

JUAN A. CRUZ

A RETROSPECTIVE





JUAN A. CRUZ

A RETROSPECTIVE

This catalogue was published on the occasion of the exhibition *Juan A. Cruz: A Retrospective*
Organized by DJ Hellerman and on view at the Everson Museum of Art, May 4 – August 4, 2019

Copyright Everson Museum of Art, 2019
Library of Congress Control Number: 2019946139

ISBN 978-0-9978968-3-1

Catalogue design: Ariana Dibble
Photo credits: DJ Hellerman

Cover image: Juan Cruz, *Manchas*, 1986, oil on canvas, 48 x 72 inches, Everson Museum of Art;
Gift of Mr. John Dietz, 86.89

Inside front image by Dave Revette. Inside back image by Julie Herman.

Everson Museum of Art
401 Harrison Street
Syracuse, NY 13202
www.everson.org



LENDERS TO THE EXHIBITION

Honorable Minna R. Buck
Stephen and Betty Carpenter
The Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman Foundation
The Gifford Foundation
Laurence Hoefler
Melanie and David Littlejohn
Onondaga Community College
Neva and Richard Pilgrim
Punto de Contacto – Point of Contact
Samuel H. Sage
Dirk and Carol Sonneborn
Martin Yenawine

FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Spanning five decades, *Juan A. Cruz: A Retrospective* presents the work of one of Syracuse's most beloved artists. Juan Cruz settled in Syracuse in the 1970s and quickly established himself as an important part of the local community. He has designed and painted numerous murals throughout the city, taught hundreds of children and teens how to communicate their ideas through art, and assumed the role of mentor and friend to too many to count. Juan's art, and very person, are part of the fabric of Syracuse, and it is an honor to be able to share his accomplishments with the world through his exhibition at the Everson Museum of Art.

Juan A. Cruz: A Retrospective could not have happened without the hard work of many people. DJ Hellerman, the Everson's Curator of Art and Programs, conceived and organized this complex exhibition, along with the expert help of Assistant Curator Steffi Chappell. Their task was daunting—reviewing thousands of works of art in order to come up with a tight exhibition that showcases the depth and breadth of Juan's voracious artistic endeavors. Kimberly Griffiths, Liz Bryson, and Caitlin Albright all worked hard to make Juan's art accessible to many groups, including the Everson Teen Arts Council, which had the privilege of collaborating with the artist on a new mural. Garth Johnson and Ariana Dibble ensured that the materials created in conjunction with the exhibition, including this catalog, expressed the vitality and joy that Juan himself embodies. And lastly, the exhibitions team, led by Karen Convertino, did a marvelous job of putting all the elements together for an amazing show.

This exhibition would not be possible without the generosity of many individuals who selflessly allowed the Everson to borrow their prized works for the duration of the exhibition. It is not easy to live with blank walls for several months, but our gracious lenders did in order to share their works with the people of Syracuse and beyond. Additionally, special thanks are due to Larry Hoefler, who was instrumental to the initial stages of planning this exhibition, as was Tere Paniagua, Executive Director of the Office of Cultural Engagement for the Hispanic Community at Syracuse University and La Casita Cultural Center. Tere also provided the Spanish translations for both the exhibition and this catalog.

Last, and not least, thank you to Juan Cruz for bringing our community together and being a ray of sunshine every day.

Elizabeth Dunbar
Director and CEO
Everson Museum of Art

PRÓLOGO Y AGRADECIMIENTOS

Al cubrir cinco décadas, *Juan A Cruz: Una retrospectiva* presenta la obra de uno de los artistas más queridos de Syracuse. Juan Cruz se radicó en Syracuse a mediados de los 1970s y rápidamente se estableció como parte importante de la comunidad local. Ha diseñado y pintado numerosos murales a través de la ciudad, instruido a cientos de niños, niñas y adolescentes en cómo comunicar sus ideas a través del arte, y asumido un papel de mentor y amigo para más personas de las que podemos contar. El arte de Juan y su persona son parte de la fibra de Syracuse, y es un honor poder compartir sus logros con el mundo a través de esta exhibición en el Museo de Arte Everson.

Juan A Cruz: Una retrospectiva no hubiese sido posible sin la increíble labor de muchas personas. DJ Hellerman, curador de arte y programas del Everson, concibió y organizó esta compleja exhibición con la ayuda experta de la curadora asistente, Steffi Chappell, Su encomienda era formidable—revisando miles de piezas para presentar una muestra que reflejara la profundidad y amplitud del trabajo voraz de Juan. Kimberly Griffiths, Liz Bryson y Caitlin Albright trabajaron arduamente para hacer la obra de Juan accesible a muchos grupos como el Consejo de Adolescentes en el Arte del Everson, cuyos miembros tuvieron el privilegio de colaborar con el artista en un nuevo mural. Garth Johnson y Ariana Dibble se aseguraron de que los materiales creados para esta exhibición, incluyendo este catálogo, expresaran la vitalidad y gozo que Juan personifica. Finalmente, el equipo de exhibiciones bajo el liderazgo de Karen Convertino, hizo un trabajo maravilloso colocando y uniendo todos los elementos para una muestra asombrosa.

Esta exhibición contó además con la generosidad de muchos individuos que desinteresadamente le prestaron al Everson las preciadas obras de sus colecciones para exhibirse durante el tiempo de la muestra. No es fácil vivir entre paredes vacías por varios meses, pero estas amabilísimas personas lo hicieron compartiendo sus tesoros con la comunidad de Syracuse y más allá. En adición, agradecemos especialmente a Larry Hoefler, quien fue instrumental en las etapas iniciales de planificación de esta exhibición, y a Tere Paniagua, directora ejecutiva de la Oficina de Encuentro Cultural con la Comunidad Hispana en Syracuse University, y del Centro Cultural La Casita. Tere además produjo las traducciones al español para la exhibición y el catálogo.

Por último, agradecemos a Juan Cruz por haber unido a nuestra comunidad, por ser un rayo de sol cada día.

Elizabeth Dunbar
Directora & CEO
Museo de Arte Everson



JUN 1912

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

For the past fifty years, I have expressed myself through painting, drawing, and sculpting. My work is my history and my life. They are my footprints, reflecting the paths I have taken in this world, and my wings, flying my soul out of my environment.

My heart provides direction, and I paint experiences and feelings, scenarios of life and death, and the relationships between people and animals and the world. I celebrate my emotions, critically examining anything that happens to or affects me. I paint scenes that are symbolic of life events, interpreting them in my own way with my own characters.

Today, I feel as strong as I felt on the day that I began painting. My universe of colors and forms is still within me. I am still motivated to explore worlds—the world that surrounds me and my internal world. I work to extract all that I hold inside and leave it on a canvas so that everyone can see and feel what lies within the heart of Juan Alberto Cruz.

DECLARACIÓN DEL ARTISTA

Por los últimos cincuenta años, me he expresado a través de la pintura, el dibujo y la escultura. Mi obra es mi historia y mi vida. Son mis huellas, reflejando los caminos que he andado en este mundo, y mis alas, el vuelo de mi alma escapando de mi ambiente

El corazón me dirige, y pinto experiencias y sentimientos, escenarios de la vida y la muerte, y las relaciones entre personas, animales y el mundo. Celebro mis emociones, examinando críticamente cualquier cosa que me ocurre o me afecta. Pinto escenas que simbolizan eventos de la vida, interpretándolos a mi manera con mis propios personajes.

