,” Cuba's terrain consists of flat to rolling plains with several mountain ranges, the highest peak of which is 6,476 feet in elevation. Its unrivaled sandy beaches have attracted thousands of visitors from around the world. The island is slightly smaller in land area than the state of Louisiana and, as of the 2014 census, had a population of over 11 million people.

At the time of the Spanish conquest, the inhabitants of the island were Taíno and Siboney peoples, most of whom perished from European diseases and ill treatment. The strategically located island quickly became a major center for Spain’s activities in the New World. The first settlement was established on the island in 1511 and Havana, which would become its capital, was founded in 1515. By comparison, Jamestown, the first settlement by the English in North America, was not founded until 1607. By the time the Pilgrims came to America in 1620, Havana was over 100 years old.
One of the great European powers, Spain established a worldwide empire with vast control over the Americas, including Florida and most of Central and South America. Because of its location as the capital of Cuba, Havana became the center of Spain’s New World commerce. By 1754, Havana was the third largest city in the Americas. Spain’s 400-year rule of Cuba was briefly interrupted from 1762 to 1763. The British flag flew over Cuba after Havana was captured by British troops in 1762. British occupation was short-lived, as Cuba was traded for Florida in 1763. Cuba remained a Spanish possession until 1898.

During the 400 years of Spanish administration, Cuba received a large influx of Spanish colonists, who engaged in various occupations from service to the crown to establishment of commercial pursuits and plantations in the interior. Cubans today have surnames that can be traced to every region of Spain. Also contributing to the population of Cuba was the importation of slaves brought in by the Spanish and the British. Cuban slaves worked in both rural and urbanized settings. In time, slaves were permitted to buy themselves out of slavery and slavery in Cuba was abolished in 1875. Although Cuban culture was primarily influenced by those two groups, over the centuries Cuba also benefitted from immigration of peoples from countries as varied as Ireland and China.

During the colonial period, Havana flourished as a trading port. Ships from all over the New World carried their goods to Havana for shipment to Spain, stimulating commerce on the island. Spanish Baroque architecture took on a unique style in Latin America, as can be seen in the Cathedral of Havana, built during the 18th century, one of many architectural wonders that led UNESCO to declare Old Havana a World Heritage Site in 1982. The University of Havana was founded in 1728, upon the authorization of Pope Innocent XIII and King Phillip V of Spain. In due course, Havana came to be known as the “Paris of the Antilles,” for its beautiful architecture and cultural development.

Blessed with temperate climate and rich soils, Cuba became an international source for sugar and tobacco and established itself as the world’s largest
sugar producer early in the 19th century. In addition to Havana, other major port cities developed, such as Guantanamo and Santiago de Cuba. Sugar continued to be a major source of income for the nation throughout its history, with Cuban currency rising to parity with the American dollar or falling precipitously depending on world sugar markets.

Spanish rule became increasingly unpopular and led to three wars for Cuban independence beginning in 1868 and terminating in 1898, with the military intervention of the United States. The United States governed Cuba until 1902, when the Cuban flag was raised over the new nation under a constitution developed in 1901 by a Cuban constitutional assembly. Tomás Estrada Palma was its first president.

The United States returned to protect American economic interests from 1906 to 1909. During that time, an American governor ruled the island. American military again protected American investments on two other brief occasions before 1917, both times under Cuban presidents. These incursions were allowed under what was commonly known as the “Platt Amendment” of the Cuban constitution, which permitted American intervention.

In the first half of the 20th century, Havana was a world capital. Its elite promoted the arts as patrons of beautiful architecture reminiscent of that of Paris and Madrid and welcomed world renown musicians who presented concerts at the Lyceum and other venues.

In the field of painting, the Cubans were fiercely proud of their native-born artists and sought to have an exemplar of their work gracing their homes.

Learning to play musical instruments or studying how to paint or sculpt was deemed part of a well-rounded individual. These aspirations extended into the rising middle class, which was also hungry for a place among the highly cultured members of that society. The influence of the amateur in the promotion of Cuban art can be seen in the role of the Academy of San Alejandro, which furthered not only future professionals, including but also spawned many talented amateur artists. San Alejandro provided a steady income for artistic greats like Armando Menocal, who returned to his alma mater to teach, and Leopoldo Romañach. While some of Romañach’s students went on to become famous such as Amelia Peláez, he also...
taught many amateurs who, in turn, instilled a love of art in their families.

Its proximity to the United States and relative prosperity made Cuba a popular tourist destination during the middle third of the 20th century. Cuban music had a strong appeal with American audiences, as did Cuban cigars and popular drinks known by such names as “Cuba Libre,” “Daiquiri” and “Mojito.” However, beneath the surface lurked certain political unrest that ultimately escalated to repression of individual liberties in the 1930’s.

Concern for the protection of American investments potentially threatened by civil unrest led the United States to sponsor a mediation exercise that brought about the departure of President Gerardo Machado, who had exceeded his term, and the installation of the president selected through the mediation, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes. In 1933, a coalition of University students and intellectuals who had the support of the Cuban people joined forces with dissatisfied soldiers and non-commissioned officers and issued a proclamation demanding the resignation of the mediation administration. Upon the president’s resignation, a new era of democracy ensued that included the development of a new constitution by constitutional assembly. The Constitution of 1940 became a model of modern democratic government and no longer included the Platt Amendment.

In 1952, Fulgencio Batista, who had been a player in the 1933 revolt as the leader of the dissatisfied soldiers and non-commissioned officers, took control in a coup d’etat, deposing democratically elected President Carlos Prío and suspending many provisions of the constitution. Despite the blow to the democratic system, Cuba continued to develop economically. In the late 1950’s, Cuba had an 80% literacy rate. Its average industrial salary was ranked 8th highest in the world in 1958. Cuba functioned under Batista’s rule for seven years. However, the Cuban people resented his strong rule.

Spurred by his pledge to restore the constitution, Cubans of all social strata backed a young revolutionary by the name of Fidel Castro, who deposed Batista and entered Havana in 1959. However, increasing limitations on civil liberties by the new revolutionary regime, including the expropriation of private property, led to the exodus of more than one million Cubans from 1959 to the present. Many have settled in the United States, principally in Dade County. The United States severed relations with Cuba in 1961 and reopened an embassy on the island in 2015.
Cuban Art in the 20th Century: 
*Cultural Identity and the International Avant Garde*

**Overview**

Modern Cuban art is a complex movement. It emerged in Havana in 1927 and matured during the next two decades. Its inception is mainly defined by a rupture with academic art, the appropriation of European avant-garde formal inventions, and the subjective symbolization of national ethos. In the 1940s a new generation of artists expanded their artistic sources to include popular art and explored new symbols of collective identity. By the 1950s a third generation of modernist artists abandoned figuration, the representation of Cuban themes, and turned to abstraction and introspection.

