



WALLACH ART GALLERY

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

WALLACH ART GALLERY AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY TO OPEN *SIN AUTORIZACIÓN: CONTEMPORARY CUBAN ART*

October 21 through January 15, 2023

NEW YORK, NY, September 27, 2022 – The Wallach Art Gallery at Columbia University is pleased to open *Sin Autorización: Contemporary Cuban Art* on view October 21 through January 15, 2023. The exhibition explores the political and intellectual context of the Cuban contemporary art production that emerged during President Obama’s second term and its many changes in the years following. *Sin Autorización* is curated by Gwen A. Unger, Doctoral Candidate, Dept. of Art History & Archaeology, Columbia University, and Abel González Fernández, Independent Curator.

Over the last few decades, observers of Cuban contemporary art have witnessed the dynamic rise of the political and cultural agency of Cuban artists, the emergence of new unofficial “underground” exhibition spaces and practices, and surges of tourism and foreign interest in Cuban art. *Sin Autorización* (without authorization) presents a constellation of works that reflect the rich potential of the vast network of personal ties and connections that fuels the Cuban art community. The artists, working across a variety of forms and concepts, employ archival sources, performance, documentation and action, and expose the nuances of daily life in Cuba not reflected in official discourse. Together they relay how a young generation of Cuban artists experiment with culture and create work that engages not only their current experience, but that of previous generations. The work also reflects the many theoretical discourses from the U.S., Europe and other parts of Latin America that reach Cuba unofficially.

As President Obama’s second term was ending, his administration relaxed restrictions on travel to Cuba, colloquially known as *obamismo*. This change created a period filled with increasing hope and possibilities. In April 2018, President Miguel Díaz-Canel’s signing of El Decreto #349 (Decree 349), a rigid censorship law requiring artists to obtain advance permission for exhibitions and performances, triggered Movimiento San Isidro, an artist-led collective protest against the government’s increased censorship of artistic expression in Cuba. This new law coupled with the Trump administration’s stricter regulations on travel to Cuba severely impeded the growing free artistic practice that Cuban artists had only recently enjoyed.

In a joint statement, the curators write: “The strength of these artists, their passion, their labor, and their unwavering dedication to the unscrupulous, the unorthodox, the unusual is what drives this exhibition. Like them, we exploit the “memory gaps” in official discourse from the state, instead filling this void with humor and desire.” *Sin Autorización* artists include Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara, Yanelys Nuñez Leyva and Tania Bruguera, whose work reflects the potency of

artistic exchange in Cuba even as the institution continues to fail artists; members of the youngest generation of Cuban artists—Julio Llópiz-Casal, Hamlet Lavastida, Leandro Feal, and Kiko Faxas—whose work counters the rigid orthodoxy of the revolution and fills the voids of silence, as well as Marco Castillo, Reynier Leyva Novo, Camila Lobón, Lester Álvarez Meno, Celia González, Celia-Yunior, Kevin Avila, Román Gutiérrez Aragonese, Santiago Diaz M., and Hector Antón.

The exhibition is accompanied by a bilingual publication with contributions from the curators, Katherine Bisquet, Carlos Manuel Álvarez, Gean Moreno, and Yanelys Núñez Leyva. The innovative format by Lucinda Hitchcock and Cara Buzzel recalls the spirit and urgency of the artist-led movement that underscores *Sin Autorización*. Copies are available at the gallery throughout the run of the exhibition for \$10.

Education and Public Programming

***Sin Autorización*: Artist Panel Discussion**

Sunday, October 23 at 1pm

Join exhibition artists Leandro Feal, Celia González, Camila Lobón, and Lester Álvarez Meno for a moderated discussion with curators Abel González Fernández and Gwen A. Unger. The panel will explore what it is like to work and practice as an artist in Havana, Cuba, and how artists navigate a government controlled art scene. The school system for fine arts in Havana, and how that leads into establishing a career, as well as how artists work in both public and institutional spaces as well as private and independent spaces will also be touched on. The artists will reflect on their experiences over the course of their careers and how the changes in recent years have affected their artistic practice, and ultimately their very lives.

The panel will be followed by a screening of the Sin349 documentary series.

***Sin Autorización* Exhibition Tour**

Saturday, November 5 at 1pm

Learn more about the artists that comprise the exhibition, *Sin Autorización: Contemporary Cuban Art*, during a tour of the show with its curators. *Sin Autorización* explores the political and intellectual context of the independent artistic scene in Cuba that emerged around 2016, and its many changes in the years following.

