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Auction Week Wrap-Up: Top Quality Works Shine in the Sales Rooms

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Strong Showing for Cuban Contemporary at Phillips



Los Carpinteros, *Mueble gordo*, 2003
Courtesy Phillips

The stand-alone section of Cuban contemporary art in the Phillips sale—which *Cuban Art News* has previewed and reported on throughout the month—achieved 100 percent sell-through at the final Latin American auction of the New York season.

“This is historic,” said one Phillips bidder who preferred to remain anonymous. “It’s the beginning of the Cuban contemporary art market on a grand scale.”

With its deliberate emphasis on contemporary work, Phillips spotlighted artists like Los Carpinteros, José Ángel Toirac, and Tania Bruguera, whose lots fetched close to double their high estimates. Works by Armando Mariño, Carlos Estévez, and Carlos Garaicoa also made a strong showing.

Overall, estimates in the Cuban contemporary section were conservative. As a result, most works surpassed these figures, in many cases by a significant amount. A Belkis Ayón embossed collograph, for instance—which Phillips Latin American head **Laura González** described as “a gem”—was estimated at \$6,000-\$8,000 and sold for \$13,750. A Manuel Mendive oil painting, estimated at \$7,000-\$9,000, brought in \$15,000.

The top lot in the stand-alone Cuban contemporary section was Los Carpinteros’ *Mueble gordo*. Estimated at \$10,000-\$15,000, it sold for \$25,000. Carlos Garaicoa’s suite of five photographs, *Acerca de la caja del reloj...*, brought in \$22,500.



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

Lam's 1950 oil painting *La rose zombie*, which took \$845,000 in the Christie's sale, well above its top estimate of \$700,000.

At Sotheby's the following night, Lam triumphed again with *Des Mêmes Racines (Cheval Bon Dieu)*, a 1945 oil that more than doubled its \$200,000 high estimate with a final price of \$461,000. At Christie's, Tomás Sánchez's 2012 oil, *La luz diagonal*, performed a similar feat, bringing \$173,000 against a high estimate of \$80,000.

Another winner was Umberto Peña's *Tu Nooo*.

Estimated at a modest \$6,000-\$8,000, it more than tripled its low with a final price of \$18,750.

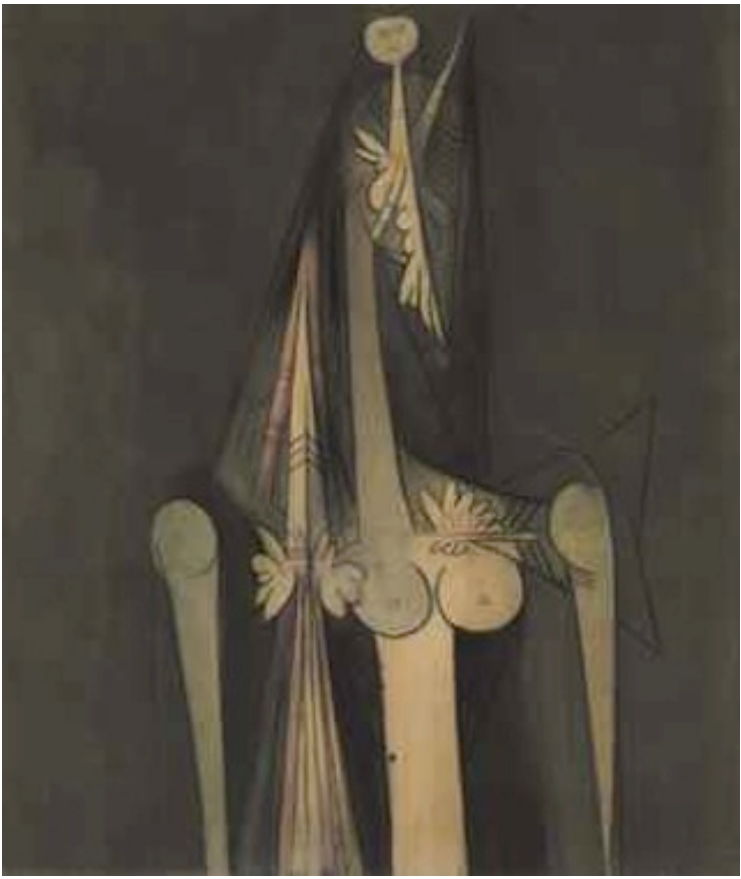
Many contemporary Cuban works also performed well in Christie's sale. The breakaway winner was Roberto Fabelo, whose 2012 *Gaviota*, a painting on embroidered silk, blew past its high estimate of \$30,000 to fetch almost double at \$56,250.

