

White Layers

A Collective Exhibition



SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 2023

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Press Release

About White Layers

Pan American Art Projects is pleased to announce *White Layers*, a collective exhibition curated by Claudia Taboada. The show will be on view from September 23rd to November 4th, 2023, with an opening reception on Saturday, September 23rd, from 6 to 9 pm.

White Layers pulls its inspiration from the short story “Las capas” by Eloy Costa, a young Cuban writer and winner of the Onelio Jorge Cardoso Latin American Short Story Award. The main character has an obsession with hiding the color of the wall causing layers of paint to consume the interior space to the point of being trapped, as the author says, “trapped, amongst the bright light, within the white bulk.” Layers, understood as a material and also as a procedure or action, have had specific functions at certain moments in the history of art. Paleolithic artists drew visual narratives on top of existing ones in caves and created so-called palimpsests of graphic information about daily life or events. Costa’s story goes way beyond the historical ideas of superimposition and layering, bringing them to an extreme. It is no longer just about an aesthetic or technical layering, but an emotional extreme, blurring the line between beauty and pain. In literature, “layering” suggests an author’s weaving of different elements to a story, often stemming from one element like a character, setting, or dialogue. This exhibition does something similar, pulling from Costa’s ideas as a foundation, and layering on top of that foundation to explore a visual narrative.

The artists, Ariamna Contino, Raúl Díaz, León Ferrari, José Manuel Fors, Reynier Leyva Novo, Elsa Mora, Ronald Morán, Carolina Sardi and José A. Toirac, explore different aspects reflected in Costa’s writing — the configuration of impossible spaces, and the exploration of shades of white — in paperwork, passe-partout, paintings, and mixed media.

For more information, visit www.panamericanart.com or contact miami@panamericanart.com

Las Capas

Eloy Costa

Lo habían contratado para que pintara las paredes de blanco. Era una casa enorme, con escaleras y varios cuartos.

El hombre comenzó su tarea con la paciencia de una esponja. Capa tras capa, fue tapando el antiguo color verde, enterrándolo como a un fósil en la piedra.

Para la sexta capa de pintura blanca no quedaba evidencia alguna de que la casa en algún momento hubiere tenido otro color. Se le veía impoluta, tan blanca que unas paredes alumbraban a las otras. El blanco se reflejaba en más blanco. Como haber sido admitidos en el cielo eterno.

Sin embargo, el hombre siguió pintando todo, capa tras capa. Y así, comenzó a ser notable el suceso. La casa, que una vez fuera enorme, de tantas capas de pintura blanca comenzó a verse pequeña. Había crecido para sus adentros.

El antiguo librero no cupo ya más nunca en el nicho donde antes tenía un lugar.

Las arañas no podían tejer ya en las esquinas curvas y blancas de la casa.

Los muebles de antes no podrían volver jamás a su sitio.

Años más tarde, el interior de la enorme casa no era más grande que el de una pequeña konak turca, esculpida en la piedra de alguna montaña.

El hombre siguió pintando la casa de blanco, una capa de pintura tras otra, hasta que ya no pudo salir de ahí, y quedó atrapado, entre tanta luz, en aquel enorme bulto blanco.

Las Capas

Eloy Costa

He had been hired to paint the walls white. It was a huge house, with stairs and several rooms.

The man began his task with the patience of a sponge. Layer after layer, he covered the old green color, burying it like a fossil in a cave.

By the sixth coat of white paint there was no evidence that the house had ever been any other color. It looked spotless, so white that some walls illuminated others. The white reflected into more white. Like having been admitted to eternal heaven.

However, the man continued painting everything, layer after layer. And so, the process became a notable event. The once huge house began to look small with so many layers of white paint. It had grown from the inside.

The old bookshelf no longer fit into the niche where it once had its place.

The spiders could no longer weave in the curved, white corners of the house.

The furniture from before could never return to its place.

Years later, the interior of the enormous house was no larger than that of a small Turkish konak, carved into the stone of some mountain.