Tania Bruguera

Thursday, November 17 at 6:30pm

Celebrated visual artist Tania Bruguera presents work in conjunction with the exhibition *Sin Autorización: Contemporary Cuban Art*. Introduced by Betti-Sue Hertz, Director and Chief Curator, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery.

Bruguera researches ways in which art can be applied to everyday political life, focusing on the transformation of social affect into political effectiveness. Her long-term projects have been intensive interventions on the institutional structure of collective memory, education, and politics.

Tania Bruguera earned her MFA in performance from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She is the founder and director of Cátedra Arte de Conducta (Behavior Art School), the first performance studies program in Latin America. around the world, including the Bronx Museum of the Arts, the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de La Habana, and the Museum of Modern Art, in New York.

Co-presented by the Institute for Latin American Studies; the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery; and the School of the Arts Visual Arts Program.

For the most current listing of the education and public programming schedule visit wallach.columbia.edu.

Wallach Art Gallery Hours

Wednesday–Sunday, noon – 6pm

The Gallery will open without charge to the general public.

Wallach Art Gallery

Lenfest Center for the Arts, Columbia University

615 West 129th Street (enter on 125th Street just west of Broadway)

Website

<https://wallach.columbia.edu/>

Covid-19 policies for entering the Lenfest Center for the Arts facility. All guests entering the building must show proof of vaccination. Visitors 18 and older are also required to show an accompanying ID. Children under 6-months may visit the exhibition accompanied by a vaccinated adult.

Media Contacts:

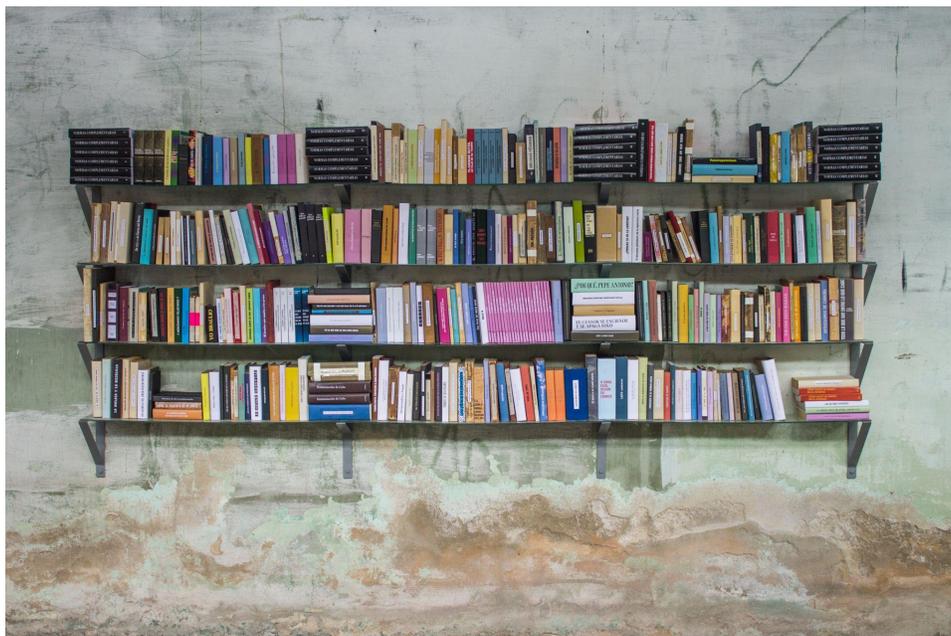
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COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