Hoy, me siento tan fuerte como me sentí el día que empecé a pintar. Mi universo de colores y formas habita aún dentro de mí. Sigo motivado a explorar mundos —el mundo que me rodea y mi mundo interior. Trabajo para extraer todo lo que guardo por dentro y dejarlo sobre una tela para que todo el mundo lo vea y sienta lo que descansa en el corazón de Juan Alberto Cruz.

INTRODUCTION

Syracuse-based artist Juan Alberto Cruz (b. 1941, Puerto Rico) combines rich symbolism with a bold and colorful abstract style to create work infused with his Caribbean heritage. Moving from Puerto Rico to Manhattan's Lower East Side and subsequent travels to Spain, Mexico, Cuba, and Central America have had a major impact on Cruz's work, which reflects a mixture of his cultural heritage and life experiences. From his earliest portrait paintings to recent abstract collages, Cruz uses the emotional realities of his past to articulate his feelings about economic inequality and systematic injustice.

As a child, Cruz taught himself to draw by copying the comic strips from discarded newspapers onto brown paper grocery bags, and later he drew portraits of everyday people that he sold for pocket change on the street. It was not until his thirties, when he enrolled in an art program led by then-Everson Director Jim Harithas that Cruz learned art could be more than replicating the world around him. Harithas taught Cruz how to paint and introduced him to a world of modern artists, which led Cruz's drawings and paintings to evolve into a complex amalgamation of figurative and abstract forms. For the past five decades, Cruz's boundless creativity and production has led him to compile a massive body of work.

Since moving to Syracuse in 1975, Cruz has made a significant impact on the local community. He has painted numerous murals throughout the city, including on the Onondaga Commons building, in Skiddy Park, and several in the Near West Side. He also completed a new mural with the Everson Teen Arts Council. Cruz served as artist-in-residence for the Near West Side Initiative for five years and ran the Patch-Up Studio, a community center that provided children and adults with a safe space to make and learn about art. By choosing to live and work in Syracuse, Cruz has brought together a multigenerational community inspired by his public art initiatives and workshops.

INTRODUCCIÓN

Juan Alberto Cruz (n. 1941, Puerto Rico), artista residente de Syracuse, NY, combina un rico simbolismo con estilo abstracto de color fuerte, atrevido, impregnado con su herencia caribeña. Su traslado de Puerto Rico al Lower East Side de Manhattan en la ciudad de Nueva York y subsecuentes viajes a España, México, Cuba y Centroamérica influenciaron grandemente en su obra, donde se entremezclan su herencia cultural y vivencias. Desde sus primeros retratos hasta su más reciente obra en collage, Cruz utiliza las realidades emocionales de su pasado para articular sus sentimientos sobre la desigualdad económica y la injusticia sistémica.

Desde niño, Cruz aprendió por sí solo a dibujar copiando tirillas cómicas de periódicos viejos. Las dibujaba en bolsas de papel estraza. Luego empezó a dibujar retratos que vendía en la calle por unos centavos. No fue hasta llegar a la edad de sus treinta que se matriculó en un programa de arte dirigido por el entonces director del Museo Everson, Jim Harithas. Ahí Cruz aprendió que el arte podía ser mucho más que replicar el mundo a su alrededor. Harithas le enseñó a pintar y lo introdujo a un mundo de artistas modernos, lo cual llevó sus dibujos y pinturas a evolucionar hacia una compleja amalgama de figuración y formas abstractas. Por las últimas cinco décadas, su producción y creatividad ilimitadas lo han llevado a compilar una cantidad masiva de obra.

Desde que se estableció en Syracuse, en el 1975, Cruz ha tenido un impacto significativo en la comunidad local. Ha pintado numerosos murales a través de la ciudad, en el edificio de Onondaga Commons, en Skiddy Park y varios lugares del West Side. También ha creado un nuevo mural en colaboración con el Consejo de Arte Juvenil del Museo. Cruz sirvió como artista-en-residencia del Near West Side Initiative por cinco años y dirigió el Patch-Up Studio, un centro donde jóvenes y adultos podían aprender sobre arte y hacer arte. Al establecerse en Syracuse, Cruz ha unido a múltiples generaciones de una comunidad inspirada por sus iniciativas de arte público y su enseñanza.



Untitled, 2018
Oil on canvas, 24 x 24 inches
Courtesy of the artist



Untitled, ca. 1990s
Wood, 50 x 46½ inches
Collection of Hon. Minna R. Buck



Untitled, 1980
Redwood, 21 1/2 x 9 inches
Courtesy of the artist

"Painting gives me a headache, sculpting makes me relax."

-Juan Cruz

While Cruz views painting as a strenuous mental activity, the process of sculpting relaxes his mind. His sculptures range from small tabletop figures to massive public art installations in bronze, steel, and wood. To make the black sculptures seen here, Cruz began with pine boards and used a jigsaw to cut them into abstract shapes of different sizes. He then assembled the wood pieces together as if constructing a three-dimensional puzzle. Cruz does not intend for the sculptures to resemble recognizable forms or structures, instead letting the individual shapes of wood dictate the outcome as he fuses them together.

"Las pinturas me dan dolor de cabeza, pero la escultura me relaja."

-Juan Cruz

Cruz percibe la pintura como una actividad mental trabajosa, mientras que el proceso de esculpir relaja su mente. Sus esculturas comprenden desde pequeñas figuras hasta masivas instalaciones de arte público en bronce, acero y madera. Para crear las esculturas negras que se presentan aquí, Cruz empezó con tablas de pino y utilizó un serrucho para cortarlas en formas abstractas de diferentes tamaños. Entonces las organizó como un rompecabezas tridimensional. Cruz no pretende que sus esculturas se parezcan a ninguna forma o estructura reconocible, sino que le permite a cada forma de la madera dictar el resultado según las va uniendo.



Equilibrium #3, ca. 2010
Wood, 23 x 18½ x 9 inches
Courtesy of the artist



Untitled, ca. 2010
Wood, 26¼ x 13 x 8 inches
Collection of the Gifford Foundation



Black Wings (Alas negra), 2012
Oil on canvas, 30½ x 30 inches
Courtesy of the artist



Untitled, ca. 2000
Oil on canvas, 30½ x 30 inches
Courtesy of the artist

In 1971, Cruz enrolled in an art program led by then-Everson Director Jim Harithas in Auburn, New York, and learned about the history of art for the first time. Already familiar with American realists such as Andrew Wyeth and Norman Rockwell, Cruz had never before seen abstract work by European artists. Harithas introduced Cruz to paintings by Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse, and he began independently researching Marc Chagall, Joan Miró, and Salvador Dalí. As he began learning about these artists and their modern art styles of Cubism, Futurism, and Surrealism, Cruz grew restless with his realistic portrait and landscape paintings. He no longer felt satisfied painting just what he observed and instead needed to paint what he felt.