The man continued painting the house white, one layer of paint after another, until he could no longer get out, and he was trapped, amongst the bright light, within the white mass.

Translation by Dr. Ross Karlan

Works

Pavel Acosta

Irises by Vincent van Gogh, From the series 'Stolen from the Met', 2023



Mixed media. Decollage and watercolor on paper

48 x 55 in

121.9 x 139.7 cm

\$ 15,000.00

Ariamna Contino

Cúpula de la Mezquita Azul de Estambul, 2018



Hand cut paper
32 x 32 in
81.28 x 81.28 cm
Unique
(6001-1697)

\$ 8,000.00

Raul Diaz

Abstracto, 2003



Recto lower Right
Acrylic on wood panel
40.50 x 51 in
102.87 x 129.54 cm
Unique
(712-4492)

\$ 18,000.00

León Ferrari

La Casa Blanca, 2004



Video
00:03:12 min
Edition of 50 plus 10 AP
(740-1915)

\$ 7,500.00

José Manuel Fors

English Garden Series, 2018



Mixed media
48 x 48 in
121.9 x 121.9 cm
(553-2319)

\$ 12,000.00

Reynier Leyva Novo

What It Is, What it Has Been, 2020



Bust of José Martí by the sculptor Juan José Sicre, after 380 layers of paint.

16 1/2 x 13 3/8 x 13 3/8 in

41.9 x 34 x 34 cm

This work is currently on loan to the Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami for the *Juan Francisco Elso: Por America* collective exhibition, scheduled from November 1st, 2023 to March 17th, 2024. In place of the sculpture, we are showing the video produced by the artist and published on Vimeo (Stop motion with the 382 photos of the painting process).

Edition 1 of 3
(6006-1339)

\$ 26,000.00

Elsa Mora

From the series *Mindscales*, 2018



Archival paper and glue
29 ³/₄ width, 22 ³/₄ height, 2 depth (frame included in measurements)
(678-1004)