**The Exhibition**

The Exhibition at the Florida State University College of Fine Arts, Cuban Art in the 20th Century, Cultural Identity and the International Avant Garde, presents important works of art as a complex modern movement evolving over decades, and are described by several discrete periods: Colonial, Early Republic, First Generation, Second Generation, Third Generation, Late Modern, and the Contemporary Periods. The Cuban modern art movement consists of a loose group of artists, divided into generations, who counted on the moral support of an intellectual elite and with minimal economic help from the private and public sectors. In spite of a fragile infrastructure, this art movement, along with similar movements in literature and music, played a major role in defining Cuban culture in the 20th century.
ART HISTORICAL PERIODS

Colonial

The founding of the Academy of San Alejandro in 1818 marked a significant turn in Cuba’s art history. San Alejandro served many purposes for those involved in its establishment and management. From the Spanish perspective, the Academy could be used as a moderating force on the island, asserting European cultural standards in the colonial setting. For Cuban artists, however, San Alejandro provided a venue for the creation of work that spoke to the complexities of Cuba’s culture and social structure. Costumbrismo, or the pictorial depiction of everyday life, was a particularly important lens through which this was accomplished.

Cuban artist Armando Menocal graduated from the Academy of San Alejandro before leaving to study in Spain in 1880. He later returned to the island to fight for Cuban independence from the Spanish crown, which was won in 1898. Both during and following his tenure in Europe, Menocal remained dedicated to the Costumbrismo style. In *Spanish Dancer with Mantilla* and *A Knight’s Squire*, the artist focuses his attention on the common people, portraying them with warmth and familiarity. Menocal would later be named director of the Academy of San Alejandro in 1927.

Even works produced by Spanish artists living in colonial Cuba followed this interest in everyday life on the island. Víctor Patricio Landaluze was a staunch opponent of Cuban independence, yet he was fascinated by the diversity of Cuba’s cultural landscape. He created many works exploring this subject matter, significant for Cuban art, and directly addressed Cuba’s relationship with race and class as it has developed over the course of the centuries.
Early Republic

The Cuban landscape dominates many works of the Early Republic. Artists explored the intricacies of the island's terrain, intimately rendering them with a dream-like quality. Paintings from this period often portray a Cuba that is unchanged and persistent, contrasting against the shift of power following the island's independence from Spain. They are the works of artists searching for Cuban identity in a new context.

Pastor Argudín y Pedroso’s *View of the Viñales Valley* functions in this way on two different scales. The painting seeks to find that which is inherent to the localized landscape, painted in diminutive, intimate size. The open expansiveness of the scene, however, optimistically alludes to the larger world with which the island is connected. This duality also exists in Romañach Leopoldo’s *Caibarién Beach*. The seaside is a familiar constant, while serving as a gateway to international waters.
First Generation

Following Cuba’s formal independence from the United States in 1902, young artists flocked to Europe to study under some of the preeminent Modern artists of that period. Many later returned to the island with a reinvigorated approach to portraying the hybrid nuances of their homeland’s culture. These artists would form what we refer to as Cuba’s international avant-garde, and many left their mark as some of the most significant artists to emerge from the early twentieth century.

The painter and sculptor Amelia Peláez embodies the internationalism that was embraced by her peers. A graduate of both the National Academy of San Alejandro and the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, France, Peláez traveled extensively during her lifetime. Her work employs a language universally recognized. In Self Portrait on a Balcony, the themes of interiority and the self are examined, yet approached from the perspective of a detached viewer. The artist inserts Cuban aesthetics into her paintings and pottery through carefully wrought details. The fine weave of the colonial-era balcony in Self Portrait is echoed in the intricate pattern on Vase with Abstract Motifs.

The artist Victor Manuel García likewise explored the personal and familiar while maintaining a dialogue with international movements. In Girl, Manuel adopts the visual vocabulary of artists such as Modigliani and Gaugin, but addresses his own experiences in subject matter and the portrait’s verdant, tropical setting.
Second Generation

The Second Generation of Cuban Modernists absorbed the internationalism emphasized by their teachers. Artists Roberto Diago and Luis Martínez Pedro dove further into abstraction in their work, though they engaged with Cuban identity to different degrees. In *Still Life*, Diago avoids any direct connection with Cuban themes, creating an image that emphasizes form and contextual isolation. Pedro’s *Jibacoa Beach* is even less formally concrete than Diago’s *Still Life*, yet the painting is grounded firmly in the island through its titular reference to the Cuban geography.
Third Generation

Like artists belonging to the Second Generation, the Third Generation similarly explored the dual themes of national identity and internationalism. They employ abstraction to manifest these two concepts, often blurring the line that separates each school of thought even further than their predecessors.

This is particularly apparent in the work of José Mijares. In Interior with Woman, Mijares presents a domestic scene, with a view of the tropical landscape visible through a backgrounded, arched window. The scene is expressively rendered, yet figural at its core. In contrast, Mijares’s Geometric Composition is fully nonrepresentational, both in content and title. Mijares utilized both styles over the course of his long career, often fusing the two in single arrangements.
Later Modern Period

The Later Modern period of Cuban art represents the culmination of years of evolution in the Modern style. Artists belonging to this period were immersed in an art world in which Modernism was an accepted language, if not the norm. Their work is almost a distillation of the style, deconstructed and refined into an independent interpretation of the movement.

The art created during Ángel Acosta León’s short but prolific career echoes the trajectory of Cuban Modernism over the course of five decades. His earlier work maintains an element of the concrete, with increasing detachment in the years following his graduation from the Academy in 1958. In *Beat up Bed in Blue*, the viewer is given a glimpse into the artist’s interpretation of reality, granted access through an object that has become dissociated from its own form.
Contemporary Period

Contemporary Cuban and Cuban-American artists continue the long tradition of locating Cuban identity between the national and the global. They negotiate the different facets of Cubanidad, while still partaking in a primary dialogue with the international vocabulary that helped shape its visual expression. In Immortality, the artist Joel Besmar walks this line, relishing in the fine, academic style characteristic to Dutch still lifes, while including a tropical element—a starfruit—to re-center the viewer’s perspective to the local.