En el 1971, Cruz se matriculó en un programa de arte a cargo del entonces director del Museo Everson, Jim Harithas, en Auburn, NY, y aprendió sobre la historia del arte por primera vez. Ya familiarizado con exponentes del realismo en los Estados Unidos como Andrew Wyeth y Norman Rockwell, Cruz nunca había visto la obra abstracta de artistas europeos. Harithas lo introdujo a la pintura de Pablo Picasso y Henri Matisse, y luego por su cuenta comenzó a estudiar a Marc Chagall, Joan Miró y Salvador Dalí. Según comenzaba a aprender sobre estos artistas y sus estilos de arte moderno como el cubismo, futurismo y surrealismo, Cruz se empezó a sentir insatisfecho con sus retratos y paisajes realistas. Ya no se conformaba pintando lo que observaba. Necesitaba pintar lo que sentía.



Untitled, 2010
Oil on canvas, 30 x 30 inches
Collection of Melanie and David Littlejohn

After living in Syracuse for almost thirty years, Cruz moved back to Puerto Rico in 2004. While building his new life in Puerto Rico, however, Cruz realized that many of the good things he remembered about his homeland were now gone. In July of 2008, Cruz returned to Syracuse to restore a mural he painted on Shonnard Street in the early 1990s with community members. On that trip, Cruz realized that Central New York felt as much of a home for him as Puerto Rico was, and moved back to Syracuse that winter.

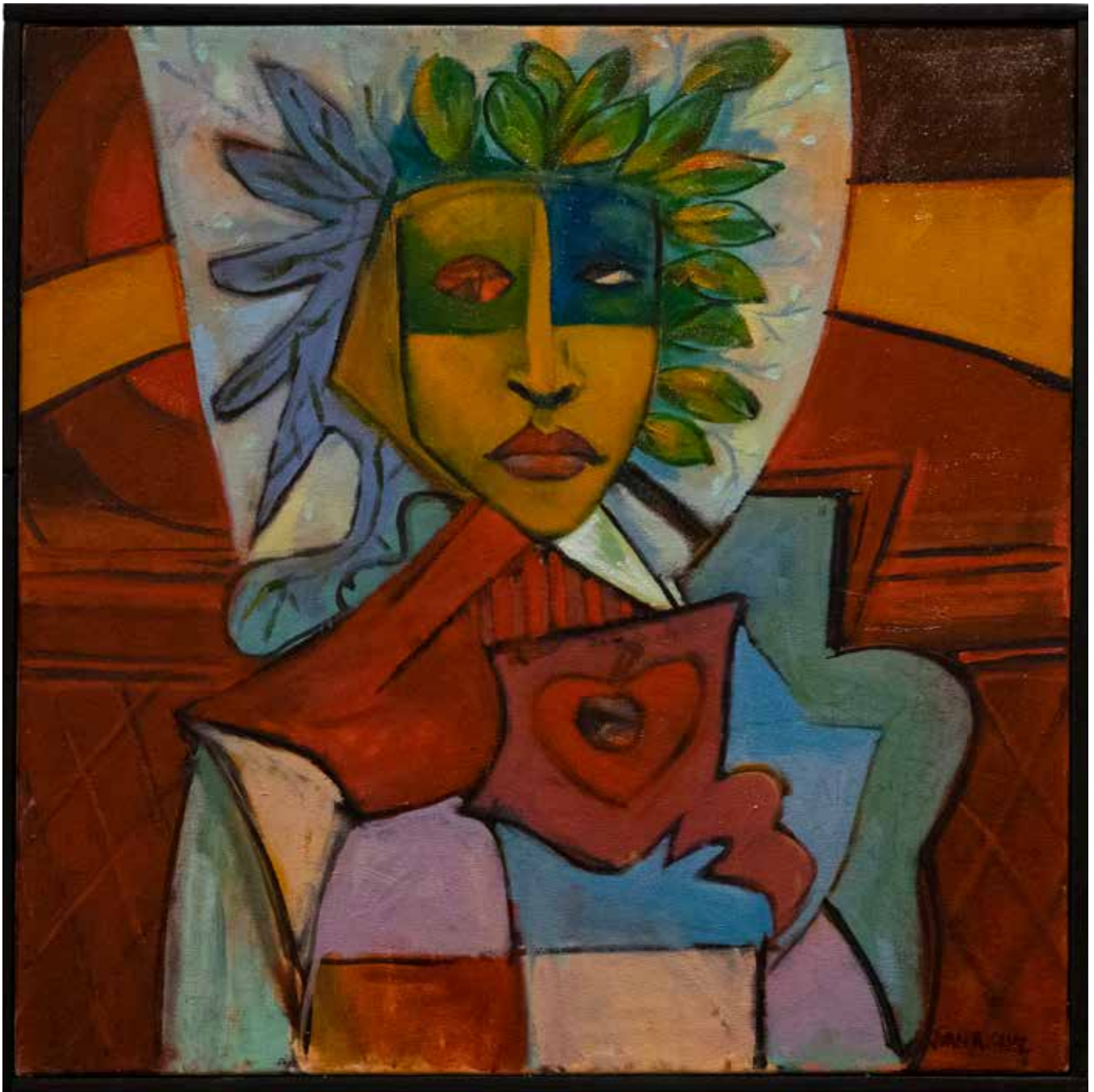
Painted in the years after leaving Puerto Rico, this work explores Cruz's nostalgia for a home that no longer exists and his conflicting feelings of belonging to two very different worlds. The composition is similar to a painting he made while living in Puerto Rico titled *Roots*, which addressed Cruz's Caribbean heritage and culture. While he painted *Roots* with his typical vibrant colors, Cruz chose to use only black, white, and greys for this painting, perhaps in reference to leaving Puerto Rico behind for his adopted home in Syracuse.

Luego de vivir en Syracuse por casi treinta años, Cruz regresó a Puerto Rico en el 2004. Sin embargo, mientras construía una nueva vida en la Isla, se percató de que los mejores recuerdos que tenía de su tierra, eran cosas que ya no existían. En julio de 2008, Cruz regresó a Syracuse para restaurar el mural que había pintado en la calle Shonnard, a principios de los años '90, junto a miembros de la comunidad. Ahí comprendió que Nueva York Central ya era un hogar para él, tanto como lo era Puerto Rico, y ese invierno decidió mudarse de vuelta a Syracuse.

