

An abstract painting featuring a central figure rendered in dark green and black tones, set against a vibrant, textured red background. The figure appears to be in a dynamic, possibly dancing or contorted pose. The entire composition is framed by a thick, textured border of grey and white paint. Overlaid on the painting is the text "Paul Sierra: A Cultural Corridor" in a white, stylized, handwritten font.

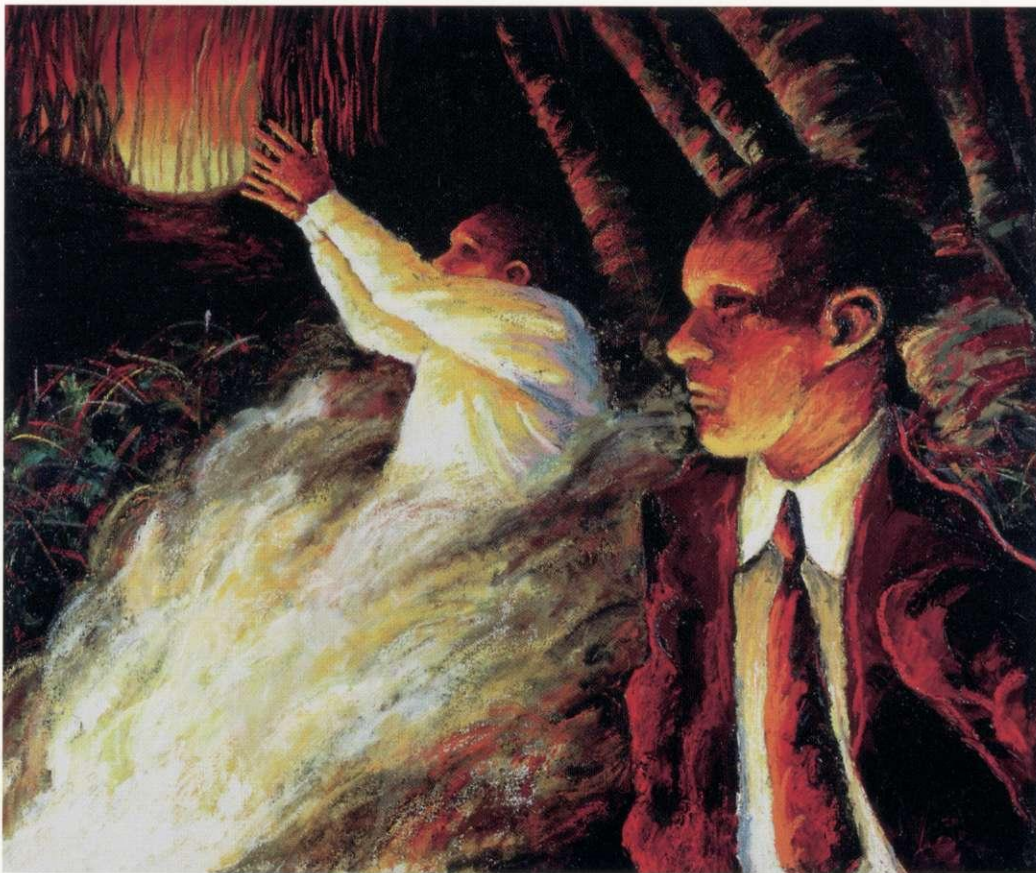
Paul Sierra:
A Cultural Corridor



Front Cover: *Entrance*, oil on canvas
Inside Cover: *Untitled*, oil on canvas
Back Cover: *Omega*, oil on canvas

Paul Sierra: A Cultural Corridor

May 9 to October 9, 1998



Ceremony

THE LATINO MUSEUM OF HISTORY, ART AND CULTURE

Paul Sierra: A Cultural Corridor has been published to accompany an exhibition of the same name organized and presented by The Latino Museum of History, Art and Culture. This exhibition is made possible by the generous support of the State of California Department of Education for the Latino Heritage Resource Center. In addition, we gratefully acknowledge the Illinois Arts Council, Kinko's Downtown Los Angeles, NBC4-Los Angeles, PIP-ARCO Plaza, Southern California Edison, State Farm Companies Foundation, Robert Berman Gallery, Nicolas Cage, Steve Greiner, Cheech Marin, and Jorge Santis.

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The Altar

FOREWORD

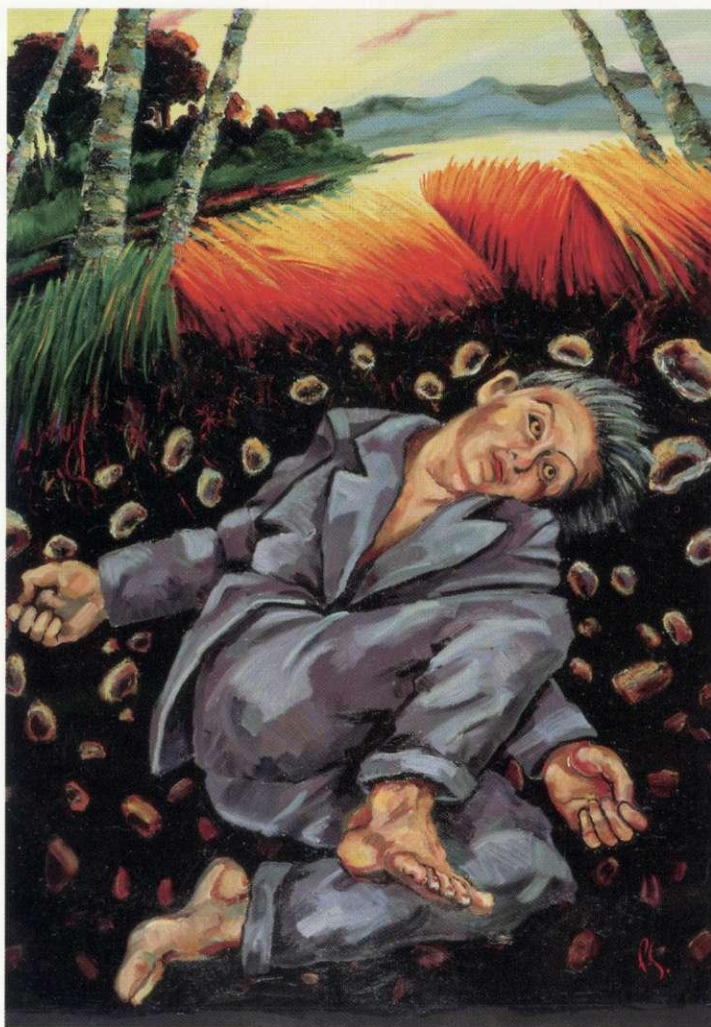
As Director of The Latino Museum of History Art and Culture (TLM), I am very proud to present **Paul Sierra: A Cultural Corridor**. This exhibition reflects the fundamental roots of TLM's Mission to present the diverse American Latino aesthetic sensibility - Latinismo - and to celebrate the contributions of Latin American Art.