[Addendum:] At Sotheby's, *The Jaws of Life*, a 2012 stainless steel sculpture by The-Merger (Mario Miguel González, Niels Moliero Luis, and Alain Pino) turned in even stronger results, more than doubling its \$30,000 high estimate with a final price of \$68,750.

Amid sales that saw few if any records broken in the Latin American field as a whole, outstanding works by auction stars Wifredo Lam and Tomás Sánchez delivered predictably strong returns. Among the three sales, the top price for a Cuban work went to Wifredo



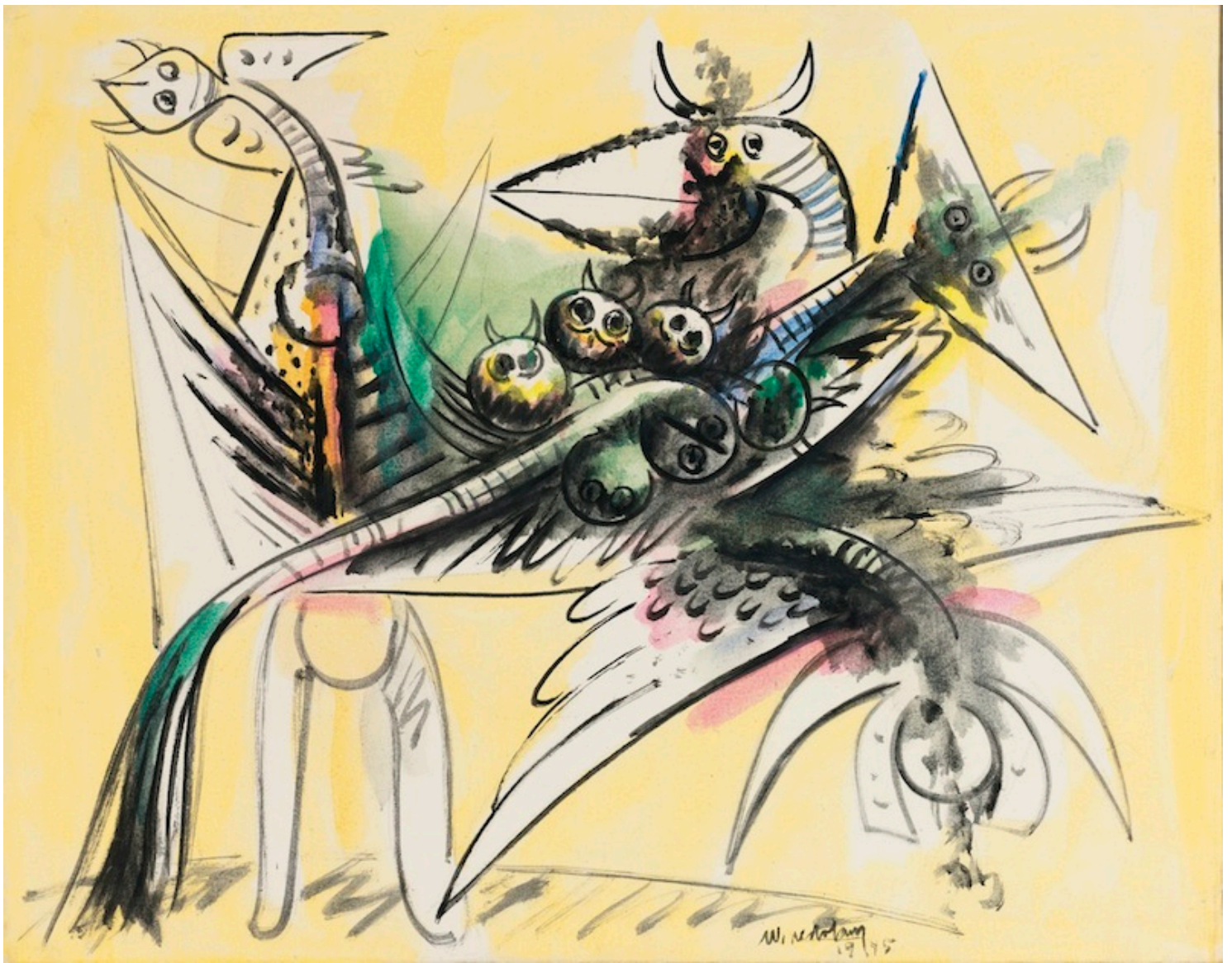
Roberto Fabelo, *Gaviota*, 2012
Courtesy Christie's



Wifredo Lam, *La rose zombie*, 1950
Courtesy Christie's



Tomás Sánchez, *La luz diagonal*, 2012
Courtesy Christie's



Wifredo Lam, *Des Mêmes Racines (Cheval Bon Dieu)*, 1945
Courtesy Sotheby's

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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.

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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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