\$ 5,000.00

Ronald Moran

Esposas (Handcuffs), 2007

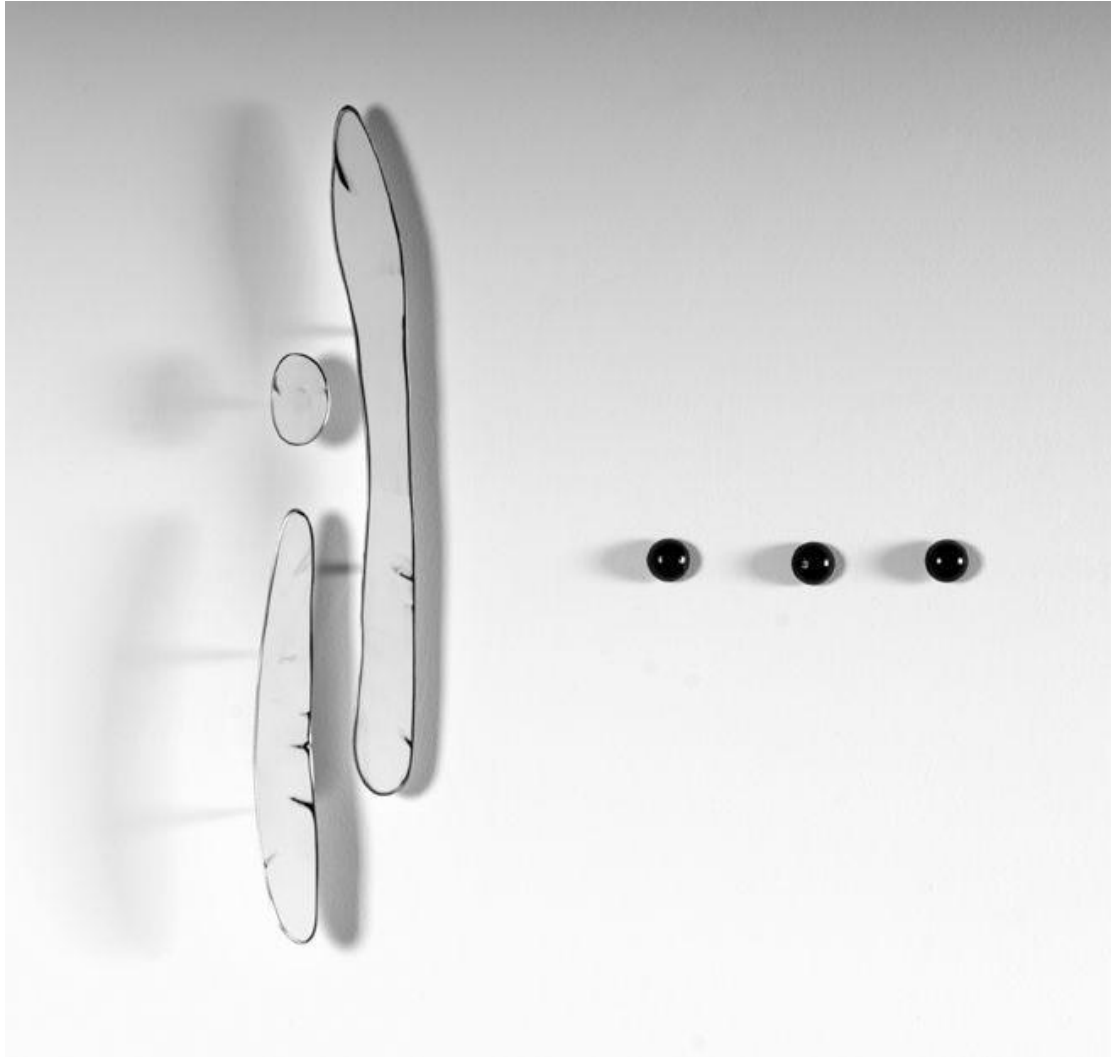


Oil on linen
59 x 118 in
149.86 x 299.72 cm
Unique
(756-7794)

\$ 22,000.00

Carolina Sardi

White Association with Black Dots, 2008



Painted steel
21 x 19 x 2 in
Unique
(752-1386)

\$ 5,000.00

Carolina Sardi

White Layered Box with Lines, 2007



Steel sculpture
9 1/2 x 72 x 2 in
24.1 x 182.9 x 5.1 cm
Unique
(752-6374)

\$ 15,000.00

Jose Toirac

Colt 38 yacente (Homage to Martí), 2020



Marble
8 1/2 x 14 x 4 in
21.6 x 35.6 x 10.2 cm
(639-2123)

\$ 16,000.00

Artist Biographies

Pavel Acosta

Stealing has been at the very core of Acosta's work since he first started making art. After graduating from the Higher Institute of Art in Havana, Cuba, and with little access to unaffordable art materials, he stole dry paint chips from the crumbling city walls and the objects around him to make collages of recycled paint on paper and canvas. He called these works *Stolen Paintings*. Acosta wanted to survive as an artist in the same way people do in Cuba – smuggling the State resources within the black market as a compensation for low salaries and scarcities. In doing so, exploring the boundaries between destroying something or committing a crime, and creating, as well as the concepts of ethics and morality within that society.

Coming to live in the United States in 2010 impacted Acosta's work in many ways. In his recent works, the source of materials is not the city anymore, but the museum. The museum walls are ambassadors of its policies and ideologies. They are carriers of memories, and ultimately of history. In the series *Wallscape* (2013 – present), he interacts within museums' permanent collection galleries. The first work in this series took place at El Museo del Barrio, NY, during its 2013 Biennial. On that occasion, he peeled off the paint from the wall he was assigned, and used the paint chips to make an exact reproduction of the permanent collection painting hung in front of his wall. Similar interventions in other museums of the United States and abroad are to come.