Paul Sierra: A Cultural Corridor, an exhibition of approximately thirty large-scale landscape paintings, provides the Los Angeles public with the rare opportunity to view Paul Sierra's current body of work. A long time resident of Chicago, Illinois, Paul Sierra still carries the tropics in his heart and manipulates his palette with dreams based on his childhood memories of Cuba. Yet, his paintings are rooted within the landscape tradition of the American Hudson River School established by Thomas Cole (1801-1848). In Sierra's painting the traditional element of American Sublime gives way to Arthur Dove's (1880-1946) spiritual mysticism. This mysticism is based on traditional American Protestant iconoclasm. Sierra fights the cultural urge to incorporate religious figures and instead incorporates Dove's philosophical aesthetic that stirs the innate spiritual quest within his brushwork. This understated spirituality evokes awe. Consequently Paul

Sierra represents a glimpse of 21st century art which combines a synthesis of two cultural aesthetic languages to create a new American Art.

My first notice of Paul Sierra and his work was in 1981, when I co-curated the exhibition entitled **Aqui: 27 Latin American Artists Living and Working in the United States** for Dr. Selma Holo, Director of Fisher Gallery at the University of Southern California. This exhibition became recognized as the first major national survey of Latino artists in the United States. The artists featured in **Aqui** are some of today's best known American artists. Paul Sierra was one of these artists along with Carlos Almaráz, Luis Cruz Azaceta, Anna Mendieta, Lilliana Porter, Alejandro Romero and Frank Romero.

Within a few years museums around the country began to exhibit American Latino artists. Unfortunately, these well-intentioned mainstream museum exhibitions placed American Latinismo within the "outside" folk-art discipline. These exhibitions fulfilled political agendas, but did little to promote and address the importance of presenting American Latino Art within American Art, and presenting Latin American Art within Latin American Art History.



Ends with Sleep

Latinismo and American Art

There are over twenty-five million Latinos currently living in the United States. As with earlier immigrants, American Latino artists (Latinos who live in the USA) continue to widen the scope of the American aesthetic vision. As the demographics shift in the United States, the importance of interpreting the experience of those who constitute the New Americans cannot be overemphasized.

Historically, the Spanish and Mexicans were the first Hispanic/Latino founders of the American Southwest culture, yet their aesthetic contributions have not been incorporated within American Art History. After the conquest of Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City), by the Spanish, they quickly moved to establish their Baroque Counter-Reformation Figurative Expressionism within Nueva España, the geographical areas of Mexico and the American Southwest. The Spanish arrival in the American Southwest preceded the English appearance on the East Coast by almost one hundred years.

From the beginning, Americans retained a strong nostalgic connection to European culture. This apparent cultural displacement along with the added religious freedom became the cultural blueprint for American Art. This Yankee blueprint soon conveyed the foundation of the formal Protestant creed. This American cultural grain is the foundation of American Art from the Minimalist Amish quilts to Contemporary abstract sensuality.

Pre-Columbian culture is the fundamental cradle of the New World from the fourth millennium B.C. through the early sixteenth century A.D. The highly civilized Pre-Columbian cultures forged and created an aesthetic language diametrically opposed to Greco-Roman Classical idealism. Scholars can no longer mix apples and oranges, and apply European aesthetic bias to judge Latinismo created in the United States.

The geographical proximity of the United States to Mexico, Cuba and Latin America provides American Art with major cultural influences different from the art of

early European immigrants. Historically speaking, European artists seem to have integrated into the American School and assimilated the Americanization process more easily than Mexican and Latin American artists. In the American Southwest, American Latino artists are overwhelmingly provided with Mexican/Latino influences innate within the popular environment and coupled with the constant incoming "fresh Latinismo culture". East Coast and New York cultural prejudice can no longer be used as the yard stick to aesthetically read Chicano/Latinismo or Latin American art.

Hence, The Latino Museum recognizes it's responsibility to provide a museum context for the intellectual reinterpretation and cultural analysis of Latinismo, Latino in the United States (American Latino) and Latin American within Latin America proper.

American Art at the beginning of the 20th century on the East Coast, and New York City, was static, conservative and created with Puritanical piety. Modernism was introduced to America by way of the 1913 Armory Exhibition in New York City. As we move towards the 21st Century, another historical chapter of American Art is in the making. Spurred by a great migration, no longer concentrated in a few cities but existing throughout the United States, American Art is going through a major re-identification. There is a cultural revitalization and direction ignited by Latinismo. American Latino and Latin American artists are providing the stimulation and aesthetic revitalization of American Art comparable to that which created the roots of Modernism, Post Modernism and Contemporary aesthetics.

"The Armory Show was the greatest shock to me—the greatest single influence I have experienced in my work. All my immediately subsequent efforts went toward incorporating Armory Show ideas into my work". *Stuart Davis -1945. Excerpts from the autobiographical monograph Stuart Davis.*

Denise Lugo

DIRECTOR

Paul Sierra is a quintessential Latin American painter. His canvases illustrate thematically, as well as stylistically, his turbulent Cuban heritage. Aloofness, composure, serenity, and blandness are qualities foreign to his art. Sierra's work excites our senses and intellect. His apocalyptic landscapes are as much about rebirth as they are about destruction. Even though forces of nature collide with incredible fury, the outcome is seldom devoid of hope.

Sierra's volcanic visions fall within the perimeters of what has been called "Magical Realism". Like a gifted sorcerer, he intertwines facts with fiction achieving fusion. His counterpoint is further enhanced by a pervading sense of metamorphosis. A supernatural aura reigns; questions are left unanswered; riddles are born.

The artist's palette could be described as explosive. Vivid reds, yellows, and oranges predominate. The high voltage hues create an intense harmony that mystify us, and their saturation acts more as an aphrodisiac than a repellant. The expressionistic brushwork entices us even further. Their boldness, angularity and density add a note of decadence.