SELECTED WORKS IN THE *SIN AUTORIZACIÓN* EXHIBITION



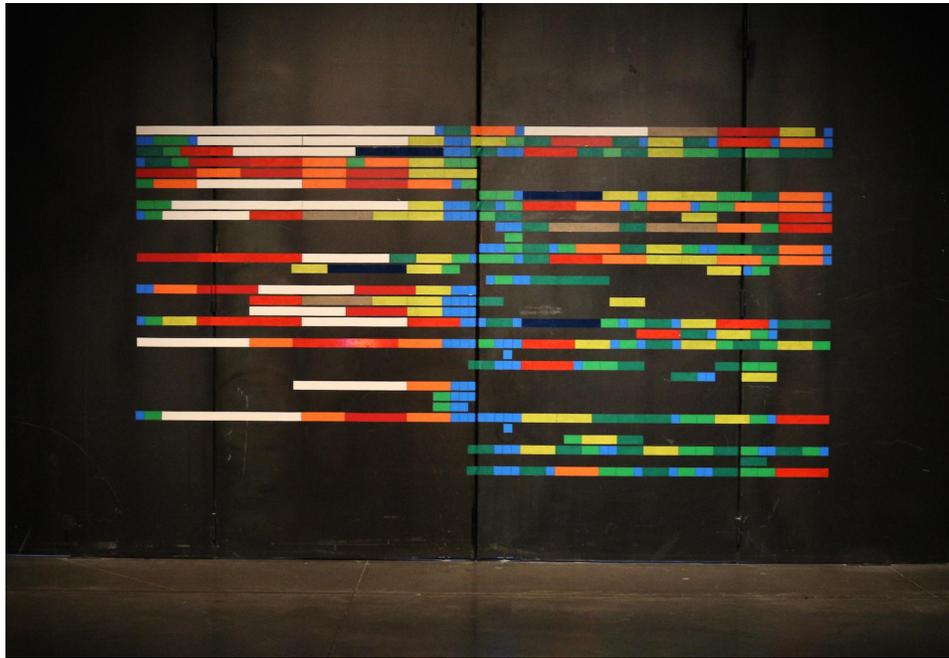
Kevin Avila and Lester Álvarez Meno with Roman Gutiérrez Aragonese, Héctor Antón, Santiago Díaz M., and the special contribution of Dascokiss, *Biblioteca para lomo-lectores* (Library for spine readers), 2018-22, installation view. Image courtesy: Kevin Avila and Lester Álvarez Meno.



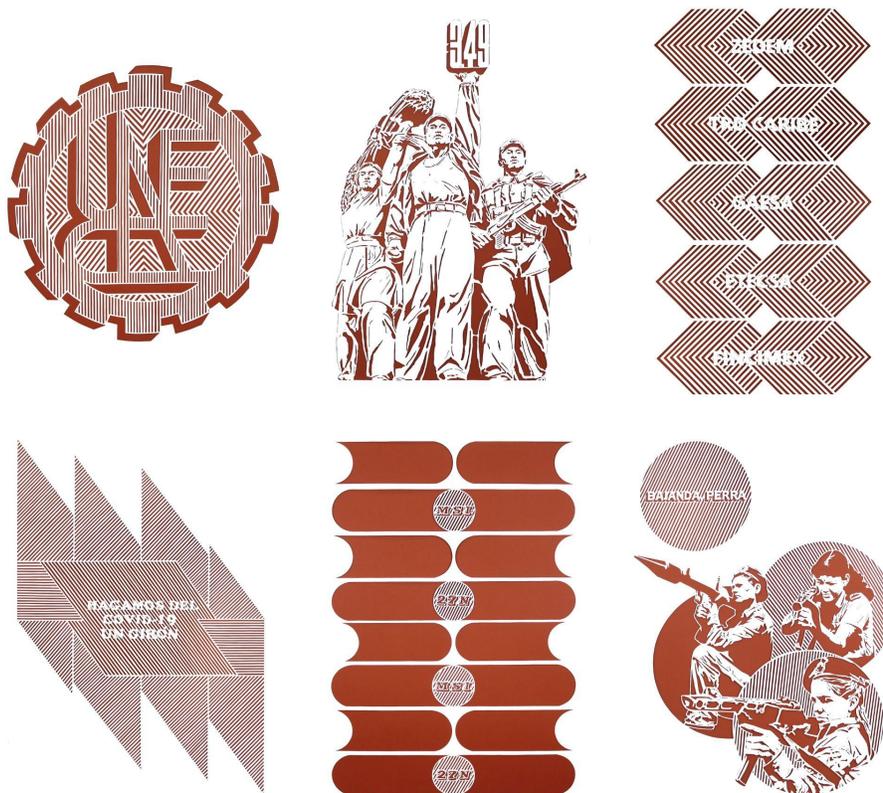
Marco Castillo, *Generación* (Generation), 2019, video still. Single-channel video; color with stereo sound ;6 min. 45 sec. Courtesy the artist, KOW, Berlin & Nara Roesler, Brazil.



Lester Álvarez Meno, “De dónde son los cantantes’ –Severo Sarduy, 1967” from the series *La Noche en Cuba* (The night in Cuba), 2018–22. Watercolor pencil on paper; 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (29.7 x 42 cm). Courtesy the artist.



Celia-Yunior (Celia González and Yunior Aguiar), *Siempre hay gente que me dice eso* (There are always people telling me that), 2009–22, installation view. Courtesy the artist



Hamlet Lavastida, six works from the series *Vida profiláctica*, 2014–22. Die-cut graphic posters. Each 39 ³/₈ x 27 ⁵/₈ in. (100 x 70 cm). Courtesy the artist.