Cuban identity takes on a new context for contemporary artists living abroad. In 1959, artist Gina Péllon left Cuba for France, where she remained until her death in 2014. Her mixed-media work, Let’s Dance, evokes the vibrant colors of the island, forming a transatlantic link to her place of origin.


[above] Detail of Joel Besmar, La Immortalidad (Immortality), 2009, oil on canvas, 30 x 39½ inches. Private Collection.
Abela, Eduardo (1889–1965): Eduardo Abela was born in San Antonio de los Baños, Cuba. The artist studied at the Academy of San Alejandro, where he graduated in 1921. Abela lived and painted in Spain from 1921 to 1924, and in France from 1927 to 1929, networking with other members of the Cuban vanguard working abroad. After returning to Cuba, the artist briefly worked as the director of the short-lived Free Studio of Painting and Sculpture, and later as Cuba’s cultural attaché to Mexico and Guatemala. Eduardo Abela died in Havana, Cuba.

Alfonzo, Carlos (1950-1991): Carlos Alfonzo was born in Cuba and received his art degree from the Academy of San Alejandro in 1973; he took a subsequent degree in art history from the University of Havana. Alfonzo was an émigré during the Mariel boat lift in 1980 and he worked in Miami until his death in 1991.

Argudín Y Pedroso, Pastor (1889-1968): Pastor Argudín Pedroso was an Cuban-born artist who lived and worked in France in the 1920s. He participated in the 1924 Exposition d’Art Américain-Latin at the Musée Galliera, as well as the Salon des Indépendants in 1925 and 1931. The media of works appearing in exhibitions and at auction houses have been cited as murals, paintings, and pastels.

Bears, R.C. (19th century): R.C. Bears was an artist active during the late nineteenth century. Bears’ birthplace is unknown; his career included a professorship of drawing at the Academy of San Alejandro, appointed in 1863, until he briefly served as interim director following the directorship of Juan Francisco Cisneros Guerrero (d. 1878).

Bencomo Mena, José A. (1890-1962): José A. Bencomo Mena was born in Remedios, Las Villas, Cuba. He studied painting and drawing at the Academy of San Alejandro, earning the first scholarship bestowed by the Cuban state to study painting in Europe. He returned to Cuba in 1927 after studying in Italy for eight years. After his return, the artist taught in the Academy of San Alejandro for over twenty-five years, earning multiple awards and honors.

Bermúdez, Cundo (1914-2008): Secundino (Cundo) Bermúdez y Delgado was born in Havana, Cuba. He attended the Academy of San Alejandro in 1930 to study painting, and the University of Havana in 1934 to study law and social sciences. Following his 1941 graduation, the artist briefly studied in Mexico City at the Academy of San Carlos, where he was influenced by the work of Diego Rivera. Upon returning to Cuba, he helped found the Asociación de Pintores y Escultores de Cuba (APEC). After the rise of Fidel Castro, Bermúdez relocated first to Puerto Rico, and then to Miami, where he died in 2008.

Besmar, Joel (b. 1968): Joel R. Besmar Nieves lives and was born in Camagüey, Cuba. The artist first studied at Camagüey’s Vocational School of Arts, and later went on to graduate from the Academy of San Alejandro. Besides his work as a visual artist, Besmar has worked as an illustrator and essayist, and as a lecturer at the Vocational School of Arts.
Cárdenas, Agustín (1927-2001): Agustín Cárdenas Alfonso was born in Matanzas, Cuba, to an Afro-Cuban family of Congolese and Senegalese descent. In Havana, Cárdenas studied under the sculptor Juan José Sicre and at the Academy of San Alejandro. The artist received international recognition for his surrealist-influenced sculpture during his lifetime, exhibiting in South Korea, the United States, Japan, France, and many other international centers for the arts. He died in 2001 in Havana, Cuba.

Carreño, Mario (1913-1999): Mario Carreño y Morales studied painting at the Academy of San Alejandro in his hometown of Havana, Cuba, from 1925 to 1926. In 1934, the artist entered the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando in Madrid, Spain, and later studied at the School of Applied Arts and the Académie Julian in Paris, France, after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Carreño spent a brief period of time living in the United States and Mexico, where he became acquainted with some of the major players of Mexican Muralism, before finally settling in Santiago, Chile. He lived there for the remainder of his life.

Cerra, Mirta (1904-1986): Mirta Cerra Herrera was born in Bejucal, Cuba. She studied at the Academy of San Alejandro from 1928 to 1934, and received a scholarship to study at the Art Students League of New York in 1935. The artist participated in significant international exhibitions and salons in New York, Philadelphia, Havana, and Paris during her lifetime, and died in Havana, Cuba September 26, 1986.

Chartand, Augusto (1828-1899): Augusto Chartrand Dubois was born in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1828 to parents of French-Cuban ancestry. He studied painting in France from the age of nine to nineteen, from the years 1837 to 1847. Following his studies, the artist traveled extensively through Europe, Asia, and the Americas. Along with his brothers, Esteban and Philippe, the artist explored the theme of the Cuban landscape in his work. Augusto Chartand died August 25, 1899, in Matanzas, Cuba.

Chartand, Esteban (1840-1883): Esteban Sebastian Chartrand Dubois was born in Matanzas, Cuba, on October 11, 1840. Beginning in 1864, the artist studied painting in France under the landscape painter, Théodore Rousseau. Chartrand was widely celebrated during his lifetime, and was offered a position at the Academy of San Alejandro, which he turned down. The artist moved to Hoboken, New Jersey, for his health in the early 1880's, where he died from tuberculosis in 1883.

Chartand, Philippe (1825-1889): Philippe Chartrand Dubois was born in Matanzas, Cuba, the eldest of three artist brothers. He traveled to Paris in 1854 to study painting, and was heavily influenced by members of the Barbizon School. He was named the first Interim Professor of Landscape and Perspective at the Academy of San Alejandro in 1886. Philippe Chartrand died in Havana, Cuba on August 9, 1889.

Cleenewerck, Henry (1818-1901): Henri Cleenewerck was born in Watou, Belgium, in 1818. He studied painting at the academies of art in Poperinge and Iepe. In 1860, the artist moved to work in Savanah, Georgia, and in 1865, he relocated to Havana, Cuba. It was during this period that Cleenewerck created his most iconic works showcasing the Cuban landscape. He returned to the United States in 1868 at the beginning of the Cuban War of Independence. Henry Cleenewerck died in Brussels, Belgium at the age of eighty-three.
Consuegra, Hugo (1929-2003): Hugo Consuegra Sosa was born in Havana, Cuba, where he concurrently studied piano at the Conservatorio Hubert de Blanck, and painting at the Academy of San Alejandro. In 1953, he became one of the founding members of The Eleven, a group of young abstract expressionists in Cuba. The artist relocated to New York in 1970, where he would reside until his death in 2003.