Anyone familiar with Paul Sierra's oeuvre would never guess his gentle and unassuming nature. He is a living example of the idiom "la procesion va por dentro" (still waters run deep). Within him, there is a delicate balance where passion and equanimity co-habitate. His striking paintings are nothing more and nothing less than the raptures of a gifted, rational man in tune with his extraordinary psyche.

Jorge H. Santis

CURATOR OF COLLECTIONS
MUSEUM OF ART
FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA

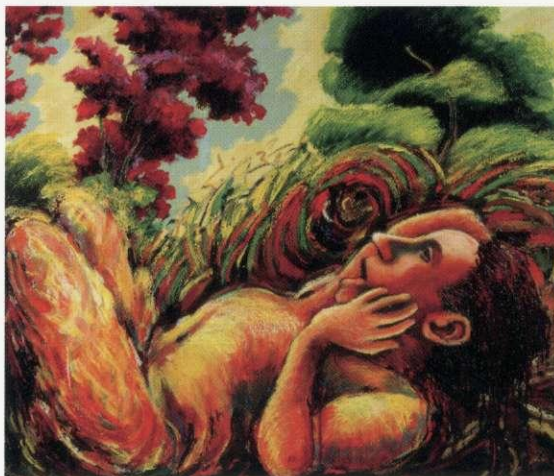
Paul Sierra es un pintor latinoamericano por excelencia. Sus lienzos ilustran, en cuanto a la temática y al estilo, su turbulenta herencia cubana. El retraimiento, la compostura, la serenidad y la suavidad son características ajenas a su arte. El trabajo de Sierra estimula nuestros sentidos e intelecto. Sus paisajes apocalípticos versan tanto sobre el renacimiento como la destrucción. Aunque las fuerzas de la naturaleza chocan con una fuerza increíble, el resultado está rara vez falto de esperanza.

Las visiones volcánicas de Sierra, recaen dentro de los perímetros de lo que se ha denominado "Realismo Mágico". Como un hechicero talentoso, entrelaza los hechos con la ficción logrando una fusión. Su contrapunto se intensifica aún más a través de un penetrante sentido de la metamorfosis. Predomina un aura sobrenatural; las interrogantes quedan sin respuesta; se engendran enigmas.

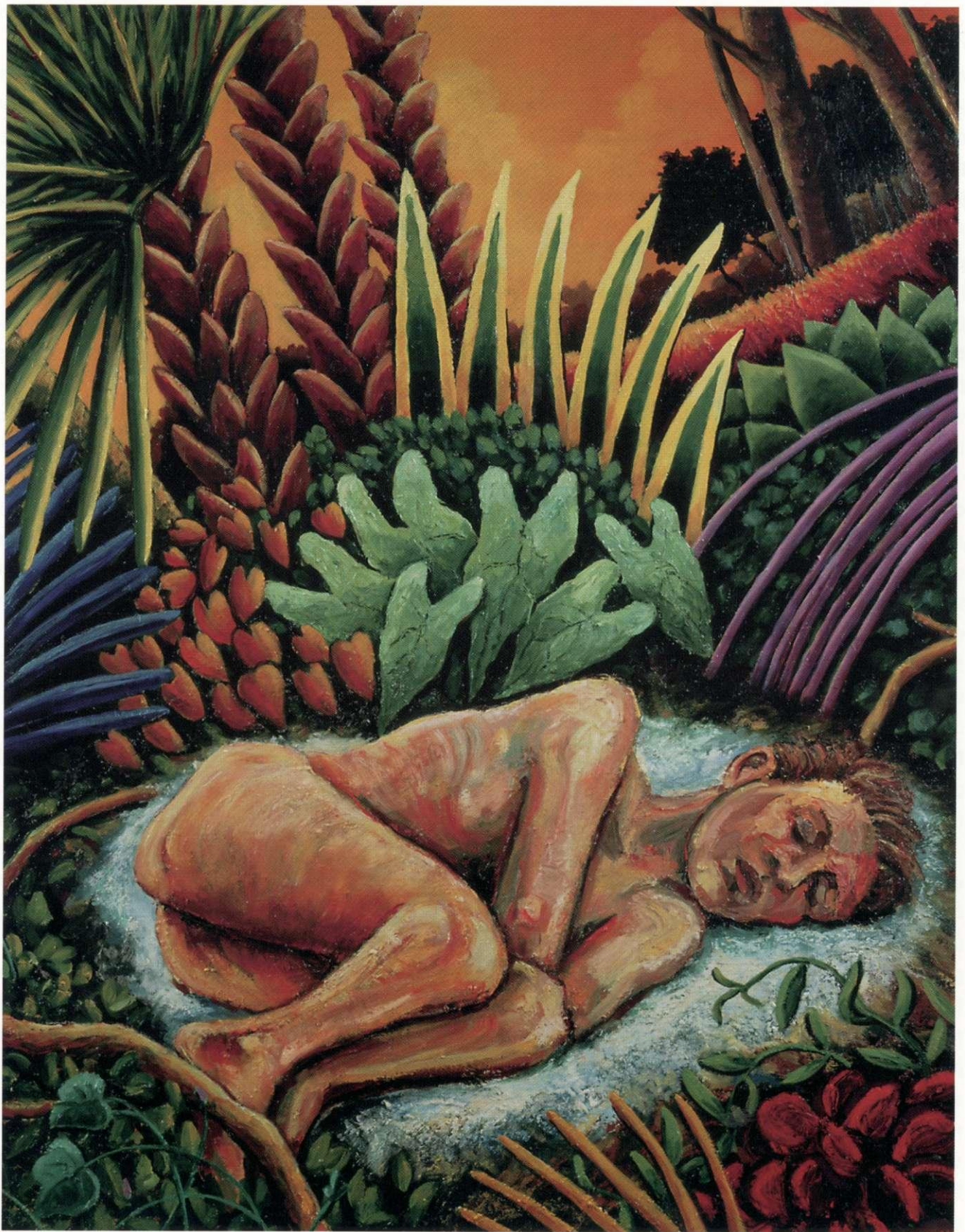
La gama de colores del artista podría describirse como explosiva. Predominan los rojos, amarillos y anaranjados relucientes. Los matices de alta tensión crean una armonía intensa que nos mistifica, y su saturación tiene un efecto más bien afrodisíaco que repulsivo. El estilo expresionista del pincel nos seduce aún más. Su audacia, angularidad y densidad le añaden una nota de decadencia.