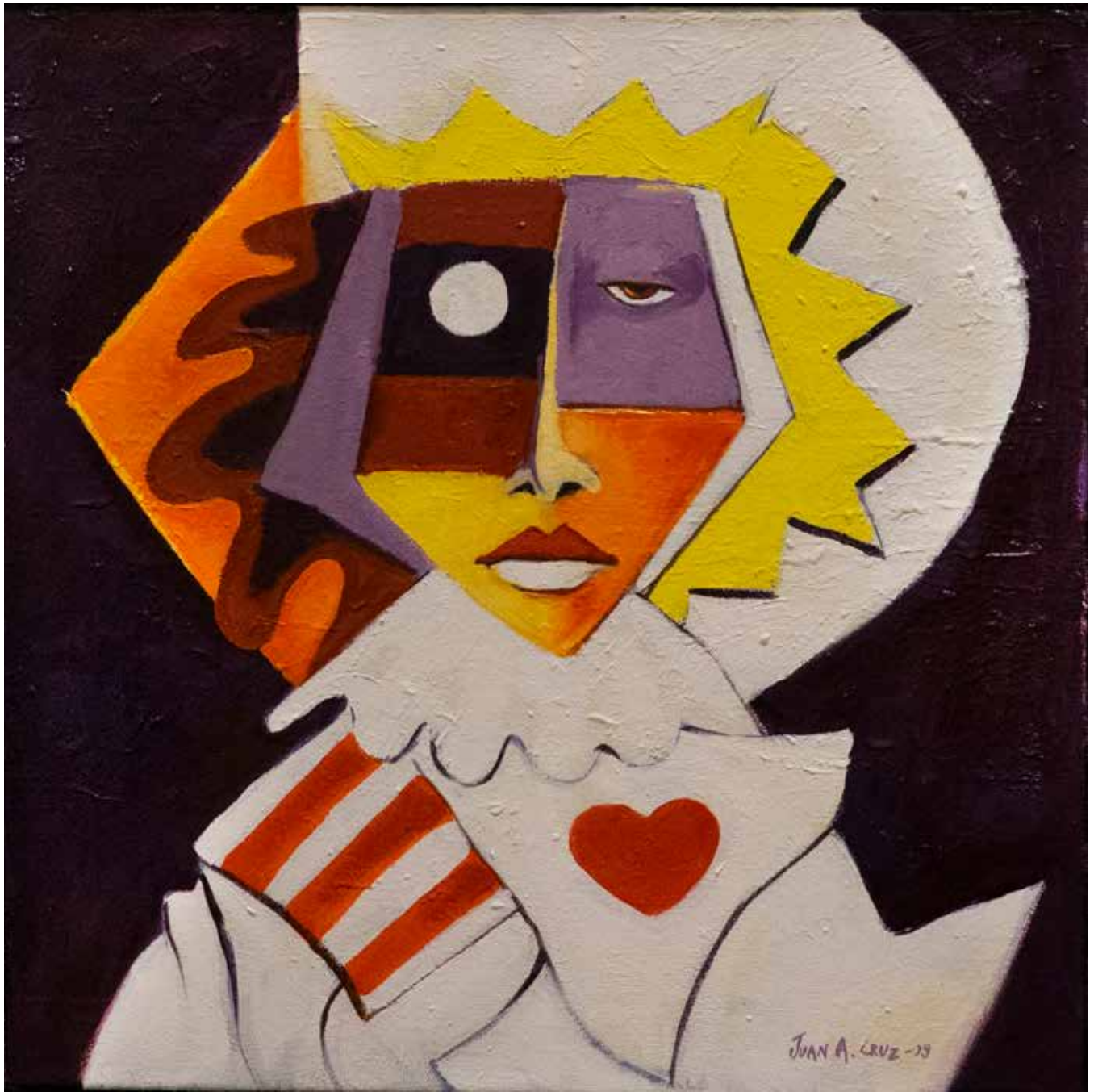
Realizada durante los años luego de dejar atrás su isla de Puerto Rico, esta obra explora la sensación de nostalgia del artista, añorando un hogar que ha no existe y el conflicto de pertenecer a dos mundos muy distintos. Esta composición es similar a una obra de Cruz hecha mientras vivía en Puerto Rico, titulada *Roots* (Raíces), que abordaba temas relacionados a la herencia y la cultura caribeña. Cruz pintó sus Raíces con los colores vibrantes que lo caracterizan, pero aquí escogió utilizar solamente el blanco, negro y gris, una posible referencia a la vida que adoptó en Syracuse.



Untitled, 2010
Oil on board, 96 x 96 inches
Courtesy of the artist



Queen Series (Serie reina), 2008
Oil on canvas, 24½ x 24 inches
Collection of the Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman Foundation



Queen Series (Serie reina), 2009
Oil on canvas, 19½ x 20 inches
Collection of the Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman Foundation



Mask II (Antifaz II), 2009
Oil on canvas, 42 x 42 inches
Collection of the Gifford Foundation



In the Kingdom #2 (En el reino #2), 2010
Oil on canvas, 47½ x 47½ inches
Courtesy of the artist



Untitled, 2009
Oil on canvas, 48 x 56 inches
Collection of the Gifford Foundation



Let's Celebrate (Celebremos), 2000
Oil on canvas, 44½ x 53¾ inches
Collection of Onondaga Community College



Sorcerers and Kings (Brujos y reyes), 1988
Oil on canvas, 38 x 48¼ inches
Collection of Melanie and David Littlejohn



Barrio Juana Matos, 2006-2007
PrismaColor pencils on board, 15½ x 15 inches
Courtesy of the artist



A Dog Life (Perra vida), 1989
Oil on canvas, 24½ x 95 inches
Courtesy of the artist



"No matter how abstract I try to be, the human figure is always there."

-Juan Cruz

For the first several decades of his life, Cruz believed that art had to be representational and realistic. He taught himself how to draw by studying and copying the world around him, beginning with comic strips in the daily newspaper and moving on to portraits of his family and neighbors, as well as landscapes. Although he began exploring abstraction in the 1970s, elements of representation have never left Cruz's work, particularly allusions to the figure. Even his most abstract works often contain facial features or other human or animal body parts. Cruz's continued exploration points to his lifelong fascination with the figure.

"No importa cuán abstracto trato de ser, la figura humana siempre está ahí."

-Juan Cruz

Durante las primeras décadas de su vida, Cruz creía que el arte tenía que ser representativo y realista. Aprendió por sí solo a dibujar estudiando y copiando el mundo que le rodeaba, empezando con las tirillas cómicas en los diarios y luego haciendo retratos de su familia y vecinos, así como paisajes. Aunque comenzó a explorar la abstracción en los años '70, los elementos de la representación nunca se excluyeron de la obra de Cruz, particularmente alusiones a la figura. Aún sus obras más abstractas contienen rasgos de la figura humana o animal. La exploración continua de Cruz apunta a su fascinación con la figura.



Carousel, ca. 2010
Oil on canvas, 48½ x 60 inches
Courtesy of the artist



The Spirits of my Night (Los espíritus de mi noche), 2013
Oil on canvas, 49 x 48 inches
Courtesy of the artist



The Monk (El monje), 1985
Oil on canvas, 36¼ x 48 inches
Courtesy of Laurence Hoefler

"I can't tell you what it means. You need to decide."

-Juan Cruz

Cruz draws on his life experiences and cultural background for subject matter, but he is quick to acknowledge that his work can—and should—mean different things to different people. Whether addressing politics, religion, his Puerto Rican heritage, or his travels to Spain, Mexico, and Central America, Cruz creates narratives that he purposefully leaves open to interpretation. His work contains elements of violence and anger as well as compassion and love, alongside dashes of intelligence, wit, and humor. Cruz hopes viewers will find and determine these meanings for themselves.

"No puedo explicarle lo que significa. Usted puede que decidirlo."

-Juan Cruz

Los temas de la obra de Cruz salen de sus propias experiencias de vida y trasfondo cultural, pero él reconoce que su obra puede—y debe—significar diferentes cosas para diferentes personas. Ya sea abordando temas de política, religión, su herencia puertorriqueña, o sus viajes por España, México y Centroamérica, Cruz crea narrativas que a propósito deja abiertas a la interpretación. Su obra contiene elementos de violencia y rabia, así como amor y compasión, junto con toques de inteligencia, ingenio y humor. Cruz espera que cada persona determine estos significados para sí.