De La Paz, Guerra: Guerra de la Paz is the composite name of the artists Alain Guerra (b. 1968 in Havana, Cuba) and Neraldo de la Paz (b. 1955 in Matanzas, Cuba). The duo employs the use of recycled, readymade objects in their art, inspired by the waste bins of second-hand goods they found on the streets near the artists' original studio. Guerra de la Paz first began its collaboration in 1996. They are currently based out of Miami, Florida.

Diago, Roberto Juan (1920-1955): Roberto Juan Diago Querol was born in Havana, Cuba. The artist graduated from the Academy of San Alejandro in 1941, and was named professor of drawing at the School of Arts in Matanzas in 1945. He was highly prolific despite his short career, and he worked with many different media, including photography, drawing, engraving, and painting. The artist participated in many international exhibitions, and his work can be found in permanent collections in major institutions in Havana, New York, and Washington, DC. Diago died in Madrid, Spain, in 1955.

Echevarría, Giosvany (b. 1971): Giosvany Echevarría was born in the municipality of Viñales, Pinar del Río, Cuba, where he also graduated from the Provincial School of Visual Arts in 1986. He completed his Master’s degree in painting from the Academy of San Alejandro in Havana in 1990. His landscape paintings are heavily influenced by the natural settings of his native province.

Eiriz, Antonia (1929-1995): Antonia Eiríz Vázquez was born in April of 1929. She attended the Academy of San Alejandro to study painting, and graduated in 1958. In the early sixties, the artist began to move away from academic painting to study and promote Cuba’s long tradition of craft art. She was nationally acclaimed during her lifetime, and taught at both the Escuela de Instructores de Artesanía and the Academy of San Alejandro. Eiríz moved to Miami, Florida in 1993, where she later died of a heart attack in 1995.

Enriquez, Carlos (1900-1957): Carlos Enríquez Gómez was born in Zulueta, Cuba, to a wealthy family. As an artist, Enríquez received little formal education, and was largely self-taught. Enríquez is considered one of the founding members of the Cuban vanguard, and he was influenced by the surrealist and modernist movements. The artist lived and worked in both Cuba and the United States, and he died while painting in his Havana studio in 1957.

Fabelo, Roberto (b. 1951): Roberto Fabelo was born in Camagüey, Cuba, in 1951. The artist studied painting and drawing at both the Academy of San Alejandro and Superior Art Institute of Havana. Fabelo has worked as a painter, illustrator, professor, and art judge over the course of his celebrated career. He has been the recipient of several national awards for art and culture, including the Alejo Carpentier medal. Fabelo presently lives and works in Havana, Cuba.
Fernández, Agustín (1928-2006): Agustín Fernández was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1928. The artist studied at the Academy of San Alejandro between 1944 and 1950, and in 1959 he traveled to Europe to work and exhibit internationally. He would remain abroad, living France, Puerto Rico, and finally New York City from 1972 until his death in 2006.

Florido, Miguel (b. 1980): Miguel Florido lives and was born in Havana, Cuba. The artist is self-taught, and has been widely praised for his still-life paintings. His works are part of both national collections in Cuba, and in collections abroad.

Fong, Flora (b. 1949): Flora Fong was born in Camagüey, Cuba. She graduated from the Academy of San Alejandro, where she also served as a professor from 1970 to 1989. Fong has been widely exhibited internationally, including fine art fairs such as Art Chicago, Art Miami, and Arteaméricas, and numerous personal and group exhibitions. The artist currently lives in Havana, Cuba.

García, Juan Gil (1876-1932): Juan Gil García was born in Madrid, Spain, and moved to Havana, Cuba, near the end of the nineteenth century. While in Cuba, the artist’s still-life paintings emphasized the natural world of the island, particularly its fruits and flowers. Many of Garcia’s works can be found in the National Museum of Fine Arts in Havana, Cuba, the same city in which the artist died in 1932.

García, Víctor Manuel (1897-1969): Víctor Manuel García Valdés was born in Havana Cuba, in 1897. García showed artistic promise from a young age, entering into his studies at the Academy of San Alejandro at the age of twelve. García left Cuba in 1925 to study abroad in France, returning to exhibit in the landmark 1927 salon at the Painters and Sculptors Association of Havana, which marked the beginning of the Cuban modernist period. Afterwards, the artist traveled back to Europe before settling permanently in Cuba in 1929, when he created some of his most iconic works. Víctor Manuel García Valdés died in Havana at the age of seventy-two.

Garcia-Roig, Lilian (b. 1966): Lilian Garcia-Roig was born in Havana, Cuba. She received her B.F.A. from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX, in 1988, and her M.F.A. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1990. The artist taught in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Texas in Austin from 1991 to 2001, later moving to Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida. Garcia-Roig served as the Director of Graduate Studies in Visual Art at FSU from 2002 to 2008, and is currently a professor of painting.

Gattorno, Antonio (1904-1980): Antonio Gattorno was an important figure in the Cuban Modernist movement. He attended the Academy of San Alejandro in his hometown of Havana, Cuba, before winning a scholarship that allowed him to travel to Europe for artistic training. The artist returned to Cuba in 1926 to teach at the Academy. In 1940, Gattorno married and moved to New York City. He would remain in the United States until his death in 1980, only visiting Cuba once in 1946.
González, Dayron (b. 1982): Dayron González was born in Quivicán, Cuba, in 1982. He studied at the Superior Institute of Industrial Design for a year before enrolling in the Academy of San Alejandro, where he graduated in 2007. The artist was a member of AHS (Asociación Hermanos Saiz), a member of the “Arte y Conducta” art workshop directed by Tania Bruguera and Lázaro Saavedra between 2006 and 2008, and a founding member of MAKINAH (Professional Association of Cuban Contemporary Plastic Artists). Dayron González currently lives and works in Miami, Florida.