Cualquiera que esté familiarizado con la obra de Paul Sierra nunca adivinaría su naturaleza gentil y

modesta. El es un ejemplo viviente de la expresión: "la procesión va por dentro". En su interior hay un equilibrio delicado, en donde la pasión y la ecuanimidad cohabitan. Sus pinturas llamativas son ni más ni menos que el éxtasis de un hombre talentoso y racional en armonía con su extraordinaria psique.



Canto



Life Pool

American Art, for the most part, has failed to recognize the artistic contributions of Latinos. Many diasporas of cultures create the American experience, and thus, American Art, within which lies the substantially unexplored Latino artistic expression.

Paul Sierra: A Cultural Corridor is reflective of the immigrant experience and the Latino contribution to American Art. Paul Sierra's paintings show a transition from his homeland Cuba, to the United States. The memory of the country of his birth is persistent in Sierra's work as it has also been strengthened by its influence.

Paul Sierra: A Cultural Corridor presents a contemporary perspective of American Art within the United States. This body of work encompasses Paul Sierra's internal dialogue in which he consistently confronts memories of his homeland and reveals his perspective of man's relationship with nature.

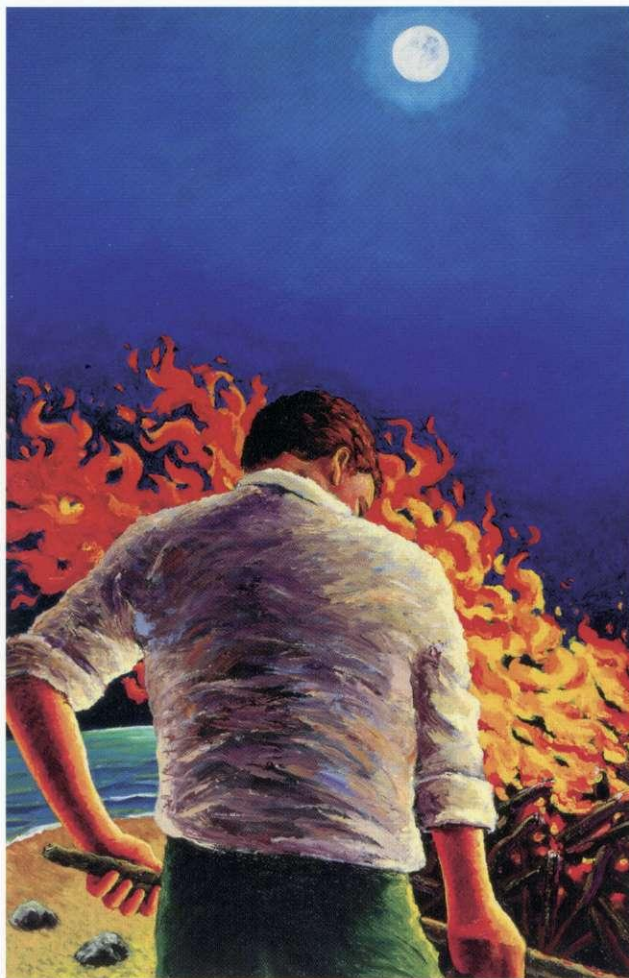
Over thirty years into his exile, Sierra affectionately recollects tropical landscapes, actively participating within a figurative tradition. In *Beacon*, his most recent work, a magical scene of dark nightscape and moonlit beach is juxtaposed with a contrasting image of a man who appears to be summoning for help. Perhaps this is a metaphor for the artist's own disillusionment. Sierra describes this piece by explaining "how distant we are from the universe, because we are so wrapped up in ourselves." The use of such opposing images is

Las contribuciones artísticas de los latinos no han sido reconocidas por un gran segmento del arte estadounidense. Una variedad de diásporas culturales han contribuido a la experiencia norteamericana y por lo tanto también a su arte, donde yace la expresión artística latina, substancialmente inexplorada. La obra

Paul Sierra: Un corredor cultural es un reflejo de la experiencia de la población inmigrante y de la contribución latina al arte norteamericano (Estados Unidos). Las pinturas de Sierra expresan la transición del artista de su patria, Cuba, a los Estados Unidos. La memoria de su país de origen persiste en su obra, la cual se ha visto fortalecida por esa influencia.

Paul Sierra: Un corredor cultural ofrece una perspectiva contemporánea del arte en Estados Unidos. Esta obra entraña el diálogo interno por medio del cual el artista confronta, en forma constante, las memorias de su patria y revela su concepto de la relación del hombre con la naturaleza.

Con más de treinta años de exilio, Sierra rememora con cariño los paisajes tropicales, con una participación activa, dentro de una tradición figurativa. En su obra más reciente, titulada *Beacon*, se juxtaponen una escena mágica de paisaje nocturno y playa iluminada por la luna, con una imagen discordante de un hombre que parece pedir socorro. Es, posiblemente, una metáfora de la propia desilusión



Beacon

irreducibly Sierra.

Similar to many Cuban artists during the mid part of the century, Sierra's work retains qualities of "Magical Realism". He subsequently creates magical settings derived from memories of his early years in Havana as well as from his imagination. As seen in *Prophet* and *Hi Ho, Hi Ho, Off To Hell We Go*, Paul combines dream like images, which appear to develop a narrative quality.

Born in Havana, Cuba, Paul Sierra immigrated to Chicago, Illinois at the age of sixteen, where he received his formal art training at the Art Institute. Sierra has adopted the United States as his home, living in Chicago since the 1960's.

Paul Sierra has contributed aesthetically to the American Art scene on the same level as William de Kooning, a prominent émigré artist from Europe, and key figure in American Abstract Expressionism. Among the ranks of Clifford Still, Sierra's work will remain an integral part of American Art.

Much like Arshile Gorky, Sierra combines imaginary landscapes with surreal images of foliage, fire and water. Using a vibrant palette with references to tropical landscapes, Sierra brings a "Latinismo" edge to contemporary art. In *Birth* and *Ceremony* we are able to sense the artist's reference to the tropical island terrain of Cuba. The employment of lush settings and warm colored compositions is a combination of the artist's



Hi Ho, Hi Ho, Off to Hell We Go

del artista. Sierra describe esta pieza explicando "lo distantes que estamos del universo porque estamos tan envueltos en nosotros mismos." El empleo de tales imágenes opuestas identifica a Sierra.