The Kingdom of this World (El reino de este mundo), 2011
Oil on canvas, 61 x 60¼ inches
Courtesy of the artist



Untitled, 1990
Oil on canvas, 73 x 97 inches
Courtesy of the artist



Nothing Changes (Nada cambia), 2012
Oil on canvas, 54½ x 60¼ inches
Collection of Samuel H. Sage

"Once you give them a title, they relax. I don't want them to relax."

-Juan Cruz

Cruz often deliberately leaves his paintings and collages untitled as a way to allow viewers to interpret the work themselves. He believes that by titling a work, its meaning becomes too direct. Instead, Cruz asks viewers to connect with his works' imagery, colors, and patterns. One's personal experiences may lead to different interpretations or ideas than Cruz intended, but he embraces this possibility.

"Una vez que se les pone nombre, se relajan. No quiero que se relajen."

-Juan Cruz

Cruz frecuentemente deja sus pinturas y collages sin título para permitir que los espectadores interpreten la obra a su manera. Él cree que, al titular la obra, su significado se vuelve demasiado directo. En vez, Cruz invita a que cada persona encuentre su propia conexión con las imágenes, colores y patrones de su obra. Las experiencias personales de cada cual pueden llevar a interpretaciones o ideas diferentes a las del artista, y él consiente esa posibilidad.



Untitled, 1985
Oil on canvas, 40½ x 48½ inches
Courtesy of Laurence Hoefler



Untitled, 2009
Oil on canvas, 30¼ x 30 inches
Collection of the Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman Foundation



In the Kingdom #1 (En el reino #1), 2011
Oil on canvas, 48½ x 47¾ inches
Courtesy of the artist

In the 1980s, Cruz received a series of grants enabling him to travel to Spain, Mexico, Central America, and Cuba. Troubled by the history of violence in the United States, Cruz viewed travel as a way to not only learn about art from other cultures, but also to search for a country where life might be more peaceful. He discovered, however, that violence permeated every society at some level, regardless of geographic location. The imagery in Cruz's paintings often reflects that violence, as well as his continued search for a more serene life. Figures with prominent teeth and open mouths scream out from the canvas, while others clench their teeth in silent, painful expressions.

En los años '80, Cruz recibió una serie de becas que le permitieron viajar a España, México, Centroamérica y Cuba. Preocupado por problemas de violencia en los Estados Unidos, Cruz viajó como una forma de no sólo aprender sobre el arte y otras cultural, sino de buscar un lugar donde la vida fuera más tranquila. Descubrió, sin embargo, que la violencia de alguna manera permea toda la sociedad, sin importar la localización geográfica. Las imágenes en las pinturas de Cruz frecuentemente reflejan la violencia, así como su búsqueda continua de una vida más serena. Las figuras con dientes protuberantes y bocas abiertas gritan desde la tela, mientras otras aprietan los dientes en expresiones silentes y dolorosas.



Untitled, 2018
Oil on canvas, 49¼ x 59½ inches
Courtesy of the artist

Manchas, or stains, addresses the violence that historically accompanies colonialism, the practice of one country occupying another and assuming control over that country's people, often while exploiting the country economically. Brimming with struggling figures, tumultuous movement, and explosions of color, the painting depicts colonialism as an act of racism and greed. Cruz paints colonizers leaving a stain of violence in their wake as they move from territory to territory, appropriating land and decimating the heritage of an entire population.

Esta obra aborda temas de la violencia que históricamente acompaña el colonialismo, la práctica de una nación que ocupa otra y asume el control sobre los habitantes del territorio ocupado mientras se explota económicamente ese territorio. Rebosante de figuras abatidas, movimiento tumultuoso y explosiones de color, la pintura presenta el colonialismo con un acto de racismo y avaricia. Cruz pinta a los colonizadores dejando una mancha de violencia a su paso según se trasladan de un territorio a otro, apropiándose de la tierra y destruyendo la herencia cultural de una población entera.



Manchas, 1986
Oil on canvas, 48 x 72 inches
Everson Museum of Art; Gift of Mr. John Dietz



Salad Bowl (Ensaladera), 2010
Acrylic and collage on wove paper, 24 x 29 inches
Collection of Neva and Richard Pilgrim



Untitled, 2018
Mixed media, 64 x 64 inches
Courtesy of the artist

"The paintings felt stiff and boring, with no movement or life."

-Juan Cruz

Around 2010, frustrated and needing a shift in his artistic process, Cruz began cutting up his canvases and collaging the pieces back together. He views the process as similar to the dissections that students perform in science classes, cutting open a creature to see what hides inside its skin, what gives the creature its identity. Dismantling one's own work could be viewed as an act of violence, but Cruz believes it to be a way of breathing new life into work. He also employs a very deliberate approach. He turns the paintings over so as not to see exactly what and where he cuts, minimizing his emotional attachment to preserving certain forms or shapes in the original painting. After cutting and initially reassembling, Cruz climbs atop a ladder, which allows him to see the full collage from a distance as it comes together. He moves the individual collage pieces around with a stick until he is satisfied with their arrangement, and then glues the composition together.

"Las pinturas se sentían tiesas y aburridas, sin movimiento ni vida."

-Juan Cruz

Alrededor del 2010, frustrado y necesitado de un cambio en su proceso artístico, Cruz comienza a cortar sus telas y a reorganizar sus pinturas. Según él, este proceso se asemeja a lo que sería abrir un animal, tal como lo hacen los estudiantes de ciencia en sus clases, seccionando para ver lo que hay debajo de la piel, lo que le da identidad al animal. Desmantelar su propia obra puede verse como un acto de violencia, pero Cruz cree que es una forma de darle nueva vida a la obra. El acto es muy intencional. Voltea las pinturas para no ver exactamente qué o dónde cortar, minimizando su apego emocional a querer preservar ciertas formas o figuras en la pintura original. Luego de cortar y comenzar a reunificar, Cruz se sube a una escalera que le permite ver el collage completo a distancia según se va armando. El artista mueve las piezas individuales del collage con una vara hasta que está satisfecho con la composición, y entonces las pega.



Untitled, 2015
Collage, 57½ x 57¾ inches
Courtesy of the artist



The Girl in the Red Jacket (La chica de la chaqueta roja), 2012
Four collages, 21½ x 17½ inches each
Collection of Samuel H. Sage



Map (Mapa), 2015
Mixed media collage, 9½ x 9½ inches
Collection of Punto de Contacto – Point of Contact

Constructed from the cut up pieces of one painting, *Los juguitos comelones* is Cruz's first collage, made about ten years before the artist began collaging in earnest. The title, which translates to *Games People Play*, refers to people who attempt to pass off disparaging comments as jokes. The collage's uneven edges purposefully extend beyond its support, pushing the boundaries of convention.

Construida a base de piezas recortadas de una pintura, *Los juguitos comelones*, es el primer collage hecho por Cruz, alrededor de diez años antes de comenzar a trabajar el collage seriamente. El título se alude a las personas que tratan de pasar un comentario despectivo por alto como si fuera un chiste. Los bordes dispares de este collage se extienden a propósito más allá del fondo que los sostiene, presionando sobre los límites de lo convencional.