Lam, Wifredo (1902-1982): Wifredo Óscar de la Concepción Lam y Castilla was born to a family of mixed Afro-Cuban and Chinese descent in the village of Sagua La Grande, Cuba. The artist moved to Havana in 1916 to study law before switching to the study of academic painting at the Academy of San Alejandro in 1918. Lam left the Academy in 1923 to continue his artistic studies in Europe. While in Spain, he studied under Fernando Álvarez de Sotomayor y Zaragoza, who had also served as an instructor to Salvador Dalí. The artist moved to France in the 1930s, where he formed a close friendship with Pablo Picasso. Picasso acted as a mentor to the young artist, introducing Lam to some of the leading artists of the period. Lam returned to Cuba in 1941, where he began exploring his family’s heritage and infusing his art with Afro-Cuban themes and motifs. It was during this period that Lam’s iconic style truly evolved. His work was widely celebrated and exhibited during his lifetime. The artist settled permanently in France in 1952, though he traveled extensively until his death on September 11, 1982, in Paris.

Landaluze, Víctor Patricio (1830-1889): Víctor Patricio Landaluze was born in Bilbao, Spain, in 1830. He arrived in Havana, Cuba in 1863, where he worked as an illustrator for the magazine, *El Almendares*. Though the artist was strongly against Cuban independence, his work captured the contemporaneous culture and customs of the country. Landaluze is considered one of the most important artists within the costumbrismo movement, and his prints were widely circulated during his lifetime. The artist died in Cuba in 1889.

Léon, Ángel Acosta (1930-1964): Ángel Acosta León was born in Havana, Cuba, to a family of ten children. He began his studies at the Academy of San Alejandro in 1952, where he graduated in 1958. The artist left Cuba in 1963 to travel throughout Europe. Despite his short career, León was a prolific artist who received both national and international awards during his lifetime. The artist committed suicide on the open sea during his return to Cuba in 1964.

Llinás, Guido (1923-2005): Guido Llinás was born in Pinar del Río, Cuba. Though he studied a few months at the School of Fine Arts in Pinar del Río, the artist was largely self-taught, specializing in both painting and engraving. Llinás taught elementary school in his home province until 1957, when he left to study Pedagogy at the University of Havana. Following his graduation, the artist traveled extensively throughout the United States, Italy, Spain, England, Germany, and France, where he remained to study engraving Hayter atelier. Llinás returned to Cuba in 1963 to serve as a visual arts professor at the School of Architecture at the University of Havana, and later moved back to Paris to work as inventory manager for the Denise René Gallery. The artist died in 2005 at the Mondor Hospital in Creteil, outside of Paris, after being struck by a motorcycle while crossing a street.
Martínez Pedro, Luís (1910-1989): Luís Martínez Pedro was born in Cuba in 1910. After studying architecture at the University of Havana, the artist began his studies at the Academy of San Alejandro in 1929. Martínez Pedro left Cuba for New Orleans, Louisiana to escape the censorship of the Machado regime and study painting and drawing at the city's School of Arts and Crafts. He returned to Cuba in 1933, where he worked first in advertising, and then illustrating, while exhibiting his work in national and international exhibitions. Luis Martínez Pedro died in 1989 at the age of seventy-nine.

Melero, Miguel A. (1836-1907): Miguel A. Melero Rodríguez was born in Havana, Cuba in 1836. He began his artistic studies on the island before moving to Paris, France, to continue his education. The artist traveled throughout Europe, returning to Cuba in 1868 at the outbreak of the Cuban War of Independence. Melero became the first Cuban-born director of the Academy of San Alejandro, and he made the significant decision to allow women to enter the Academy for arts instruction. Melero died in Cuba in 1907.

Mendive, Manuel (b. 1944): Manuel Mendive was born in Havana, Cuba, to an Afro-Cuban family of Yoruba descent. Mendive's family was active in the practice of Santería, which heavily influenced the artist's style and artistic interests. The artist graduated from the Academy of San Alejandro, and is considered one of the most important living, contemporary Cuban artists. Mendive made his first trip to West Africa in 1982. The artist lives and works in the outskirts of Havana, and continues to promote Afro-Cuban art and culture through his painting and sculptures.

Menocal, Armando (1863-1942): Armando Menocal was born and died in Havana, Cuba. He studied at the Academy of San Alejandro until 1880, when he left to study painting in Spain under the artist Francisco Jover. He exhibited in Spain before returning to Cuba to fight in the Cuban War of Independence. Following its completion, the artist returned to the Academy to serve as professor of landscape painting. The artist was named director of the Academy in 1927, and was named director emeritus in 1940. Armando Menocal died in 1942.

Mialhe, Frédéric (1810-1868): Pierre Toussaint Frédéric Mialhe, known as Federico Mialhe in Cuba, was born in France in 1810. Mialhe was trained as a painter and engraver, and he lived and worked in Cuba between 1838 and 1854. The artist was hired by the printing house of the Real Sociedad Patriótica to document the island, and he additionally worked as a drawing professor at the Academy of San Alejandro during his time in the country. Mialhe died in 1868 at the age of fifty-eight.

Mijares, José (1921-2001): José María Mijares Fernandez was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1921. He entered the Academy of San Alejandro in 1936, where the artist studied painting. Mijares would later teach at the school for two years before his resignation at the emergence of the Castro regime. He left Cuba in 1968 for Miami, Florida, where he lived until his death in 2001.
Milián, Raúl (1914-1984): Raúl Milián was born in Havana, Cuba. He was a self-taught artist, who has been widely exhibited on an international scale. The artist began painting in 1952, and he explored the use of non-traditional materials in his art. Raúl Milián died in Havana in 1984.

Morales, Eduardo (1862-1938): Eduardo Morales was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1862. Morales enrolled at the Academy of San Alejandro, later leaving his studies to fight in the Cuban War of Independence. Following the end of the conflict, he joined the National Police Force, painting in his spare time and later in retirement. While small, the artist's oeuvre is extremely meticulous, and his landscape paintings captured the Cuban countryside in a transitional period of the island's history.

Moreno, Servando Cabrera (1923-1981): Servando Cabrera Moreno was born in Havana, Cuba. The artist attended the Art Students League in New York City and La Grande Chaumière in Paris before enrolling in and later graduating from the Academy of San Alejandro in Havana. While the artist was successful and celebrated during his lifetime, Moreno's work pushed cultural boundaries, and he faced censorship throughout his entire career. Servando Cabrera Moreno died in Cuba in 1981.

Orlando, Felipe (1911-2001): Felipe Orlando García Murciano was born in Tenosique, Mexico. The artist's family moved to Cuba in 1914, where the artist would live until 1946, before settling first in New York City, and later in Mexico City, Mexico, in 1951. Orlando studied Anthropology at the University of Havana, where he also attended the painting workshops of the artists Jorge Arche and Víctor Manuel. The artist taught at both the Universidad de las Américas and the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, both in México City, and was widely exhibited in Mexico, Cuba, and the United States during his lifetime.