Al igual que la obra de muchos artistas cubanos de mediados de siglo, la de Paul Sierra retiene cualidades de realismo mágico. Subsecuentemente se dedica a la creación de entornos mágicos provenientes de las evocaciones de sus primeros años en La Habana, así como de su imaginación. Como puede observarse en las obras *Prophet* y *Hi Ho, Hi Ho, Off to Hell We Go*, Paul combina imágenes surrealistas y ensoñadoras que parecen desarrollar un carácter narrativo.

Sierra nació en La Habana, Cuba y a la edad de dieciséis años emigró a Chicago, Illinois, donde siguió una carrera tradicional de arte en el Art Institute. Sierra adoptó a los Estados Unidos como su hogar y ha vivido en Chicago desde los 60's.

El aporte estético de Paul Sierra a la escena artística estadounidense es de un calibre igual a la de William de Kooning, inmigrante europeo y figura clave del Expresionismo Abstracto de Estados Unidos. Al mismo nivel que Clifford Still, la obra de Sierra seguirá

siendo una parte integral del arte en este país.

En forma similar a la de Arshile Gorky, Sierra combina paisajes imaginarios con las imágenes surrealistas de floresta, fuego y agua. Con una paleta vibrante que evoca los paisajes tropicales, Sierra

personal style with the influence from his formal education of the European masters of the twentieth century. In their intrinsic nature, the works of Sierra, Arshile Gorky of Armenia and Roberto Matta of Chile all contain recurring themes derived from a drive towards self-examination and identity.

Sierra's canvases exist as a cultural corridor between Cuba of the 1960's and the contemporary American experience. The most recent paintings on exhibit at The Latino Museum, created between 1991 and 1997, represent the essence of Paul Sierra with a melange of magical settings and earthly scenes converged in the artist's mind. It is with Sierra's constant reference to man and his relation to nature that we too become easily absorbed into the vital force he has created within his paintings. His fantastical and countervailing paintings provide for us a sense of rediscovery.

Monica Torres-Creason

CURATOR, AMERICAN ART
THE LATINO MUSEUM



Cuatro Santos

impregna de "Latinismo" el arte contemporáneo. En *Birth* y *Ceremony* podemos sentir la referencia que hace el artista al terreno tropical de la isla de Cuba. En el empleo de los entornos exuberantes y de las composiciones con colores cálidos, Sierra combina su estilo personal con la influencia de los maestros europeos del siglo veinte que formaron parte de su educación formal. En la naturaleza intrínseca de la obra de Sierra, de Arshile Gorky de Armenia y de Roberto Matta de Chile se encuentran temas recurrentes derivados de una tendencia a la identidad y al estudio subjetivo.

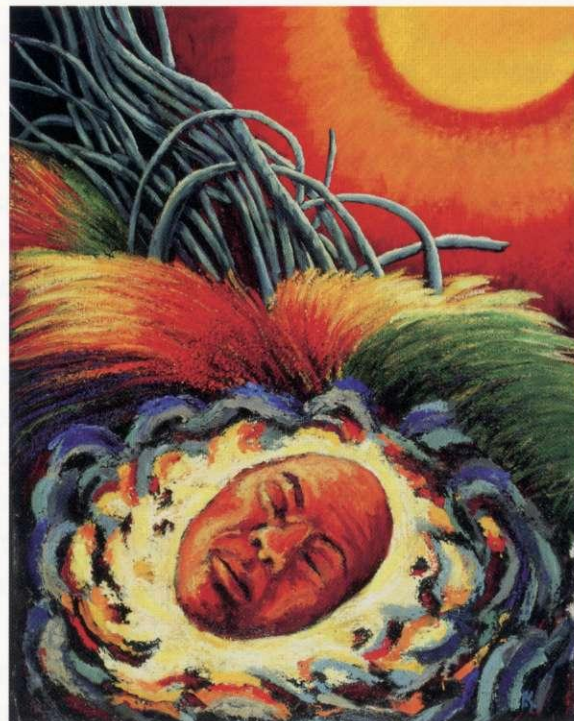
Los lienzos de Sierra existen como un corredor cultural entre la Cuba de los años sesenta y la experiencia del arte contemporáneo en los Estados Unidos. Las pinturas más recientes, de 1991 a 1997, expuestas en el Museo Latino, representan la esencia de Paul Sierra, con una mezcla de entornos mágicos y escenas terrenales que convergen en la mente del

artista. Esa referencia constante de Sierra hacia el hombre y a su relación con la naturaleza hace que nos sumerjamos fácilmente en la fuerza vital que ha logrado crear en su obra. Sus pinturas fantásticas y contrarrestantes nos infunden una sensación de redescubrimiento.

THE THEATRE OF NATURE: PAUL SIERRA'S PAINTINGS

The recent paintings of Paul Sierra, the Cuban-American painter most likely to take risks with his imagery, reveal a fascinating synthesis of two currents which have fueled pictorial thought in the Western Hemisphere for a century. Sierra turns North American nineteenth century romantic vistas of nature on their head, deleting the awe of epic entry into new frontiers. He replaces awe with a sense of stagecraft — the theatricality of moment which is steeped in Latin American oneiric painting of this century. Theatre implies an intimate scale centered on human action being beheld, understood, and empathized with by an audience. Turning nature into theatre entails heightening its symbolic charge. Sierra (a last name which, perhaps interestingly, means “mountain range”) dramatizes the moment in which man and nature intersect in the unconscious, and he sets this drama by brook and range, in forest or cauldron.

Embracing the theatricality of painting — long a Latin American aesthetic premise which fundamentally separates that region's art from the ironies and reductions North American artists have always hurled against representation — involves engaging a unique set of ambiguities. In the western tradition from the Enlightenment to the present, “nature” refers to both the context of our physical existence as well as the set of laws and impulses which drive the machinery of our personalities. But if our waning century's myriad theories on culture and the psyche have at times sought to explain human action as the effect of the laws governing these two “natures”, Sierra suggests a shift in emphasis.