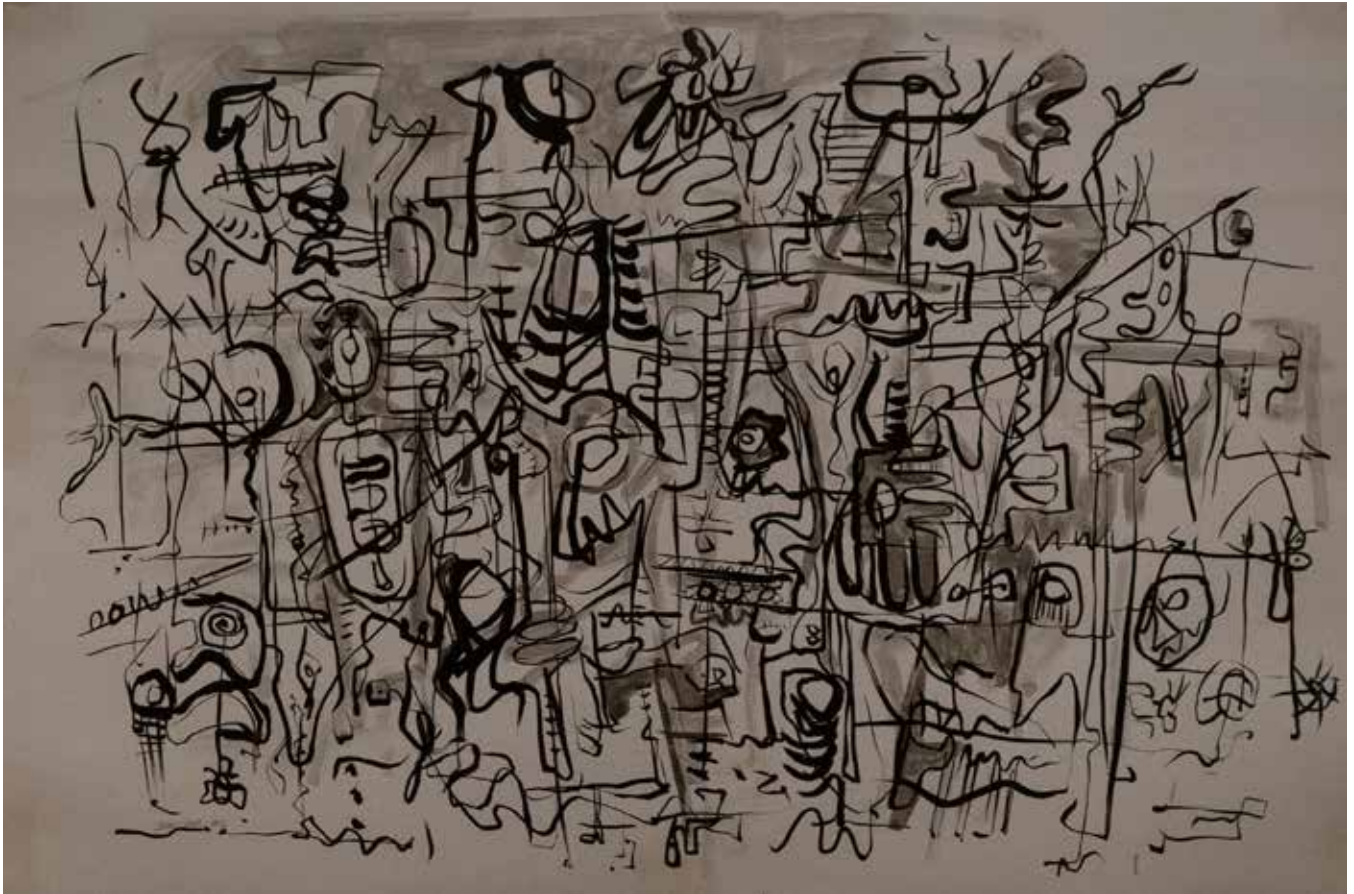
Games People Play (Los juguitos comelones), 1998
Acrylic and collage, 24 x 30 inches
Collection of Stephen and Betty Carpenter



Venus Fly Trap (Venus atrapamoscas), 2006
Oil pastel on wove paper, 30¼ x 38¼ inches
Collection of Dirk and Carol Sonneborn



Complications (Complicaciones), 1989
Ink on paper, 19¾ x 19½ inches
Collection of Dirk and Carol Sonneborn



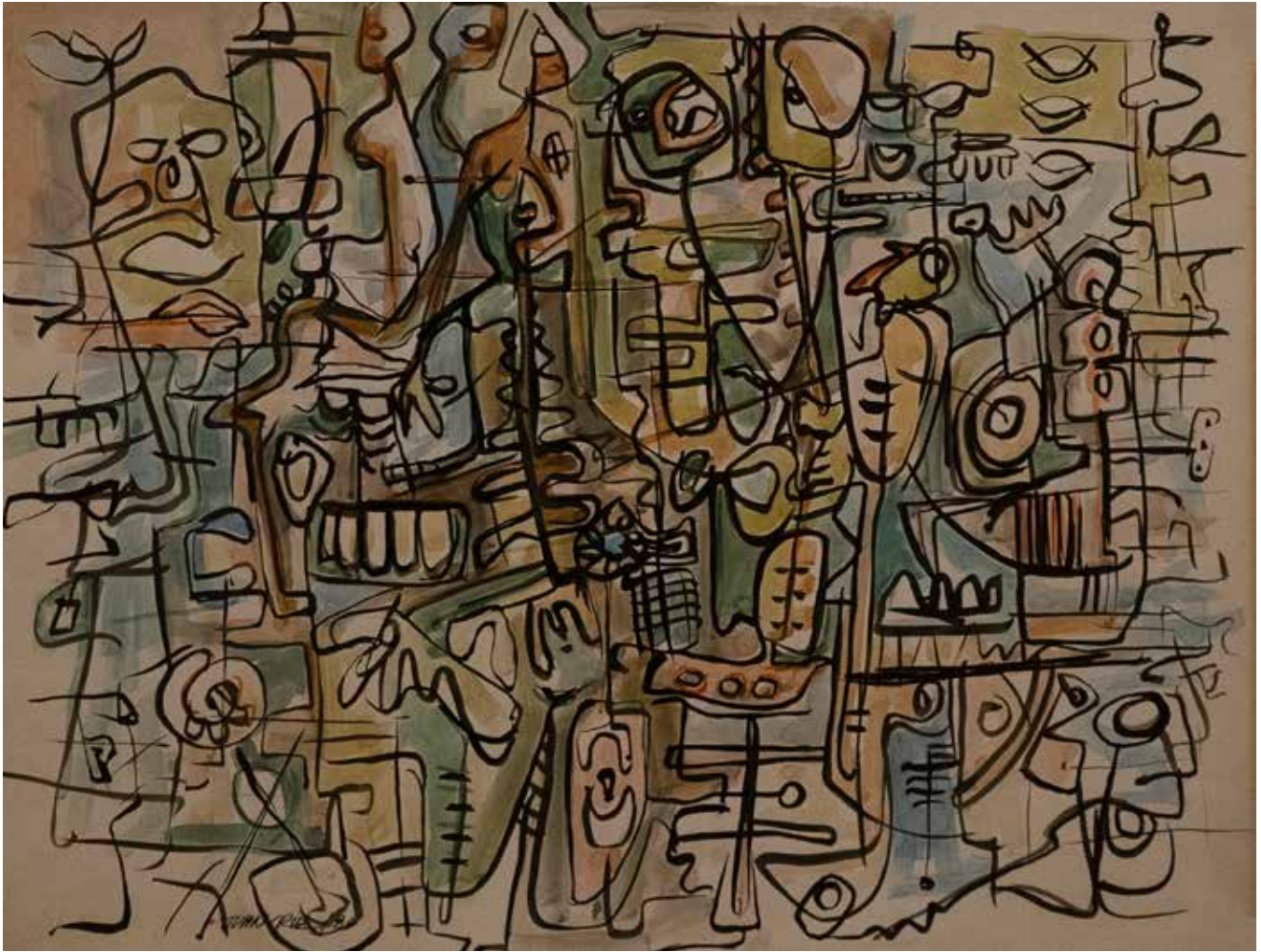
Symbols (Simbolos), 1986
Ink on paper, 23 x 35¼ inches
Collection of Martin Yenawine