Peláez, Amelia (1896-1968): Amelia Peláez del Casal was born in Yaguajay, Cuba, where she lived with her family until they relocated to Havana in 1915. The artist entered the National Academy of San Alejandro at the age of twenty, where she quickly became recognized for her paintings. Peláez left Cuba to work in Europe in 1927, settling in Paris, but traveling throughout the continent. She studied at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, later returning to Cuba in 1934. The artist exhibited nationally and internationally, and was prolific in the media of pottery, mural painting, and easel painting. Amelia Peláez died in Havana in 1968.

Pellón, Gina (1926-2014): Gina Pellón was born in Cumanayagua, Cuba. She studied at the Academy of San Alejandro, where she graduated in 1954. The artist taught at the Velado Polytechnic Institute until 1957. In 1959, Pellón left Cuba for France, fleeing from the Castro regime. Her first solo exhibition took place in Switzerland in 1960. The work of Gina Pellón has been widely exhibited in throughout Europe. The artist remained in Paris until her death in 2014.
Ponce de León, Fidelio (1895-1949): Fidelio Ponce de León was the pseudonym of Alfredo Fuentes Pons, a painter born in Camagüey, Cuba in 1895. The artist studied at the San Alejandro Academy in Havana from 1913 until 1918. Following graduation, he taught drawing to disadvantaged children and worked in commercial arts for many years. The artist traveled to New York City in 1937, where The Museum of Modern Art obtained his work, Mujeres, as part of its permanent collection. Ponce de León died in Havana in 1949 from tuberculosis.

Portocarrero, René (1912-1985): René Portocarrero was born in Havana, Cuba. While the artist very briefly studied at the Academy of San Alejandro, he is generally considered self-taught. His work was first exhibited at the Salon of Fine Arts in Havana, and the artist served as a professor at the Free Institute of Painting and Sculpture. Portocarrero traveled throughout Europe and the Americas, and was highly prolific. He died in Havana at the age of seventy-three.

Ramos, Domingo (1894-1956): Domingo Ramos was born in Guines, Cuba. He was admitted into the Academy of San Alejandro in 1907, and in 1918, the artist was awarded a scholarship from the National Congress to study at the San Fernando School in Madrid, Spain. After his return in 1919, Ramos was named a professor at the Academy in Havana. He served as a professor until he was awarded the position of Principal of the School in 1949. Ramos had a productive artistic career, and he presented over twenty personal exhibits of his artworks. The artist died in Havana in 1956.

Ravenet, Domingo (1905-1969): Domingo Ravenet was born in Valencia, Spain, but was raised in Havana, Cuba. The artist graduated Cum Laude from the Academy of San Alejandro. Following graduation, he continued his studies at the Academy Chaumière in Paris, France. Ravenet chose to dedicate his life to the instruction of the arts, and served as a mentor and instructor to many renowned Cuban artists. Ravenet died in Havana, Cuba in 1969.

Rodríguez, Mariano (1912-1990): Mariano Rodríguez was born in Havana, Cuba. He showed interest in drawing and painting at a young age, and at the age of twenty-four the artist traveled to Mexico, where he would meet the painter Rodríguez Lozano. Lozano mentored the young Rodríguez, who devoted himself to his work upon his return to Cuba. He was appointed assistant professor at the Escuela Libre de Pintura in 1937. Throughout his career, the artist sought to depict Cuba's contemporary history in his work. Mariano Rodríguez passed away in Cuba in 1990.

Rodríguez Morey, Antonio (1874–1967): Antonio Rodriguez Morey was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1874. He studied at the San Alejandro Academy under the landscape painter, Valentín Sanz Carta. The artist traveled to Europe to continue his artistic training in 1891, finally settling in Rome in 1895, where he served as professor of drawing at the Sacred Heart Institute. In 1912, Rodriguez Morey was appointed to a professorship at the San Alejandro Academy in Havana to teach drawing, artistic anatomy and art history. He later moved on to the position of Director of the National Museum of Havana in 1918, leaving an important legacy to the development of Cuban art in the twentieth century after a long, fruitful career. The artist died in Havana in 1967.
Romañach, Leopoldo (1862-1951): Leopoldo Romañach y Guillen was born in Sierra Morena, Cuba. During his childhood, the artist's education took place in Barcelona, Spain. Romañach returned to Cuba at the age of fifteen, and in 1885, he enrolled at the Academy of San Alejandro. In 1889 he received a scholarship to study at the Free School of Painting in Italy. After his tenure in the country, he traveled to New York City, where he worked as a painter for several years. The artist returned to Havana in 1900, where he was appointed professor of color theory at the Academy. He would spend the remainder of his life training three generations of artists, mentoring many of the members of the Cuban vanguard. The artist died in Havana in 1951.

Sánchez, Tomás (b. 1948): Tomás Sánchez was born in Aguada de Pasajeros, Cuba, in 1948. The artist is the eldest of two sons. At the age of sixteen, Sánchez moved to Havana to study at the Academy of San Alejandro, later transferring in 1967 to the newly founded National School for the Arts to attain a more contemporary focus in his studies. After graduating, the artist served as the professor and chair of engraving at the National School for the Arts until 1976. Sanchez has participated in exhibitions in over thirty countries, including a number of individual retrospectives. The artist currently lives and works in both Miami, Florida, and Costa Rica.

Sanz Carta, Valentín (1849-1898): Valentín Sanz Carta was born in the Canary Islands, and he began his art education at the Provincial Academy of Fine Arts in the region. In 1882, the artist moved to Havana, Cuba, establishing himself as a painter of portraits, landscapes, and seascapes. Sanz Carta won the position of landscape painting chair at the Academy of San Alejandro in 1887 as the result of a contest, and the artist held the position almost until his death in Havana in 1898.

Soldevilla, Loló (1901-1971): Loló Soldevilla was born in Pinar del Rio, Cuba, in 1901. She received her artistic training in Paris, France, and served as the Cuban cultural attaché in Paris from 1949 to 1957. She served as a professor at the School of Architecture in Havana from 1960 to 1961. During her lifetime, the artist was exhibited primarily in Cuba and France. Loló Soldevilla died in 1971 in Havana, Cuba.