Another body of work consists of realizing detailed copies of masterpieces from museum collections using the same technique – the works are collages of acrylic wall paint on Drywall or sheetrock. The sheetrock panel is mounted on a wooden structure and hung from the ceiling, detached from the wall. There is a QR code next to the painting, which allows the viewer to access the webpage of the museum featuring the original piece. In this way, his low-tech works are like ghosts that find their way back to their 'bodies' through cutting edge technology. He has already reproduced renowned works by masters such as Vermeer, Van Gogh, Rembrandt, Murillo, Audobon, Monet, Magritte, Durer, and Courbet. In 2019, he had the opportunity to show one of my copies with its original piece - a painting by Albert Bierstadt, from the collection of the University of Wyoming Art Museum in his solo exhibition there. It is now part of that museum's collection, as they commissioned the piece.

Ariamna Contino

Contino's work is intentionally monochrome and presents us with the inherent contradiction between what represents the subject matter and the beauty of the technique used. Images that appear to be idyllic landscapes are in fact representations of the paths for drug trafficking. These incidents were registered abundantly in the media, which became an essential source of information and inspiration for Contino.

Contino was born in 1984 in Havana, Cuba, and attended the San Alejandro Academy in the same city. She is particularly known for two series: *Arsenal* and *Camino al Eden*. In *Arsenal* she represents weapons that have been involved in massacres but not in wars. *Camino al Eden* seems at first renderings of Latin American landscapes, however, it is the corridors through which drugs travel from South America to the United States.

Her work has been included in several important exhibition in Cuba and outside, among those a Collateral exhibition to the Havana Biennial, Ludwig Foundation of Cuba Havana (2008); Project Group, Ludwig Foundation of Cuba, Collateral to the 11th Biennial of Havana, Cuba (2012); Cuban Contemporary Art Salon, Centro de Desarrollo de las Artes Visuales, La Habana, Cuba (2014); and the XII Havana Biennial (2015).

Raul Diaz

Raul Diaz invites us to seek refuge in a secret universe that exists within each of us – a soothing, friendly space characterized by the presence of beauty and the solitude of personal soul searching that rarely surfaces amid the chaos of contemporary life. Evoked by the artist's memories of his childhood, the mysterious images in Diaz's artworks are deeply personal and reminiscent of his own spiritual adventure. The images produce a sense of nostalgia that compels the viewer to reflect on his or her own life as well as past family histories. The past and future meld into one as the viewer contemplates his or her place within time.

Since his first exhibitions in the early 1980s, Diaz has shown an inclination towards expressing himself through figures – typically human ones. His distinct style comes from his unique technique of texturing wood panels that reveal otherworldly images. He uses mixed media to produce a tactile impression on the surface of wood panels that depicts peaceful figures among boats, kites, roses and shells. Diaz's construction of human figures is forged from an ethereal conception rather than a naturalistic representation of the human form. The characters that appear in his works are planar, out of scale silhouettes that are often seen from behind in unrealistic positions and postures. The depth of color and textures in the backgrounds of Diaz's artworks create a dream-like environment that is present in all of his work. The simplicity of the figures against these dynamic backgrounds instills a sense of calm in the viewer that is distinctive of Diaz's artworks.

Diaz was born in 1952 in Cordoba, Argentina, where he continues to live and produce his art. Although Diaz studied architecture, he could not avoid the overwhelming call within himself to be a painter. Self-taught, Diaz has emerged as one of the most prominent artists in Argentina and has participated in numerous group exhibitions in Argentina and abroad. He has had solo shows in Cordoba, Buenos Aires, the United States, the Netherlands and Italy. He has also been the recipient of important awards including the Grand Prize of the National Salon of Painting of the Pro-Art Foundation, Cordoba (1990). In 2010, Diaz was honored with a solo exhibition at the Museo Caraffa in Cordoba.

León Ferrari

León Ferrari was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina; and died in the same city. Trained to be an engineer, Ferrari was mostly an autodidact artist.

