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## Auction Preview: Laura González on Contemporary Cuban Art at Phillips

Published: November 14, 2013

Spotlighting the historic stand-alone section in the Latin American sale



José Ángel Toirac, *Eternity*, 2000  
Courtesy Phillips

Phillips' head of Latin American art talks about the first stand-alone section of Cuban contemporary art in a major auction—why it's historic, why it's happening now, and the lots to watch.

*The upcoming Latin American sale at Phillips includes a special section on Cuban contemporary art—the first of its kind. Phillips is known for doing cutting-edge presentations in its sales. Tell us: why Cuba, and why now? What is it that you're seeing in the market at this moment?*



Abel Barroso, *The Rush for the Freedom Land*, 1997  
Courtesy Phillips

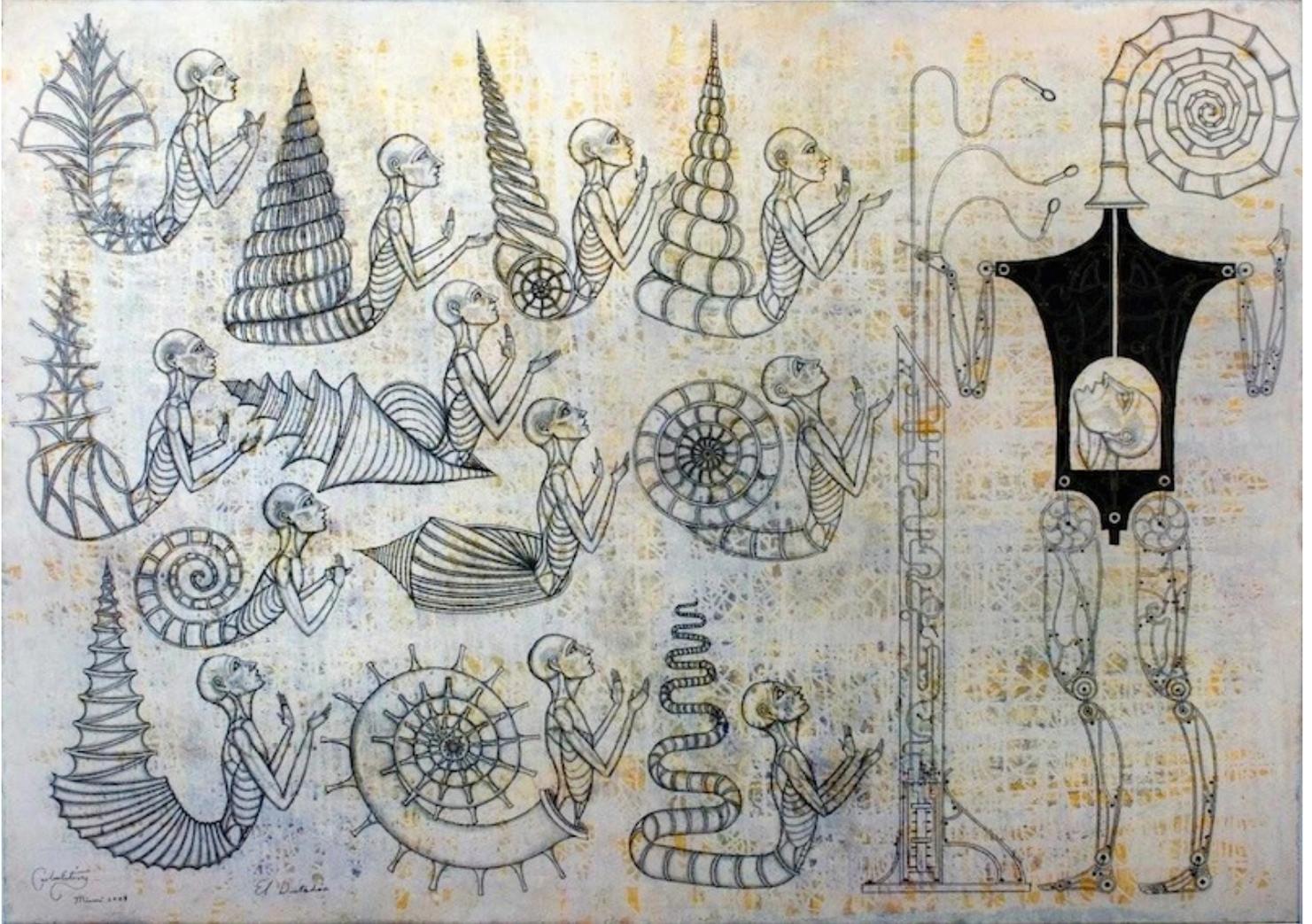
Cuba is going through an active metamorphosis at the moment, and the changes in government policy and international outlook have absolutely affected the arts. Cuba is an active participant in the global cultural dialogue—a great example of this is that they've participated in the last two Venice Biennales. It's time to highlight the work of these accomplished artists who, in many cases, have not had a chance to be listened to on the international stage. It's also great that there's an increasing amount of interest in Cuba's artistic contributions, not only on its political and social issues. It's always been an incubator for innovative thought, and it's important to emphasize that to the collecting public.

