

[CINTAS Foundation](#) Board President Hortensia Sampedro Hacker and a group of CINTAS Fellows responded to a request for comments about the foundation in June, 2014. Their remarks serve as a resource and supplement for a Miami Herald story about the exhibition, *Impact and Legacy: 50 Years of the CINTAS Foundation*, at Miami Dade College's Museum of Art and Design in Miami, FL.

I received the CINTAS Fellowship in 1982, early in my artistic practice. The fellowship represented a great validation for me. It encouraged me to continue developing my work full time.

The CINTAS Fellowship is the only financial support available exclusively to Cuban artists in exile. It provides a priceless showcase for our artistic community's achievements. Thanks to Hortensia Sampedro's leadership, the CINTAS Foundation has enjoyed outstanding continuity as a beacon for the arts.

The piece in this show, "Alarcolira," a mixed-media work in painting and sculpture, shows my ongoing interest in combining images and words.

– Lydia Rubio

*I have always felt a great deal of admiration for Pope John Paul II, as a pope and mostly as a man of his times. I am not a religious person, so my encounter with him, through my art, was a big challenge when I was commissioned by Florida International University [in 1987] to create the painting *Exiliados (Exiles)* as a gift to him.*

Throughout my work, and using my own experiences as an artist, I have dealt with converting myth into everyday life. So to create a painting without any obvious religious symbols, I used the theme of "family" or a family that could be placed in Miami. I have been influenced by Renaissance and Baroque art, which is mostly based on the Bible, so there is a connection that helped me to realize the painting.

– Arturo Rodríguez

The CINTAS fellowship is a great space for the artist to dialogue with the public, curators and other cultural agents. It gives you the opportunity to present your work and a specific project to a group of curators and critics. ... Certain expectations come into play: quality, context, historical period, gender, cultural production.

– Angela Valella

My studies in Buddhism and experiences in Nepal

and India are a way of approaching the tension between connection and communication. My current work, including the piece in the CINTAS auction [not part of the exhibition], uses animals as symbols of our hidden human nature and our fundamental desire for connection. For example, I use chimps to represent the internal mental noise we experience (what Buddhists call “monkey mind”) as well as the external cacophony created as we compete to be heard. This tension raises a question: How do we shift from co-creating noise to truly listening and connecting to one another?

Although I’m an interdisciplinary artist working across a variety of mediums like painting, ceramic sculpture and photography, a common thread runs throughout my work. I’m interested in the importance of human connection and the role (and limitations) of communication in forming those bonds. This theme comes directly from having regularly traveled to Cuba since I was 12 years old, where I experienced first how our familial connection transcends any limitations of language.

– Katarina Wong

In 1983 I graduated from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore. I had just received confirmation that I had won the CINTAS Fellowship. I was wisely advised by my parents to spend the prize money traveling through Europe. I was 22 years old and desperately seeking new horizons. The CINTAS opened the door to Europe for me. My work created in Paris was exhibited in The Miami Generation exhibition at the Cuban Museum of Arts and Culture in 1984.

Thanks to Oscar B. Cintas, I experienced the beauty of French culture, art and language. I will cherish the memories of Paris and the Cuban exile artists I met there forever.

– Pablo D. Cano

The support from the CINTAS Foundation came at a critical point in my art career. It afforded me dedicated time and freedom to concentrate on my work with great focus that would have been impossible without the fellowship award. The work I have made in the last two years has been my most fulfilling. I am incredibly grateful to the CINTAS Foundation.

– Jillian Mayer

I grew up as the son of two Cuban parents in Marietta, Ga. Growing up as a first-generation Cuban American in the South created a feeling of dislocation that I feel is common among most first- and second-

generation immigrants. There is a strong connection to the familial homeland through stories, traditions and history. But there is also a desire to fit in and integrate into your surroundings. This duality creates a feeling of alienation and conflict that fuels much of my work. Many of my photos, paintings, drawings, and videos deal with identity politics and conflicting desires to assimilate or go against the grain while living in two worlds.