At the forefront of pre-conceptual art, Ferrari's career developed at a time when the question of language was particularly central to Western culture due to the role taken by post-structuralism, semiotics, and the philosophy of language. Ferrari worked in a wide range of art forms and mediums. He explored techniques such as sculpture, painting, drawing, and assemblage to film, collage, mail art, poetry, and sound. During his time in Italy in the 1950s, he produced ceramic sculptures stylistically connected to the European abstraction of the time. Upon returning to Argentina, he continued to create sculptural works of metal wires and rods before beginning what would become his most iconic works, a series on paper and, ultimately, installations, developing an organic style in which gestural forms appear both as abstractions and as explorations of the codes of writing.

Known for his antagonistic political stance and artistic ethics, Ferrari obtained international acclaim when his work was included in the 2000 survey exhibition 'Heterotopias' at the Centro Reina Sofía in Madrid. Four years later in 2004 a national scandal arose in his name at the Centro Cultural Recoleta in Buenos Aires, where the artist had his first major retrospective exhibition. During the forty days that the exhibition lasted, 70,000 visitors passed through the art center, 1,000 articles were printed, and countless manifestations arose both against and in defense of the artist and his work; this mass outpouring of attention solidified Ferrari as one of the most important artists of Latin America.

His work can be found in important public collections, amongst others: the Tate Modern, London; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston ; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Buenos Aires; Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires; Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, Brazil; and the Museo de Arte Moderno de México, Mexico City. In October of 2007 he was awarded the Gold Lion at the 52nd Venice Biennale. In 2010 The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York inaugurated 'Tangled Alphabets' a two-artist retrospective of León Ferrari and Mira Schendel. The exhibition in New York was followed by presentations at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid; and the Fundação Iberê Camargo in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

José Manuel Fors

Jose Manuel Fors was born in 1956 in Havana, Cuba. He attended the San Alejandro Academy and the Institute of Museology, both in Havana, Cuba.

Fors has exhibited internationally in the United States, Spain and Japan. His work can be found at the collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles); Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Los Angeles); The Museum of Fine Arts (Houston); and at Fundación Museo de Bellas Artes (Caracas, Venezuela) among others.

Fors was a member of the legendary Volumen I (Volume I), and participated in their first exhibition in 1981 with an installation. During the Eighties, Fors produced installations that were ground-breaking for the Cuban context, and these are perhaps his best known works. Working with natural materials, such as leaves, was a challenge at a time, when something like that was not generally considered art in his country. His installations and other works of this period leaned towards a more conceptual approach. Instead of the universal and trite symbols of time, Fors chose decadence, as a metaphoric image through his dried leaves accumulations to render the passage of time. This was the backbone of his first solo exhibition titled *Acumulaciones* (Accumulations) in 1983. In those early years, he was engaged in exploring the concept of the passage of time and the evocative power of memory, and these installations proved to be the ideal visual solutions.

His work has always revolved around memory in one way or another, either through his photographs or his installations. When he began to exhibit in the late Seventies, photography was far from being his technique of choice. He was trained as a painter and his excursions into photography began when he had to photograph some of his installations. He liked the effect and from then on photography became part of the creative process for him.

Reynier Leyva Novo

Reynier Leyva Novo is one of Cuba's leading conceptual artists. Working across media, Novo combines anthropological research with cutting-edge technology to examine the psychological and sociological effects of complex issues throughout the history of Cuba and the Caribbean. He develops his projects through mining historical data and official documents, transforming their contents into minimalist and conceptually charged sculptures and multimedia installations that are at once visually engaging and intellectually provocative.

Novo's work challenges ideology and symbols of power, questioning notions of an individual's ability to affect change. Among the artist's most recognized series is *The Weight of History* (2014-5), a project in which he actualized a software to compute the mass and volume of ink used to print key ideological texts underpinning five totalitarian regimes that shaped the 20th century, including Cuba. Novo's commitment to deconstructing myths while highlighting the fragments of reality and lived experiences that generate them has led him to political activism through art.