Soler Mena, Osmany (b. 1974): Osmany Soler Mena was born in Camagüey, Cuba, in 1974. In his painting, Soler Mena mixes natural imagery with abstract language. The artist lives and works in his hometown.

Solís, Uver (1923-1974): Uver Solís was born in Matanzas, Cuba. She studied drawing at the School of Education in Havana, under the direction of the artist, Domingo Ravenet. Her first exhibition took place in Havana in 1945, and in 1946, she participated in the Modern Cuban Painting Exhibition at the Fine Arts Palace in Mexico City, Mexico. In her later years, Solís painted and served as a teacher before developing health issues that prevented her from working. The artist passed away in Havana in 1974.
Composition in Visual Art: 
The Case of Amelia Peláez

LESSON PLAN

Overview

Students will learn about composition in visual art using Amelia Peláez's *Still Life with Fruit* and *Woman on a Balcony*. Through discussion and hands-on activities, they will use Peláez's stylistic techniques to learn creative ways of organizing line and color when designing their own compositions.

Age Group

Secondary (Grades K-5)

Lesson Length

Two 45-minute lessons

Rationale

Peláez's work provides an opportunity for students to learn about the arrangement of visual elements in painting. By using her paintings as a starting point, students will come to understand that artistic expression can be achieved by exploring the relationship between line and color. Hands-on activities will help students absorb the lesson.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe and discuss what the term composition means in visual art.
- Describe and discuss the relationship between line and color in Amelia Peláez's paintings.
- Create a work of art in the style of Amelia Peláez.

Florida Common Core Standards Connection

Visual Arts

VA.K-5.C: Critical Thinking and Reflection

VA.K-5.C.1: Cognition and reflection are required to appreciate, interpret, and create with artistic intent.

VA.K-5.O: Organizational Structure

VA.K-5.O.1.1: Understanding the organizational structure of an art form provides a foundation for appreciation of artistic works and respect for the creative process.
VA.K.S: Skills, Techniques, and Processes

VA.K.S.1.3: Incorporate ideas from art exemplars for specified time periods and cultures.

VA.K.S.1.4: Choose accurate art vocabulary to describe works of art and art processes.

VA.K.S.2.1: Integrate the structural elements of art and organizational principles of design with sequential procedures and techniques to achieve an artistic goal.

Language Arts

LAFS.K-5.SL.1: Standards for Speaking and Listening

LAFS.K-5.SL.1: Comprehension and Collaboration

LAFS.K-5.SL.1.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade K-5 topics, texts, and issues, building on others ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Materials

- Images to display for the class:
  - Amelia Peláez’s *Still Life with Fruit*
  - Amelia Peláez’s *Interior with Balcony*
- Watercolor paper
- Watercolor paint
- Painting utensils

LESSON

Day 1: Discussion and Brainstorming

Warm up: Explain to the students that today's lesson will be on the Cuban artist, Amelia Peláez. Ask students if they know where Cuba is on a map.

- Display Amelia Peláez’s *Still Life with Fruit*. Discuss the subject of the painting.

- Next, explain what the term “composition” means in visual art. Ask students to observe the formal elements in the painting. What colors do they see? Are the lines thick or thin? Are the colors bound by the lines? Display Amelia Peláez’s *Interior with Balcony*. Ask students to describe the painting. Point out the elements of composition.

- Explain that artists explore the relationship between line and color to create something visually unique.

Day 2: Hands-on Project

Have the students paint their own artwork in the style of Amelia Peláez.
ABOUT THE ART


The Artist

Amelia Peláez was born in 1896 in Yahuajay, Cuba, a provincial town near Havana. There she lived with her family until they relocated to Havana in 1915. Peláez entered the Academy of San Alejandro at the age of twenty, where she quickly became recognized for her paintings. She left Cuba to work in Europe in 1927, settling in Paris, but traveling throughout the continent. She studied at the École du Louvre, later returning to Cuba in 1934. The artist exhibited nationally and internationally, and was prolific in the media of pottery, mural painting, and easel painting. Amelia Peláez died in Havana in 1968.

The Paintings

Still Life with Fruit demonstrates Peláez’s trademark style: areas of color, unbounded by the thick, dark lines that illustrate the subject of the painting. This painting also demonstrates her trademark subject: Still life with fruits within an architectural frame. Here, the open window shows a display of fruit set in an ornately patterned bowl and centered on the window’s ledge. The large area of brown seems to describe the color of the window shutters, but it is not bound by the lines that illustrate them. Likewise, the large area of yellow does not seem to define anything in particular as the fruit, bowl, and ledge are uniformly this color. Interior with Balcony is another example of Peláez’s expressive use of line and color. Here she represents a balcony, which was also a common motif in her work. Peláez is known for depicting subjects that illustrate the local visual culture in Cuba. In this case, she demonstrates her interest in elements of Spanish Colonial architecture.
Geometric Abstraction

LESSON PLAN

Overview

By examining Loló Soldevilla's *Untitled, Celestial Realm* and Jose Mijares’ *Geometric Composition*, students will come to identify and understand the artistic style of geometric abstraction through the creation of paintings that are concrete; pure in form and color without having reference to nature, narrative, or symbolism.

Age Group

Secondary (Grades 6-12)

Lesson Length

Two 45-minute lessons

Rationale

By examining the artworks of Loló Soldevilla and José Mijares and their respective uses of geometric abstraction, students will be introduced to the group of Cuban artists known as Diez Pintores Concretos Cubanos (Ten Concrete Cuban Artists) and will come to understand how these artists used this particular form of abstraction to engage in a dialogue with the international art world.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify the elements of geometric abstraction and distinguish it from other stylistic modes of abstraction.
- Describe and discuss how the Cuban artists, Soldevilla and Mijares, participated in an international art dialogue.
- Create a geometrically abstract work of art using Soldevilla’s and/or Mijares’s methods for creating an image of pure color and form.

Florida Common Core Standards Connection

Visual Arts

VA.68.C/VA.912.C: Critical Thinking and Reflection
VA.68.C.1/VA.912.C.1: Enduring Understanding

Cognition and reflection are required to appreciate, interpret, and create with artistic intent.
The arts reflect and document trends and historical events, and help explain how new directions in the arts have emerged.

Understanding the organizational structure of an art form provides a foundation for appreciation of artistic works and respect for the creative process.