Sanctuary (Santuario), 1986
Ink on paper, 22½ x 35 inches
Collection of Martin Yenawine



In Search of Tranquility 1 (En búsqueda de la tranquilidad 1), 1986
Watercolor on paper, 17 x 23 inches
Collection of Martin Yenawine



In Search of Tranquility 2 (En búsqueda de la tranquilidad 2), 1986
Watercolor on paper, 17 x 23 inches
Collection of Martin Yencow

"Every drawing is part of the story."

-Juan Cruz

Sketching and drawing are integral to Cruz's artistic process. Every painting begins with sketches and small drawings that inform the final composition. Cruz imagines his paintings as books and the sketches as the pages that lead to each book's conclusion. He cannot reach the conclusion without first making the sketches, which determine the paintings' final colors, patterns, and forms. Cruz also sketches as a way to keep his mind focused. With endless ideas for paintings running through his mind, sketching allows him to put the thoughts on paper and quiet his brain.

"Todo dibujo es parte de la historia."

-Juan Cruz

Hacer bosquejos y dibujos son parte integral del proceso artístico de Cruz. Toda pintura comienza con bosquejos y pequeños dibujos que informan la composición final. Cruz imagina sus pinturas como libros y los bosquejos como páginas que llevan a la conclusión de cada libro. No puede llegar a la conclusión sin antes hacer bosquejos que determinan los colores finales, patrones y formas de la pintura. Cruz también hace bosquejos para mantener su mente enfocada. Con innumerables ideas pasando por la mente, el bosquejo le permite organizarlas sobre papel y aquietar su mente.



Untitled, 1989
Drawing, 6½ x 11½ inches
Collection of Dirk and Carol Sonneborn



Untitled, 1985
Drawing on paper, 9¼ x 4¼ inches
Courtesy of the artist



Untitled, 1985
Oil on canvas, 48½ x 36 inches
Courtesy of Laurence Hoefler



Untitled, 1988
Acrylic on paper, 29½ x 21¾ inches
Collection of Martin Yenawine



Untitled, 1984
Oil on canvas, 12 x 13¾ inches
Collection of Dirk and Carol Sonneborn

Cruz was not raised to follow a specific religion, but he grew up surrounded by a spiritual family—particularly his grandmother, mother, and sister—and has studied several religious practices, including tenets of Buddhism and astrology. References to different spiritual practices abound in his paintings, such as the upraised palm on the figure in *La santa*, a reference to the practice of palm reading.

Cruz no creció dentro de una religión en particular, pero sí rodeado de una familia espiritual—especialmente su abuela, su madre y su hermana—y ha estudiado varias prácticas religiosas, incluyendo los principios del budismo y la astrología. En su pintura abundan las referencias a diferentes prácticas espirituales, como la palma levantada en la figura de *La santa*, una referencia a la práctica de leer la mano.



The Saint (La santa), 1987
Oil on canvas, 72½ x 36 inches
Courtesy of the artist



Untitled, not dated
Pastel on board, 14½ x 15½ inches
Courtesy of the artist



Untitled, not dated
Drawing, 9¼ x 9¼ inches
Courtesy of Laurence Hoefler

Cruz moved with his family from Puerto Rico to Manhattan's Lower East Side at age five. Cooped up in his family's apartment day after day, Cruz began drawing as a way to pass the time. One of his neighbors purchased multiple daily newspapers from the local market and when he finished reading them, he left them outside of his apartment door. Cruz would sneak down the shared hallway to take the comic sections from each paper back to his apartment where he spent hours teaching himself to draw by endlessly copying the cartoons. With no access to drawing paper, Cruz pulled apart brown paper grocery bags to draw on instead. This skill—using whatever materials were available for art making—is one Cruz has continued to employ throughout his life.

Cruz se mudó con su familia de Puerto Rico al Lower East Side de Manhattan en la ciudad de Nueva York, a la edad de cinco años. Enclaustrado día tras día en el apartamento donde vivían, Cruz comenzó a dibujar para pasar el tiempo. Uno de sus vecinos compraba los periódicos diariamente en el mercado local y cuando terminaba de leerlos, los dejaba afuera en el pasillo frente a la puerta de su apartamento. Cruz iba calladito y se llevaba a su apartamento las secciones de tirillas cómicas de cada periódico para luego pasar largas horas copiando los muñequitos. No tenía papel de dibujo, así que rompía las bolsas de compra, que eran de papel de estraza. Ahí dibujaba. Esta destreza —utilizar cualquier tipo de material disponible para hacer arte—es una que Cruz a seguido empleando a lo largo de su vida.



Harriet Tubman, ca. 1970s
Pencil on paper, 22 x 10 inches
Collection of Martin Yenawine



Untitled, 1975
Oil on canvas, 36½ x 44½ inches
Collection of the Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman Foundation



Untitled, 1977
Oil on canvas, 19 x 21 inches
Courtesy of the artist



Untitled, 1968
Oil on linen, 10½ x 8½ inches
Courtesy of the artist



Untitled, 1977
Watercolor on paper, 11½ x 8½ inches
Courtesy of the artist

El camino, or *The Path*, is one of Cruz's earliest paintings and represents his first foray into abstraction. While the painting is still representational—one can easily discern the landscape—Cruz suggests forms with brush strokes, marks from the edge of a palette knife, and color modeling rather than depicting the trees, shrubbery, and pathway as fully realistic forms.

El camino es una de las primeras pinturas de Cruz y representa su primera incursión en la abstracción. Mientras que la pintura representa un paisaje, Cruz sugiere formas y pinceladas, marcas del borde de la espátula y modelado del color en lugar de árboles, arbustos y un camino como formas enteramente realistas.



