

Art collaboration spotlights Cuban culture



NUESTRO PUEBLO

Ana Gershanik

A few steps away from the beginning of a new year, I want to wish everybody a healthy, happy, prosperous and peaceful 2010. I also want to thank the readers of *Nuestro Pueblo* for all your suggestions and for connecting me and the people of New Orleans to so many important happenings in the local Latino community.

Even before the new year starts, there is a very important event going on in the city that is connected to the Cuban community.

The Newcomb Art Gallery at Tulane University, the New Orleans Museum of Art and the Stone Center for Latin American Studies at Tulane University are presenting "¡Sí Cuba!", a major collaborative venture between museums, universities, galleries and other arts organizations in the city, that will take place through April 2010.

"¡Sí Cuba!" started at NOMA on Dec. 18 with an exhibition by local Cuban-born artist **Luis Cruz Azaceta** titled "Swimming to Havana," organized by **Miranda**

Lash, curator of modern and contemporary art. The exhibition will be on view in the museum's great hall through March 28. Cruz Azaceta's solo exhibit features a suite of new paintings from 2009.

"Swimming to Havana" proposes the impossible, as no unassisted human is capable of traversing 90 miles across the Caribbean Sea from Florida to Cuba. Yet it is a journey said to have taken place countless times in the minds of Cubans who wish to reach the United States, and Cuban immigrants who dream of returning home.

In his suite of new paintings, Azaceta invites viewers to undertake their own imaginative journeys through his imagery. These paintings explore the idea of "crossing over" in myriad ways: between abstraction and figuration, between geometric and organic forms, between Cuban and American culture, and between the historically linked cities of New Orleans and Havana.

The artist was born in Havana in 1942, and immigrated to New

York at 18. Since 1992, he has lived in New Orleans where he has exhibited his work at major galleries. In addition, his paintings have been shown at major museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Museum Of Modern Art in New York and the Smithsonian Institute in Washington. He has also been the recipient of various grants.

"¡Sí Cuba!" will continue Jan. 16 with "Polaridad Complementaria: Recent Works from Cuba," a traveling show organized by the Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Wifredo Lam in Havana that will be presented jointly at the New Orleans Museum of Art and the Newcomb Art Gallery.

On view through March 14, the exhibition offers audiences the opportunity to become acquainted with Cuba's current artistic production. The participants are artists who have attained international acknowledgement. All have exhibited in Europe and Latin America and several in the United States.

The artists presented at NOMA will include **Abel Barroso**, **Luis Enrique Camejo**, **Ricardo Elías**, **Douglas Pérez**, **Ludmila Velasco** and **Nelson Arellano**.

There will be various related programs in conjunction with

the exhibits, including joint opening receptions at NOMA and at Newcomb Art Gallery. A keynote address Jan. 28 at 6 p.m. at NOMA's Stern Auditorium will feature noted critic, curator and art historian **Gerardo Mosquera**. There will be a Cuban art symposium Jan. 29 at Tulane.

Tulane University's Latin American library gallery, located on the fourth floor of the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, will present "A Century of Images from the Latin American Library, 1859-1959," on Jan. 16, depicting photographs, drawings and unique ephemeral materials documenting the urban landscape and popular culture of Havana from 1859 to 1959. It will be on view through June 16.

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Mario Padilla's Studio and Gallery has moved from the Magazine Street location to 938 Royal St. in the French Quarter, and is now under a new name: PK Gallery. For more information call 504.267.0590 or 512.627.7851 or check the Web sites at www.mariopadilla.com or www.nolapkgallery.com.

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