Language Arts

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Materials

- Images to display for the class:
  - Loló Soldevilla's *Untitled, Celestial Rain*
  - Jose Mijares’ *Geometric Composition*
  - R.C. Bears’ *Viandas (Staples)*
  - Roberto Juan Diago’s *Bodegón (Still Life)*
  - Guido Llinás’s *Sin Titulo (Untitled)*
- Canvases or paper for painting
- Paint
- Painting utensils

**LESSON**

Day 1: Discussion and Brainstorming

*Warm up:* Explain to the students that today's lesson will be on geometric abstraction. Begin by asking students what abstraction means. Come up with a working definition of abstract art. From Dictionary: Art that is non-representational, or that converts forms observed in reality to patterns that are recognized by the viewer. Then ask more specifically what geometric abstraction means. Come up with a working definition of geometric abstraction. From Dictionary: A form of abstract art based on the use of geometric forms combined into non-representational compositions.

- Display R.C. Bears' *Viandas (Staples)*. Discuss the artist's preference for representing a likeness to nature in this still-life.
• Display Roberto Juan Diago’s Bodegón (Still Life). Discuss how this image remains representational, but show how the objects are abstracted from reality so that the viewer is also called to focus on the forms and colors themselves.

• Display Guido Llinás’s Sin Titulo (Untitled). Discuss how the artist is no longer interested in representing objects found in real life. (There is not even a title!) Explain how this is an example of pure abstraction. (Also be sure to point out that the forms and colors are not clearly defined as a set up to discuss geometric abstraction.)

• Display Soldevilla’s painting. Discuss how this is an example of geometric abstraction because the colors and forms are clearly defined. The artist uses specific geometric shapes, but does not attempt to represent any real-world objects.

• Display Mijares’s painting. Discuss how the forms and colors are also geometric and non-representational.

• Explain that Soldevilla and Mijares were both artists who belonged to a larger group of Cuban artists called the as Diez Pintores Concretos Cubanos (Ten Concrete Cuban Painters). These artists wanted to express emotion without representing anything from reality. They wanted the colors and forms to be the subjects of the paintings rather than cultural references and objects. You may also discuss how groups of artists sometimes work together by sharing ideas, and yet each artist creates something completely unique.

• Explain that the root of their art was found in European artists such as Kazimir Malevich from Russia, Piet Mondrian from the Netherlands, and Vassily Kandinsky from his Bauhaus period in Germany, and therefore, these Cuban artists are part of a greater international art dialogue.

Day 2: Hands-on Project

Have the students paint their own artwork in the style of geometric abstraction.

Alternative writing assignment: Have the students write an essay describing the differences between geometric abstraction and other types of abstraction.
ABOUT THE ART

Sin Titulo, Mundo Celestial (Untitled, Celestial Realm) by Loló Soldevilla. 1956. 27¼ x 39¼ inches. Private Collection, Miami Florida.

Composicion Geometrica (Geometric Composition) by José Mijares. 1957. Guache on paper. 12 x 17¾ inches. Private Collection.

The Artists

Loló Soldevilla was born in Pinar del Rio, Cuba, in 1901. She received her artistic training in Paris, France and served as the Cuban cultural attaché in Paris from 1949 to 1957. She then taught at the School of Architecture in Havana from 1960-1961. Soldevilla is also known as one of the 10 Concrete Cuban Painters (Diez Pintores Concretos Cubanos), a group of painters that used geometric abstraction to create an art that is pure in form and lacking any reference to nature, narrative, or symbolism. Their concept of geometric abstraction and Concrete Art dates back to Kasimir Malevich’s Suprematism, Piet Mondrian and Theo van Doesberg’s De Stijl, and Wassily Kandinsky’s Bauhaus period. During Soldevilla’s lifetime, her work was exhibited primarily in Cuba and France. Loló Soldevilla died in 1971 in Havana, Cuba.

José Mijares was born in Havana, Cuba in 1921. He entered the Academy of San Alejandro in 1936, where he studied painting. Mijares would later teach at the school for two years before his resignation at the emergence of the Castro regime. Like Soldevilla, Mijares belonged to the group, Ten Concrete Cuban Painters. In 1968, the artist left Cuba for Miami, Florida, where he lived until his death in 2001.

The Paintings

The primary focus of Soldevilla’s painting is the arrangement of circles of varying sizes and colors on a plain black background.

The primary focus of Mijares’ painting is the use of bold lines and rectangular forms to create an allover composition, lacking any real sense of depth and/or background.
Artist Research Project

LESSON PLAN

Overview

Students will select a Cuban artist represented in the current exhibition, *Cuban Art in the Twentieth Century: Cultural Identity and the International Avant Garde*, and will conduct research that will be presented to the class.

Age Group

Secondary (Grades 6-12)

Lesson Length

Four 45-minute lessons

Rationale

By researching an artist's biography and body of work, and presenting this information to the class, students will become familiar with art historical research, writing, and presentation methods. Further, by observing the different presentations of fellow classmates on a similar theme, students will also come to understand the various art historical periods in Cuba, identify different types of artistic training, and understand the level of international exchange among Cuban artists.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Read and research about art history.
- Synthesize and present material to an audience.
- Learn collectively through the research and presentations of others.

Florida Common Core Standards Connection

Visual Arts

*VA.68.H/VA.912.H: Historical and Global Connections*

*VA.68.H.2/VA.912.H.2: Enduring Understanding*

The arts reflect and document trends and historical events, and help explain how new directions in the arts have emerged.
LESSON

Day 1-2: Assignment and Research (Students may work in pairs or individually)

1. Have students review the biographies of the artists provided in this teacher packet and choose an artist that interests them. Artists that will have the most information out there are:

   a. Wifredo Lam
   b. Amelia Peláez
   c. Víctor Manuel García
   d. Mario Carreño
   e. René Portocarrero
2. Have students research the following questions:

- When was this artist born?
- Where was this artist born?
- Where did this artist receive his or her artistic training?
- Did this artist travel outside of Cuba? If so, where?
- What subject(s) does this artist typically paint or sculpt?
- Did this artist belong to any formal group of artists? [Los Once(The Eleven), for example]
- Where did this artist seem to draw his or her inspiration? (Any particular well-known European, American, African or Asian artist or art movement?)
- What period of Cuban art history does this artist generally belong? (Have them read the section in this packet entitled, Cuban Art in the Twentieth Century)
- Did this artist exhibit his or her work during his or her life time?
- Is this artist still alive? If not, when and where did he or she die? If still living, where is he or she currently living?

**Day 3-4: Presentations**

Give each student 5 minutes to present his or her research and give examples of their artist's work. After each presentation, allow students in the audience to ask questions about the artist and respond to the art.
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