The Path (El camino), 1974
Oil on canvas, 21½ x 27¾ inches
Courtesy of Laurence Hoefler



Untitled, 1978
Watercolor on paper, 14¾ x 20 inches
Collection of the Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman Foundation



Untitled, 1980
Watercolor and ink on paper, 9 x 13½ inches
Courtesy of the artist



Untitled, 2017
Pastel on paper, 14 x 12 inches
Courtesy of the artist



Untitled, 1978
Watercolor on paper, 11¼ x 15¼ inches
Courtesy of the artist

CHECKLIST (In order of appearance)

Untitled, 2018
Oil on canvas, 24 x 24 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, ca. 1990s
Wood, 50 x 46½ inches
Collection of Hon. Minna R. Buck

Untitled, 1980
Redwood, 21½ x 9 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Equilibrium #3, ca. 2010
Wood, 23 x 18½ x 9 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, ca. 2010
Wood, 26¼ x 13 x 8 inches
Collection of the Gifford Foundation

Black Wings (Alas negra), 2012
Oil on canvas, 30½ x 30 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, ca. 2000
Oil on canvas, 30½ x 30 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, 2010
Oil on canvas, 30 x 30 inches
Collection of Melanie and David Littlejohn

Untitled, 2010
Oil on board, 96 x 96 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Queen Series (Serie reina), 2008
Oil on canvas, 24½ x 24 inches
Collection of the Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman Foundation

Queen Series (Serie reina), 2009
Oil on canvas, 19½ x 20 inches
Collection of the Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman Foundation

Mask II (Antifaz II), 2009
Oil on canvas, 42 x 42 inches
Collection of the Gifford Foundation

In the Kingdom #2 (En el reino #2), 2010
Oil on canvas, 47½ x 47½ inches
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, 2009
Oil on canvas, 48 x 56 inches
Collection of the Gifford Foundation

Let's Celebrate (Celebremos), 2000
Oil on canvas, 44½ x 53¾ inches
Collection of Onondaga Community College

Sorcerers and Kings (Brujos y reyes), 1988
Oil on canvas, 38 x 48¼ inches
Collection of Melanie and David Littlejohn

Barrio Juana Matos, 2006-2007
Prismacolor pencils on board
15½ x 15 inches
Courtesy of the artist

A Dog Life (Perra vida), 1989
Oil on canvas, 24½ x 95 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Carousel, ca. 2010
Oil on canvas, 48½ x 60 inches
Courtesy of the artist

The Spirits of my Night (Los espiritus de mi noche), 2013
Oil on canvas, 49 x 48 inches
Courtesy of the artist

The Monk (El monje), 1985
Oil on canvas, 36¼ x 48 inches
Courtesy of Laurence Hoefler

The Kingdom of this World (El reino de este mundo), 2011
Oil on canvas, 61 x 60¼ inches
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, 1990
Oil on canvas, 73 x 97 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Nothing Changes (Nada cambia)
2012, Oil on canvas
54½ x 60¼ inches
Collection of Samuel H. Sage

Untitled, 1985
Oil on canvas, 40½ x 48½ inches
Courtesy of Laurence Hoefler

Untitled, 2009
Oil on canvas, 30¼ x 30 inches
Collection of the Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman Foundation

In the Kingdom #1 (En el reino #1), 2011
Oil on canvas, 48½ x 47¾ inches
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, 2018
Oil on canvas, 49¼ x 59½ inches
Courtesy of the artist

Manchas, 1986
Oil on canvas, 48 x 72 inches
Everson Museum of Art
Gift of Mr. John Dietz

Salad Bowl (Ensaladera), 2010
Acrylic and collage on wove paper
24 x 29 inches
Collection of Neva and Richard Pilgrim

Untitled, 2018
Mixed media, 64 x 64 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, 2015
Collage, 57½ x 57¾ inches
Courtesy of the artist

The Girl in the Red Jacket (La chica de la chaqueta roja)
2012, Four collages
21½ x 17½ inches each
Collection of Samuel H. Sage

Map (Mapa), 2015
Mixed media collage
9½ x 9½ inches
Collection of Punto de Contacto –
Point of Contact

*Games People Play
(Los jueguitos comelones)*, 1998
Acrylic and collage, 24 x 30 inches
Collection of Stephen and
Betty Carpenter

Venus Fly Trap (Venus atrapamoscas)
2006, Oil pastel on wove paper
30¼ x 38¼ inches
Collection of Dirk and
Carol Sonneborn

Complications (Complicaciones)
1989, Ink on paper
19¾ x 19½ inches
Collection of Dirk and
Carol Sonneborn

Symbols (Simbolos), 1986
Ink on paper, 23 x 35¼ inches
Collection of Martin Yenawine

Sanctuary (Santuario), 1986
Ink on paper, 22½ x 35 inches
Collection of Martin Yenawine

*In Search of Tranquility 1
(En búsqueda de la tranquilidad 1)*
1986, Watercolor on paper
17 x 23 inches
Collection of Martin Yenawine

*In Search of Tranquility 2
(En búsqueda de la tranquilidad 2)*
1986, Watercolor on paper
17 x 23 inches
Collection of Martin Yenawine

Untitled, 1989
Drawing, 6½ x 11½ inches
Collection of Dirk and
Carol Sonneborn

Untitled, 1985
Drawing on paper, 9¼ x 4¼ inches
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, 1985
Oil on canvas, 48½ x 36 inches
Courtesy of Laurence Hoefler

Untitled, 1988
Acrylic on paper, 29½ x 21¾ inches
Collection of Martin Yenawine

Untitled, 1984
Oil on canvas, 12 x 13¾ inches
Collection of Dirk and
Carol Sonneborn

The Saint (La santa), 1987
Oil on canvas, 72½ x 36 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, not dated
Pastel on board, 14½ x 15½ inches
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, not dated
Drawing, 9¼ x 9¼ inches
Courtesy of Laurence Hoefler

Harriet Tubman, ca. 1970s
Pencil on paper, 22 x 10 inches
Collection of Martin Yenawine

Untitled, 1975
Oil on canvas, 36½ x 44½ inches
Collection of the Dorothy and
Marshall M. Reisman Foundation

Untitled, 1977
Oil on canvas, 19 x 21 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, 1968
Oil on linen, 10½ x 8½ inches
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, 1977
Watercolor on paper
11½ x 8½ inches
Courtesy of the artist

The Path (El camino), 1974
Oil on canvas, 21½ x 27¾ inches
Courtesy of Laurence Hoefler

Untitled, 1978
Watercolor on paper
14¾ x 20 inches
Collection of the Dorothy and
Marshall M. Reisman Foundation

Untitled, 1980
Watercolor and ink on paper
9 x 13½ inches
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, 2017
Pastel on paper, 14 x 12 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, 1978
Watercolor on paper
11¼ x 15¼ inches
Courtesy of the artist

Special thanks to Tere Paniagua and Larry Hoefler for their guidance throughout this project.

Spanish translations provided by La Casita Cultural Center.

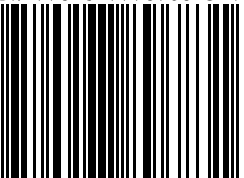
The operation of the Everson Museum of Art is made possible with funding from the Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman Foundation, the County of Onondaga administered by CNY Arts, the Central New York Community Foundation, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, the Richard Mather Fund, the Everson Board of Trustees and Everson Museum of Art Members' Council.







ISBN 978-0-9978968-3-1



9 780997 896831 >



EVERSON MUSEUM OF ART