I grew up with many stories of what it was like in Havana. Family photos lined the walls of our hallway, and I fantasized about what it would be like to live there. Since I was born in the States, I was never legally allowed to visit. This added another layer of mystery to the mythology of my forbidden homeland. After I received the CINTAS foundation grant, I used the money to explore my Cuban ancestry more in depth and began a four-year project based on my family and Cuba. I went to Cuba for the first time in 2007 and visited the homes, schools and churches of both sides of my family.

The sense of loss, nostalgia and longing to belong to a past that no longer exists continues to drive my work. Being Cuban is something I am intensely proud of, but it also feels like a bit of a mystery to me, and I find that I am continually working through that mystery in my studio.

– Anthony Goicolea

I'd say my heritage plays deeply in the unconscious. I'm Cuban by osmosis, never having set foot on the island, but you can never escape the great narrative of a family's defection from their homeland. My work is an attempt to understand who I am, to hopefully connect with other human beings.

– Luis Gispert

I selected "The Wait" for the CINTAS Foundation art collection because I wanted to address the Cuban diaspora – Cubans in a state of waiting for many years. The weathered, corrugated metal reflects the ocean that separates us and the passing of time. The naked self-portrait perhaps symbolizes the bitterness of isolation and detachment, the uprooted condition of exile. The irony is that we Cubans – inside or outside the island – remain in wait. [the artist describes a work in the collection, but not the exhibition.]

– Luis Cruz Azaceta

The context of my work is more related to the possibilities of the present than to my origins. I'm interested in the geopolitical more for its potential than

its identity. Therefore, my immediate environment and the intersection between art, science and technology are more valuable ideas than national archetypes.

If my work bears a mark of my origins, it is in the Cuban tradition of complex thinking – widespread and systemic. I learned about such thinkers as Cintio Vitier, Jorge Mañach, Fernando Ortiz, Samuel Feijóo, etc. during my formative years. This generated the enduring pride and pleasure in recalling them that pursues me to this day.

– Ivan Abreu

What I'm after is a lingering ephemeral engagement, slow, quiet and with enough depth, kinesthetically, to be recalled by the viewers after the work is no longer in front of them.

I am quietly aware of how my personal history is everywhere in the work, but this manifests itself like every other reference, very subtly and solemnly, and always unannounced, without being reduced to oversimplified labels or explanatory narratives. That sense of intimacy and subtlety in the work is key for me.

–Teresita Fernández

Cuba is in my DNA. Although I always try to be as universal as possible as part of being a "contemporary painter," it is impossible to prevent my roots from surfacing. So I embrace this influence, and most times I consciously add it to the pieces. So, universal themes are anchored to more local, traditional values and experiences in a modest, subdued but colorful "Cuban language." For me, Cuban music, poetry, humor and social issues are always a great source of inspiration.

– Gilberto Ruiz

I never cease to be amazed, and pleased, at the success of the Fellows in their fields of endeavor. These are aptly detailed in their testimonials, but if I had to pick one or two, I would reference Oscar Hijuelos, who went on to win a Pulitzer Prize, and Guillermo Calzadilla (with Jennifer Allora) and Felix Gonzalez-Torres who represented the U.S. in the Venice Biennale, Tania León for her indefatigable work and Latin Grammy nominations and many others too numerous to name. In fact, that is the challenge, in that looking through the list of Fellows, the depth and breadth of their achievements stand out on their own.

There is a tremendous overlap among the artistic

disciplines that reflect Cuba and what being Cuban is all about: attributes that deal with the senses in a way recognizable by experiencing the impact of the visual or swaying to the notes in a composition or soaring the imagination with the words of a Cuban poet. The last 30-plus years in which I have served on the board have provided me with a lifetime of enjoyment of Cuban artistic culture almost impossible to describe, but memorable in my heart and senses.

– Hortensia Sampedro Hacker, board president

Information about all the CINTAS fellows can be found at bitly.com/CintasVisualArtists.

The Miami Herald story by George Fishman about the related exhibition will be online in July, 2014.