

## National tour of contemporary Cuban art stops in Bridgeport

Phyllis A.S. Boros, Staff Writer

Published 02:35 p.m., Thursday, August 11, 2011



Reinerio Tamayo's "Nike Girl," a work on paper from 2006, is featured in "Polaridad Complementaria: Recent Works from Cuba" on view at the Housatonic Museum of Art in Bridgeport from Aug. 15 through Oct. 20. Photo: Contributed Photo / CT

Soldiers with flowers bursting from their mouths or with three ears all grouped together on one cheek; views of the picturesque esplanade that runs along Havana's coast; bare chocolate-brown feet draped in bright white pearls.

From the pleasant to the thought-provoking, from representational to abstract -- it's all here in "Polaridad Complementaria: Recent Works from Cuba" (Complementary Polarity), an exhibition that opens Monday, Aug. 15, at Bridgeport's Housatonic Museum of Art.

Bridgeport is the final stop (and the only New England venue) in a two-year tour of the United States, which included exhibitions in Chicago, Charleston, S.C., and New Orleans. It will be on view through Oct. 20. To celebrate the Park City visit, the HMA will host a reception, open to the public free of charge, on Aug. 31 from 5 to 7 p.m. in its galleries at Housatonic Community College.

Featuring more than 50 pieces -- paintings, drawings, sculpture, photography, video and installation art -- "Polaridad" "is a major exhibition developed by the Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Wifredo Lam, Havana, offering audiences the opportunity to become acquainted with the island's current artistic production ... (attesting) to the aesthetic and conceptual level that characterizes Cuban art today," explains tour organizer International Arts and Artists, a Washington, D.C. nonprofit group that promotes cross-cultural understanding through art.

Developed by art critic and researcher Margarita Sánchez Prieto and Jorge Fernández Torres, curator and director at Centro de Arte Contemporáneo, "the exhibition illustrates the features that have defined Cuban artistic production in recent years, especially the interest in focusing on the Cuban context in a reflexive manner with the (artistic) languages in fashion.

"Polaridad Complementaria' aims to create a dialogue by examining and comparing Cuba's political, historical, and common cultural links with the United States," the organization points out.

Arts and Artists points out that most of the artists are young artists who have attained international standing; the majority of them have taken part in fairs and biennials abroad. All have exhibited in Europe and Latin America and several have done so in the United States, including Rene Peña, Abel Barroso, Aimee García, Yoan Capote, Roberto Fabelo, Luis Cabrera and Angel Ramírez.

HMA Director Robbin Zella, who programs the gallery exhibitions, points out that all the artists have been active in Cuba during its transition -- known officially as the Special Period in Time of Peace -- following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Cuba's most fervent Communist ally), the economic crisis that ensued and present day.

"These artists, who are enjoying greater levels of freedom" to express themselves through their work "are documenting shifts in society and ideology, as Cuba makes the transition from socialism to globalism -- with tourism its primary industry at the moment," Zella adds.

"Unlike in previous generations, when public expression and discussion were stifled, these artists are in a position to critique their government, to be critical of state policy" and to address a wide range of social issues, she says.

Zella says she wanted to host this exhibition in particular because the "mandate and mission" of the college museum -- which is considered among the most prominent of any two year college in the nation -- "is to reflect world events and regional concerns. And with the Hispanic population continuing to grow in this country, I thought this exhibition would be a nice way to address those issues."

Funding for the show was provided by the Werth Family Foundation, of Woodbridge, and the Housatonic Community College Foundation.

Special programming, in conjunction with the exhibition, will be presented during the run of the show, but has yet to be finalized, Zella says. Events will be posted on the HCC website as soon as details are set, she adds.

#### WHEN YOU GO

Housatonic Museum of Art is at Housatonic Community College, 900 Lafayette Boulevard in downtown Bridgeport. The museum is open through August, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Thursday evenings until 7 p.m. From September through May, the museum galleries are open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Thursday evenings until 7, Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Sundays from noon to 4 p.m. For additional information and holiday hours, call 203-332-5052 or visit [www.hcc.commnet.edu](http://www.hcc.commnet.edu).