Novo's work has been presented at the Liverpool Biennial 2010, United Kingdom; La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy (2011, 2017); Bienal de la Habana, Havana, Cuba (2015, 2019); XII Shanghai Biennale, China (2018); 6th Ghetto Biennale, Port-au-Prince, Haiti (2019); and the Aichi Triennale, Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Aichi, Japan (2019), among others. In 2020, he was selected for *20 in 2020: The Artists of the Next Decade-Latin America*, a publication highlighting the 20 Latin American artists who will define the next decade.

His work is part of the collections of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada; Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx, NY, USA; Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation (CIFO), Tabacalera Building, Madrid, Spain; Colección de Arte del Banco de la República, Bogotá, Colombia; Farber Collection, New York, NY, USA; Fundación María Cristina Masaveu Peterson, Asturias, Spain; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C., USA; Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, Eugene, OR, USA; MISOL Art Foundation, Bogotá, Colombia; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, Cuba; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH), TX, USA; Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), FL, USA; Pizzuti Collection of the Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH, USA; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, USA.

Elsa Mora

Elsa Mora was born in Holguin, Cuba; and currently lives and works in Mount Tremper, New York, United States. She attended first The Vocational School of Arts, in Holguín; and later The Professional School of Visual Arts, in Camagüey, both in Cuba.

Her work can be found as part of the collections of museums such as the Museum of Latin American Art, in Long Beach, California; the National Museum of Women in the Arts, in Washington DC; and at The Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, Eugene, Oregon. She has participated in exhibitions such as Utopia/Post-Utopia, at the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, State University of New York, New Paltz, New York; and Inside/Outside: Contemporary Cuban Art, at Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, among many others.

Mora's work is inspired by nature, and partially based on the long tradition of botanical illustration. She takes passages from the natural world as similes for stages in human life. She is exploring the concept of transformation from a symbiotic point of view, blending vegetation and humans. Her distinctive 'women' are created with mixed elements from both worlds; her female torsos have either faces constructed of groupings of birds, or arrangements of flowers for heads resulting in extraordinary surrealist creatures.

Her work often takes from autobiographical sources. Her earlier pieces were collages in which she combined personal artifacts with photos and painted elements. Later on, she relied more on painting or drawing, making reference to a personal transformation, illustrated through her hybrid beings.

Ronald Morán

Ronald Morán was born in 1972 in Chalchuapa, El Salvador. He works and lives in San Salvador, El Salvador. Has a Graduate Degree in Plastic Arts from National Art Center CENAR, also studied applied arts at Dr. José Matías Delgado University, San Salvador; as well as artist residencies in México and Spain. In 2006 he was selected by EXIT Magazine, Madrid, Spain, as 1 of the top 100 most influential Latin-American Contemporary Artists.

Morán has participated in over 150 exhibitions throughout the United States, Latin America, Europe and Asia. In 2007, and represented El Salvador at the Venice Biennale. He has also exhibited at the Bienal Cuvee in Austria, the Tenth Habana Bienal, the Dorsky Curatorial Project in New York and the Margulies Collection in Miami with a recent invitation to the Beijing Biennale in 2010.

His professional career began in the 90's from drawing and collage. Through his works, Morán makes critical interpretations of relationships and everyday environments, employing a fine ironic sense and a highly intuitive — metaphorical — use of images. In its production, it tracks and exposes the repercussions of migrations, the immanence of political-economic violence and its influence on family and extra-family ties.

His artistic creation is very diverse; he develops series that formally appear very different from each other, but conceptually interwoven with a thread that characterizes his work, especially the ironic sense and the metaphorical use of the images. His means of expression are manifold, including installation, photography, video, painting and object art.

Carolina Sardi

Carolina Sardi was born in Argentina and was educated at the National University of La Plata, in Argentina, then studied with the sculptor Ennio Iommi. Sardi moved to Miami in 1995, and first took a studio space at the Art Center on Lincoln Road. Later on she moved her studio to Little Haiti.

