



Emilio Falero (Cuban, b. 1944) *Across*, 2006. Oil on canvas, 48 x 48 in.



Binghamton University Art Museum

Visions and Imagination Cuban-American and Argentinian Art

January 31 – March 14, 2019

Luis Cruz Azaceta (Cuban, b. 1942) *The House of Asterion*, 2013. Archival digital print, hand colored with gel markers, 29 ½ x 29 ¼ in.



Carlos Estévez (Cuban, b. 1969) *Forging People*, 2007. Pencil and gouache on Nepal paper, 30 x 20 in.

The Art of Collecting

The act of collecting art is an engagement with objects and the artists who created them. Collecting can be an avocation, a hobby, a scholarly enterprise, a process of personal self-reflection, a business or an obsession. Collectors collect to possess. Sometimes, they also share so that others may find their way to their vision, and their objects may be seen in exhibitions such as this one. Personal and cultural resonance, as well as aesthetic preferences, compel collectors to pursue certain works, wherein the compositions, colors, space, forms and levels of reality employed by the artist carry meaning from the artist to the collector.

Collecting is deeply personal. The magnetic pull of an artist's style or way of communicating their lived experience can draw the collector to select particular works. The experience of creating a collection may then deepen when friendship between the collector and artists increases the appreciation of works. As friendships intensify, the process of building a collection thus links the lives of collectors and artists, and memories of times shared become integrated into the history of a collection. Over time, the circumstances that inspired the creation of the works come to define a collection. And as collections expand, they track the lives of artists and collectors, even as they record the ongoing development of artists.

When these friendships grow, works of art themselves may evidence the lived experience and shared events between the artists and collectors. Works of art often indicate transitions and turns of fortune and fate. But they may also mark entrances and exits of a collector in the life of an artist. When this happens, a collection becomes a record of lives joined by experiences that trace a history of shared time and events.

The exhibition on view, curated by Lynette M.F. Bosch, is the result of the efforts of two Cuban-Americans collectors who have amassed objects that coincide with different aspects of their lives and identities. This exhibition also commemorates a significant gift made by Jorge and Norma Gracia of works by Argentinian and Cuban-American artists to the permanent collection of the Binghamton University Art Museum.

Both Jorge Gracia and Lynette M.F. Bosch are scholars: he, a philosopher, and she, an art historian. Both professors in the State University of New York system, he teaches at the University of Buffalo, while she teaches at SUNY, Geneseo. They have collaborated on scholarly projects and have been friends since 2005. Over the years, the artists whose works they collect have become friends, thus the works included in this exhibition mark a network of relationships that bring together art, scholarship and life.

The Bosch and Gracia collections overlap and diverge, reflecting lives marked by shared experience, but also significant differences. Both Bosch and Gracia were born in Cuba and have collected Cuban-American art because they are themselves Cuban-American. Bosch and Gracia met in 2005 when the Gracias attended an exhibition of artwork by Cuban-American artists who work and live in western New York. The exhibition – *Art on the Hyphen: Cuban-American Artists of Western New York* – was curated by Bosch and held at the Burchfield-Penney Center in Buffalo, New York. The works on display inspired Gracia to assemble his own collection of Cuban-American art. As his collection expanded, he added Argentinian artists.

Gracia's interest in Argentinian paintings is linked to his wife, Norma, who was born in Argentina. Yet Gracia's broadening collection also relates to his scholarly focus on Argentinian writer, Jorge Lu s Borges. Soon, a traveling exhibition of paintings by leading Argentinian artists was organized and Gracia authored the catalogue, *Painting Borges: Philosophy Interpreting Art Interpreting Literature* (2012). As a consequence, the exhibition on view here at Binghamton University also commemorates the gift of Argentinian paintings featured in Gracia's Borges project.

Although Bosch's collection focuses on Cuban-American work, it also includes Mexican-American, Chilean and 19th-century American art. But here, Cuban-American work is lent to complement the Gracias' gift. As a Cuban-American art historian, Bosch's publications include books and articles on the Cuban-American artists featured in this exhibition. Since 1990, she has been teaching courses on Latin American Art at SUNY, Geneseo, SUNY Cortland, Brandeis University and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Hence, Bosch's collection reflects her life as a teacher/scholar and her identity as a Cuban-born American.

In 2006, as part of a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar, Gracia and Bosch, along with Isabel  lvarez Borland, a scholar of Cuban-American literature, organized exhibitions and publications reflecting the topic of the seminar: "Negotiating Identities in Art, Literature, and Philosophy: Cuban Americans and American Culture." To document the lives of artists studied in the seminar, Gracia conducted a series of interviews, recorded on videotape that are now part of the Cuban-American Archive in the Smithsonian Institution.

As Gracia and Bosch have collected art over decades, their scholarly and personal friendships with the artists have formed a network of associations. Therefore, their collections should be understood as a record of lives lived and experiences recounted. This exhibition thus invites visitors to share in the lives of those whose work is on view here. The artists in this exhibition explore their emotions, experiences and concerns which, in turn, engage with philosophy, literature, and the history of art and religion. Identity, spirituality and politics thus coexist in these works as the range of subjects and styles reflect a diversity of personal and artistic interests. These works, as assembled by Bosch and Gracia, enable visitors to engage in a dialogue with collectors and artists, their intellectual and creative impulses.

Lynette Bosch, SUNY Distinguished Professor, SUNY, Geneseo



Alberto Rey (Cuban, b. 1960) *Doubting of St. Thomas*, 2009. Oil on plaster on canvas over wood, 19 x 33 in.



Maurizio Nizzero (Argentinian, b. 1958) *Tadeo Cruz's Biography*, 2009. Ink and coffee on paper, 17 1/3 x 29 in.



Maurizio Nizzero (Argentinian, b. 1958) *The Gospel According to Mark*, 2009. Ink and coffee on paper, 21 x 33 1/2 in.