Birth

LAS PINTURAS DE PAUL SIERRA: UN TEATRO DE LA NATURALEZA

Las últimas pinturas de Paul Sierra, el pintor cubano-americano más propenso a arriesgarse con el uso de las imágenes, revelan una síntesis fascinante de dos corrientes que han impulsado el pensamiento pictórico en el hemisferio occidental por todo un siglo. Sierra toma las vistas románticas de la América del Norte del siglo XIX y las voltea de cabeza, eliminando la reverencia ante el descubrimiento épico de las nuevas fronteras. Reemplaza esa reverencia con un sentido de escenotecnia — la teatralidad del momento — del cual está empapada la pintura onírica de la América Latina de este siglo. El teatro implica una escala íntima, centrada en la acción humana, que permite la contemplación, comprensión y simpatía por parte de una audiencia. Para que la naturaleza pueda convertirse en teatro hay que tomar el contenido simbólico y llevarlo al máximo. Sierra (note la coincidencia de su apellido) dramatiza el momento en el cual el hombre y la naturaleza se interceptan en forma inconsciente y escenifica ese drama del arroyo y la sierra, en el bosque o en el caldero.

Esta inclusión de lo teatral en la pintura ha sido, por largo tiempo, una premisa estética en el arte latinoamericano, característica que lo separa fundamentalmente de las ironías y reducciones del arte norteamericano que siempre ha atacado la representación. Dicha característica de incluir lo teatral en el arte pictórico conlleva una serie particular de ambigüedades. En la tradición occidental, desde el Siglo de las Luces hasta ahora, la “naturaleza” implica tanto al contexto de nuestra existencia física, como a la serie de leyes e

THE THEATRE OF NATURE

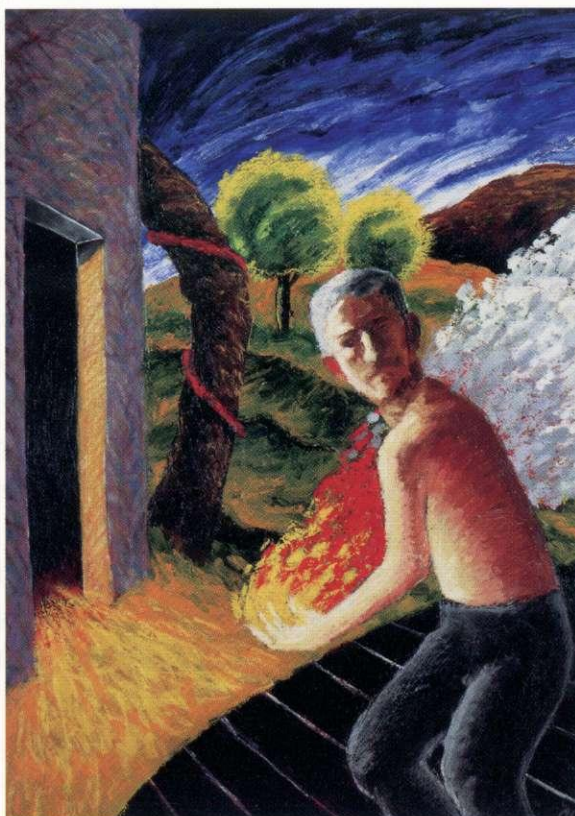
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Action, particularly what Wallace Stevens would call the "act of the mind", has its own ineffable yet implacable agency. It resists the causalities of personal and collective unconscious, socio-economics (that third "nature" that presumably determines us), and that repertoire of physical etiologies (from genetics to nutrition to El Niño) which herd us into this or that.

Sierra is startling blend of Enlightenment cynic and Romantic visionary who sees the individual, in his moment of conflictive entry into nature, as both active shaman and transcendent mystic. We alter

the world ourselves, often at great peril, but always reaffirming our powers over the very conditions of life on whose survival we so clearly depend. Man is the alchemist who can turn the raw material of his presence in the world into lead and gold at the same time. In that simultaneity and paradox lies our glory. Human consciousness is the point at which creation, destruction and their balance meet to define themselves. Being is simply the constant reconfiguration of this interlocking triad.

The two fundamental images which Sierra employs to address this vision of man are fire and water. These are the same images which appear in more submerged ways in myriad Romantic and oneiric works of art, both visual and literary (Sierra is one of the best read painters I know). From fiery sunsets above colossal waterfalls in the Rockies, to Frida Kahlo's conjugation of blood and desert, fire and water are noun and verb of intense thought, feeling and their mutual expression.



Prometheus

UN TEATRO DE LA NATURALEZA

CONTINUACIÓN

impulsos que dirigen la maquinaria de nuestras personalidades. Pero, a cambio de las teorías interminables sobre la cultura y la psiquis que en nuestro siglo agonizante han intentado algunas veces explicar las acciones humanas como efecto de las leyes que gobiernan estas dos "naturalezas", Sierra sugiere una transferencia en el énfasis. La acción, particularmente la que Wallace Stevens llamaría "acto de la mente", cuenta con su propio agente, inefable, pero también implacable. Resiste las causalidades de la

inconsciencia personal y colectiva, las socioeconómicas (la tercera "naturaleza" que se presume también nos determina) y el repertorio de etiologías (desde la genética hasta la nutrición hasta el Niño), que nos arrean aquí o allá.

Sierra es una mezcla asombrosa del cínico de la Ilustración y del visionario del Romanticismo, que percibe al individuo, en el momento de su intrusión conflictiva en la naturaleza, en su papel de hechicero activo y de místico trascendente. Alteramos el mundo y nos alteramos a nosotros mismos, muchas veces corriendo grandes riesgos, pero siempre reafirmando nuestros poderes sobre las mismas condiciones de vida de cuya supervivencia obviamente dependemos. El hombre es el alquimista que puede convertir el material bruto de su presencia en el mundo en oro y en plomo, todo al mismo tiempo. Nuestra gloria consiste en esa simultaneidad y en esa paradoja. La conciencia humana es el punto en el cual la creación, la

THE THEATRE OF NATURE

CONTINUED

Their yin-yang dialectic appears in every cosmology, mythology, poetics, religion and philosophy on the planet. Among their most marvelous attributes is that both elements coalesce male and female principles. The womb of still waters partners the boulder-shattering cataract. The hearth duels with the atomic blast. Fire and water are the bread and wine of the deepest altar of the mind. It is because of their dynamic equilibrium that life on earth is possible. No small part of the visual luxury palpable in all of Sierra's work — from its engulfing colors, to its erotically dramatic subject matter, to its orgasmic textures — hails from this conviction-driven understanding that life thrives on the enigmatic confluence of opposites.