The works in this section range from the 1960s to the present. What are your favorite lots? Which ones do you see as hidden gems?



Belkis Ayón, *Sin Título (Sikán, Nasakó y Espíritu Santo)*, 1993  
Courtesy Phillips

The work by Belkis Ayón is definitely a gem, although I'm not sure about the hidden part. This edition—of which only 6 works were made—has been exhibited all over the world. Still, Belkis is not a household name and that should change. Her incorporation of spiritual iconography and deeply personal references is very powerful. I'm excited to have this work in the sale.



Carlos Estévez, *El dictador*, 2008  
Courtesy Phillips

Carlos Estévez's work *El dictador* presents a unique depiction of the collective psychology of dictatorships. It's at once literal and full of subtle allusions, which I find very interesting.



Tania Bruguera, *Uniformes*, 1998  
Courtesy Phillips

I also think the works by Tania Bruguera and Pedro Vizcaíno are worth highlighting. Bruguera is such an important artist, and the work we have in the sale really communicates the bravado of her performances. Pedro Vizcaíno's piece is a great example of contemporary Cuban painting, and I love the Philip Guston vibe that permeates the work, at least for me.

*A portion of the proceeds from this part of the sale will go toward the acquisition of contemporary Cuban art by El Museo del Barrio. Tell us about that.*

This donation helps give El Museo the ability to execute a cohesive acquisitions strategy, incorporating artistic voices from all walks of the contemporary Latin American and Latino art world. Cuba is an integral part of that conversation, and we are thrilled to be able to support the development of such an important institutional

collection.



Sandra Ceballos, *Absolut Jawlensky*, 1995  
Courtesy Phillips

*In general, how would you describe the position of contemporary Cuban art in the global art scene these days?  
And the art market specifically?*

Cuba has a rightful place in the contemporary art market, and what we are trying to do in this sale is give it the emphasis and attention that it deserves, in line with what we have done for Brazilian art and contemporary Latin American art as a whole. It's all part of the same contemporary market, we just contextualize it differently. We've found that collectors enjoy this type of approach, because it gives them the opportunity to engage with quality material that they haven't otherwise had access to.



Los Carpinteros, *Mueble gordo*, 2003  
Courtesy Phillips

*Anything else you'd like us to know?*

We're delighted with the selection of works we've acquired for this auction. I'm very proud to continue the tradition that Phillips has set forth in terms of offering cutting-edge works, always ahead of the curve. Contemporary Cuban art is a perfect example of this vision and I'm really looking forward to seeing how contemporary collectors respond to it.

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[Growing Up in Neverland: A Look at Cuban Art and Society \(/news/growing-up-in-neverland-a-look-at-cuban-art-and-society/5242\)](#)

The group show, organized by Pinar del Río–based curator David Horta, brought Cuban art and artists to the University of Tampa. Janet Batet looks at the exhibition and some of its highlights.

[Documentary Insights at the Havana Film Festival New York \(/news/documentary-insights-at-the-havana-film-festival-new-york/5241\)](#)

Midway through the 2016 Havana Film Festival New York, film writer and documentary specialist Nadine Covert reflects on the Cuba-themed documentaries on the festival schedule.

[An Art Table Conversation: Artists and Curators on Cuba Today \(/news/an-art-table-conversation-artists-and-curators-on-cuba-today/5224\)](#)

As the thaw in Cuba-US relations continues and Cuban art begins to appear in more North American galleries and museums, the US art world is catching up with panel discussions, presentations, and conversations. Art Table, a national organization promoting women's leadership in the visual arts, recently gave one such program in New York. The Q&A with the audience was especially interesting.

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"Expanded Painting" in Havana (</news/expanded-painting-in-havana/5128>)



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