Sardi has been commissioned for several site-specific large scale installations in many of this city's acclaimed buildings and private homes, including most recently the newly finished Apogee Hollywood condominiums and the Icon Bay project. She has also been included in the prestigious Heavy Metal exhibition at the National Museum for Women in the Artist in Washington, D.C.

She is best known for her wall installations of organic elements cut from steel and aluminum. She plays with the effects of volume, light, and shadow, adding to the work another layer of possibilities. In a recent series, she uses polished gold, copper, or chrome surfaces, in which the viewers can find their own reflections, thereby introducing a variety of added readings.

Some of her solo exhibitions include: Panamerican Art Projects Gallery in Miami and Dallas, Lelia Mordoch Gallery in Paris, Cheryl Hazan Gallery in New York; Steps Gallery in London, UK; Heriard Cimino Gallery in New Orleans, Exquisite Tension at the Gulf Coast Museum of Art in Largo, FL; Blue at the Government Center Gallery from Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs; Over/Under at Flashpoint Gallery in Washington DC; Forest at the Bass Museum of Art in Miami Beach, Bee at Mia Gallery, Miami International Airport ; Imaginary Lines at the Museum of the Americas in Washington DC and Free to be Captive at the Museum of Art of Fort Lauderdale.

Sardi has a broad experience in designing, fabricating and installing public, private and corporate art projects. Some examples of commissioned works include Miami-Dade Art in Public Places, Port of Miami, Baggage Claim, Terminals 4 and 5, Water and Suitcase Projects (2003); Oppenheim Architecture, Ilona Building Fence and Gate, Miami Beach (2001); Related Group of Florida, Icon Building Miami Beach Lobby's Sculptures and The Slade Palm Beach Suspended Sculpture (2004-2005); Grand Venetian Miami Beach Lobby's Wall Sculpture and Epic Hotel Miami Wall Sculpture for the Front Desk (2011); Gates, Fence, Louvers and Lamps for the Apogee Beach Building in Hollywood, FL (2014); Icon Bay Fence for Sculpture Park (2015) in Miami for the Related Group of Florida; Wall Installations for the lobby at the Belfiore Building in Houston, TX (2016) and Wall Installations for the Cleveland Clinic in Cleveland, OH (2017).

José Toirac

The work of José Toirac is defined by his ability to observe and dismantle historical and political processes. His references, therefore, are always essential characters of politics and history, through which he relates the universal, to the reality that surrounds him. His intention is to show the zones of the silence of official history, the truth that always hides behind the power.

His work is strongly censored by the authorities in Cuba. Part of his creative process is to use images from the public domain (magazines and official newspapers), because once they are published, supposedly they pass the censorship of the State. His work travels along the line that separates politics from reality, exposing that intermediate zone where manipulation mechanisms are visible.

Toirac often seeks inspiration in the past as a way to bring home his point referencing a present situation. He frequently includes the use of documents and images, both historical and artistic, mostly but not exclusively, from Cuban national records and archives. He brings out fragments of history that can be subject to revision, and by deconstructing it he confronts its official 'reading' in a subtle way, presenting the facts under a new light. He is very interested in the way that history has been manipulated to reinforce a given idea. His main source of inspiration, which is his country's political history, is endless, mostly due to the manipulative use of history by the state. He is constantly questioning the way that collective memory is 'constructed' by fabricating 'supporting evidence' such as photos, to 'facts' or by hiding information. The artist points out how the history of Cuba during these last decades would be rewritten once the political order changes and many 'new' historical facts surface. Toirac received the National Prize of the Plastic Arts for the Work of a lifetime.

His pieces can be found in collections such as the National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba; the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York City; the Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno (CAAM), Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain; the Arizona State University Art Museum (ASU), Tempe, Arizona; the Ludwig Forum, Aachen, Germany; the Rubell Family Collection, Miami, Florida; The Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence, Rhode Island; the Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, California; the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, Texas; and the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal, Québec, Canada, among others.