And the mind too is self-governing volcano, at least the mind of the artist. In these recent paintings, Sierra has been unafraid in explicitly referencing metaphysical personages linked to the mythology of fire and water. Prometheus is caught in the moment of theft, at his most untitanic humanness. He is the bare-chested, denim-legged worker in a non-union universe. The prophet, headless but pondering, frames a dawn caught between two pairs of parentheses—his neck and the sky, the flanking trees. Genesis on the four-sided earth; its origin in thought is metaphysics while its manifestation is human. The prophet, after all, stands casually, hands clasped more in thought than prayer, and he is wearing the ordinary clothes of contemporary citizenship. In another painting his head, perhaps, is an alternative sun floating in an aura of foam on the stream, beneath the blazing star.

This set of darings is what defines Sierra's originality and importance as a visual artist. He



Judith

UN TEATRO DE LA NATURALEZA

CONTINUACIÓN

destrucción y el mismo equilibrio entre ellas, se encuentran para definirse a sí mismos. El ser es simplemente la reconfiguración constante de esta tríada engranada.

Las dos imágenes fundamentales utilizadas por Sierra para consumir esa visión del hombre son el fuego y el agua. Son las mismas imágenes que, en forma más sutil, aparecen en un sinfín de obras de arte románticas y oníricas, tanto en la pintura como en la

literatura (Sierra es uno de los pintores más instruidos que conozco). Desde unos ocasos salvajes sobre las cascadas colosales de los Rockies, hasta la conjugación de Frida Kahlo de sangre y desierto, fuego y agua se convierten en sustantivo y verbo, de idea y sentimiento intensos y su expresión mutua. Su dialéctica de yin-yan aparece en toda cosmología, mitología,

poema, religión y filosofía del planeta. Ambos elementos fusionan principios femeninos y masculinos y ese es uno de sus atributos más fascinantes. El vientre de las aguas tranquilas se empareja con la más vigorosa y terrible catarata. El fogón convive con la explosión atómica. El agua y el fuego son el pan y el vino del altar más íntimo de la mente. Su equilibrio dinámico es lo que hace posible la vida sobre la tierra. No es ínfima la porción del lujo visual palpable en toda la obra de Sierra - desde sus colores envolventes, pasando por sujetos dramáticamente eróticos, hasta sus texturas orgásmicas - que proclama, desde su comprensión motivada por la convicción, el florecimiento de la vida en la confluencia enigmática de las fuerzas opuestas.

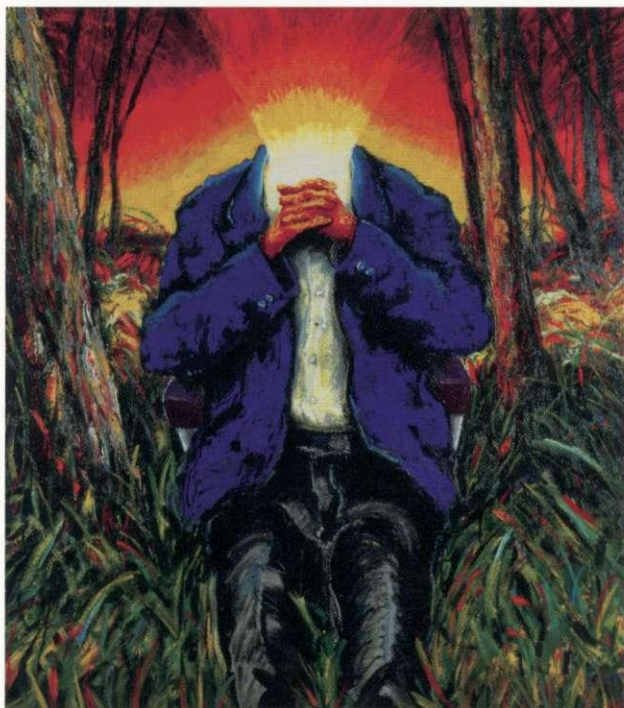
Y la mente también es un volcán independiente, por lo menos la mente del artista. En estas últimas pinturas,

THE THEATRE OF NATURE

CONTINUED

engages allegory without the hedging prophylaxis of postmodernist babble, but he also does so without the strident, orthodox pedantry of a muralista. He awakens the most profound structures of Latin American art's visual theatre without exploiting the crass carnival of ethnic iconography. Sierra understands and embraces the North American epic of the frontier, but he relocates its setting in the searing intimacy of the oneiric episode, a locale precious few North American visual artists have ever ventured into. Fire and water and their querulous marriage are the expression of reflected feelings that target the very meaning of our existence. While others swim downstream singing about the end of "meaning" and the triumph of undigested variability, Sierra is daring to think about what it means to be alive, here and now. If Sierra ever needs a heraldic motto, he might consider: Necessary art or no art.

Ricardo Pau-Llosa



Prophet

UN TEATRO DE LA NATURALEZA

CONTINUACIÓN

Sierra, completamente libre de miedos, se refiere en forma explícita a los personajes metafísicos asociados con la mitología del fuego y del agua. Prometeo es capturado en el momento del robo, en su humanidad menos titánica. Es el trabajador de pecho descubierto, vestido de tejano, en un mundo sin sindicatos. El profeta, descabezado, pero reflexivo, sirve de marco a un ocaso atrapado entre dos pares de paréntesis - su cuello y el cielo, los arboles flanqueadores. Génesis en un mundo de cuatro lados; su origen es metafísico en el pensamiento mientras que su manifestación es humana. El profeta, después de todo, aparece casualmente, con las manos unidas, más en postura de reflexión que de oración, y lleva puestas las ropas ordinarias de un ciudadano contemporáneo. En otra pintura su cabeza es, a lo mejor, un sol alternativo que flota en el riachuelo, en un aura de espuma, bajo la estrella radiante.

Esta serie de audacias es lo que define la originalidad de Sierra y su importancia como pintor. Hace uso de la alegoría dejando de lado la profiláctica evasiva del parloteo postmodernista. Y lo hace también sin la estridencia, la pedantería ortodoxa del muralista. Descubre las estructuras más profundas del arte teatral visual latinoamericano sin explotar el carnaval burdo de la iconografía étnica. Sierra comprende y acoge la épica norteamericana de la frontera, pero reubica su entorno en la intimidad abrasadora del episodio onírico, un escenario precioso que muy pocos artistas plásticos norteamericanos se han atrevido a explorar. El fuego y el agua y su matrimonio quejumbroso son la expresión de los sentimientos reflejados que apuntan al sentido mismo de la existencia. Mientras que otros nadan corriente abajo, proclamando el fin del "significado" y el triunfo de la variabilidad no digerida, Sierra se atreve a pensar sobre lo que significa estar vivo, aquí y ahora. Si Sierra alguna vez necesitara de un lema heráldico, podría considerar el siguiente: El arte indispensable o ningún arte.

