

## **George Rodez: celebration of color and imagination.**

Born in New York in 1957, he spent two years with his grandparents in Cuba from 1958 to 1960 as a result of his mother was ill and unable to take care of him. It is from those memories that "Grandfather's Terrace" was created, where the artist and his brother played in their house in Old Havana. "Ever since I was little I've had a photographic memory and I remember many details, like the parrot that was in the terrace and the floor glass panes which I used to look through to see my grandfather working in his pharmacy," says George Rodez.

The point of departure for this exhibition was exactly Grandfather's Terrace. With this Afro-Caribbean series, the artist tries to transport the spectator to the vibrant colors and lifestyle of the Cuba of yesteryear. "Its as if I painted Cuba again with fresh colors, removing it from its ruins; as if I had returned with a brush to restore it all," he explains.

Rodez's peasants ([quajiros](#)) reflect an idealized desire to return to calmer times and perhaps to the happiness of a simpler life. His quajiros play musical instruments that symbolize Cuban's love of parties, music, and joy, but he also has his flowers playing [claves](#), maracas and guitars. "One time I heard María Elena Cruz Varela say: 'Pray for Cuba, because in Cuba there are no flowers.' And I identified those flowers with the people that could no longer be who they wanted to be. I represent human beings as flowers, and the ivy-like [malangas](#) as the things that they have to do to be able to survive when nobody is looking," affirms Rodez, who invited the sculptress Mari Sánchez to exhibit next to his paintings her sculptures of Caribbean fruits.

When he began working on this series, which he is exhibiting at his new studio-gallery in Coconut Grove, he always painted an eye within the paintings, making reference to the vigilant and omnipotent State, but in his new pieces he has removed the eye, foretelling a change for the Island and its inhabitants.

"Colors for me are a celebration. The two blues found in many of my backgrounds represent the day and the night; the skies and the seas, which have swallowed so many Cubans. In addition, my colors describe emotions: the yellow, friendship; the red, passion; the blue, serenity; the green, hope; and the purple, divine health," assures the artist.

The next series that he is preparing for is called Elements and Values and what is important is the imaginative form used to create these pieces. "I start by applying acrylic to the canvas without thinking of where I'm going with it or the texture that I'm going to end up with. At a given moment, I sit back to analyze that mix of colors, that abstraction. I turn the canvas around and look at it from all angles. Doing this brings out different images and I bring forth those which call my attention the most, to create an impressionist and an expressionist combination at the same time," he explains.

It is a process similar to finding forms in clouds; that is why his next exhibition will be called Get your Head out of the Clouds. He paints and gives life to the hidden ghosts on the canvas. "The canvas is like a vortex which transports images from other dimensions," assures Rodez.

The Living Rose, for example, is a work inspired by a poem from Idania Avila that speaks of transformation. It is created from bottom to top and begins with a seed, like a uterus. "There a woman sleeps and reflects on her past, dreaming of what she can do to improve her present," the artist states, adding that in spite of the cold, the rose/person can sprout to become an evolved human being having conquered years of programming. "I am a witness to that in my own life and thank God, today, I feel centered. We are here to grow, to love one another; the rest is merely entertainment."

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El Nuevo Herald, May 13, 2010