EXHIBITION CHECK LIST *

1. **"Angel"**
1993
80" x 60"
2. **"Back to the Seed"**
1990
60" x 90"
3. **"Beacon"**
1997
54" x 36"
shown on page 8
4. **"Birth"**
1995
60" x 42"
shown on page 10
5. **"Canto"**
1991
50" x 60"
shown on page 6
6. **"Ceremony"**
1992
60" x 80"
shown on page 1
7. **"Corazon"**
1992
50" x 60"
8. **"Cuatro Santos"**
1985
36" x 48"
shown on page 15
Cheech Marin Collection
9. **"Double Self-portrait"**
1993
60" x 50"
10. **"Ends with Sleep"**
1995
72" x 54"
shown on page 4
11. **"Entrance"**
62" x 45"
shown on front cover
1993
12. **"Eros and Psyche"**
1992
60" x 46"
13. **"Gentleman with Hand on His Breast"**
1992
60" x 46"
14. **"Hi Ho, Hi Ho, Off to Hell We Go"**
1992
60" x 80"
shown on page 9
15. **"In the Garden"**
1993
60" x 50"
16. **"Judith"**
1991
50" x 60"
shown on page 13
17. **"Life Pool"**
1996
52" x 40"
shown on page 7
18. **"Mad Dogs"**
1984-86
41" x 44"
shown on page 14
Robert Berman Collection
19. **"Nido"**
1992
52" x 36"
20. **"Omega"**
1994
80" x 60"
shown on back cover
21. **"Primal Pool"**
1993
66" x 99"
22. **"Primeval"**
1995
42" x 55"
Nicolas Cage Collection
23. **"Prometheus"**
1991
60" x 44"
shown on page 12
24. **"Prometheus #2"**
1992
60" x 44"
25. **"Prophet"**
1993
62" x 54"
shown on page 14
26. **"Rituals"**
1992
63" x 50"
27. **"The Altar"**
1990
59" x 80"
shown on page 3
TLM Permanent Collection
28. **Untitled # E-117**
1993
80" x 60"
29. **Untitled # E-110**
1993
70" x 50"
30. **Untitled # F-121**
1994
60" x 90"
31. **Untitled # PS-21**
1992
62" x 50"

* All paintings in the exhibition
are oil on canvas



Mad Dogs

SELECTED EXHIBITION HISTORY AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Paul Sierra

Born in Havana, Cuba, 1944. Immigrated to the United States in 1961. Studied at the Art Institute of Chicago. Lives and works in Chicago.

Exhibition History

- 1998 Musee Desta Pisseries, Aix-En-Provence, "Loin De Cuba", 1988-89
Robert Berman Gallery, Los Angeles, May
- 1997 Lyons Wier Gallery, Chicago, October
Gallery 72, Omaha, September
- 1996 Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame, January, solo
Phyllis Kind Gallery, Chicago, March, solo
Robert Berman Gallery, Los Angeles, November, solo
- 1995 Corbino Gallery, Sarasota, February, solo
Fred Snitzer Gallery, Miami, March, solo
- 1994 University of South Dakota, Vermillion, September, solo
Buena Vista College Art Gallery, Storm Lake, October, solo
Marquette University, Michigan, "Latino Art", January
Museo del Barrio, New York, "25th Anniversary Show" April
Ft. Lauderdale Museum, Ft. Lauderdale, "Cuban Artists in the 20th Century", December
- 1993 Bowling Green University, Bowling Green, October
Botello Gallery, San Juan, March
- 1992 Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, March
El Paso Museum, El Paso, "Chicano & Latino: Parallels and Divergences", February
- 1991 Daniel Saxon Gallery, Los Angeles, October 1991
"Cuba/USA: The First Generation"
Minnesota Museum of Art, St. Paul, January 1992; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, January-March 1991
Gwenda Jay Gallery, Chicago, January, 1991; Louis Newman Galleries, Beverly Hills, September, 1991
Gallery of Contemporary Art, Colorado Springs, "Chicago Art Today," October
- 1990 Evanston Art Center, Evanston, January-February, solo
Scott Alan Gallery, New York, two person, March
- 1989 Maier Museum of Art, Randolph-Macon Woman's College, Lynchburg, 78th Annual Exhibition: "Chicago", February-March
Gump's Gallery, San Francisco, September-October
"Hispanic Art in the United States: Thirty Contemporary Painters and Sculptors"
Brooklyn Museum, June-September 1989; Los Angeles County Museum, February-April 1989
Museo del Barrio, New York, "¡Mira! The Canadian Club Hispanic Art Tour 1988-89", March-April 1989
- 1988 "Expresiones Hispánicas" 1988 Coors National Hispanic Arts Exhibit and Tour
Mexican Cultural Institute, San Antonio, May-June; Southwest Museum, Los Angeles, July-September
"¡Mira! The Canadian Club Hispanic Art Tour 1988-89"
Terra Museum, Chicago, December 1988-January 1989, Meadows Museum, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, June-July 1988
Museo de Arte de Ponce, Ponce, Puerto Rico, "Outside Cuba", April-June
Mexican Fine Arts Center, Chicago, "¡Adivina! Expresiones Latinas de Chicago", April-July
College of Lake Country, Grayslake, IL, "Highlights from the Collection", August-October
- 1987 INTAR, Hispanic American Arts Center, New York, "Religious Iconographies in Contemporary Hispanic Art", January-February
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, "Hispanic Art in the United States: Thirty Contemporary Painters and Sculptors", May-July 1987
College of Lake Country, Grayslake, IL, "Nuestras Imágenes: Our Images", March
Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, New York, "Outside Cuba", June-August
- 1986 Noyes Art Center, Evanston, "¡Mira Chicago!", March-May
Museo de la Ciudad de Mexico, "Chicago Latino Artists", September
Mendenhall Gallery, Whittier College, Whittier, CA, "Vínculos" ("Connections"), October
- 1985 Mary Porter Stenson Gallery, U. C.-Santa Cruz, "Aquí", organized by the University of Southern California, January-February
Morton College Art Gallery, Cicero, IL, "An Exhibition of Drawings", January-February
Miami-Dade Community College South, South Campus Art Gallery, "American Artists of Cuban Origin", October-November
Dittmar Gallery, Northwestern University, Evanston, "Two Views of Women", November-December

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