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A detail of "Nothing to Wear II" by Carlos Gamez de Francisco

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**A Q&A with artist Carlos Gamez de Francisco**

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Louisville has had its share of world famous artists throughout history. If you are not familiar with Carlos Gamez de Francisco ([carlosgamezdefrancisco.com](http://carlosgamezdefrancisco.com) (<http://carlosgamezdefrancisco.com>)), it's time to pay attention. I predict he will be as famous someday as Sam Gilliam, Enid Yandell and Ed Hamilton.

**LEO: What type of artist are you?**

*Carlos Gamez de Francisco:* I started painting in different media, such as watercolor, oil and acrylic, when I was 15 years old. Then I explored with some other materials such as fabric, leather, wood and natural fibers while attending the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Currently, I'm working with complex patterns and historical references in portraiture, textile design, exaggerated fashion design and sculpture. The complexity of the design and placement plays with the eyes of the viewers, challenging them to discover and determine how manipulation and distortion have played into their understanding or perception of the moment.

**What is your earliest childhood memory that involves art?**

I remember when I made one of my first drawings at the age of 5. I was on the kitchen table at home, and I tried to draw on a book cover with both of my hands. My mother asked me what I was doing. I explained to her that I was drawing how the water goes from the sky to the kitchen's faucet. My mother, worried about my 'creative' explanation, set up an appointment with a psychologist. That is the only drawing I keep from my childhood.



"Comprehensive Study of Modes and Manners" by Carlos Gamez de Francisco

**Who are some of the artists you admire?**

Contemporary artists: Kehinde Wiley, Takashi Murakami, Yinka Shonibare, Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons. Cuban artists: Wilfredo Lam, Fabelo, Pedro Pablo Oliva, Cosme Proenza, Miguel Angel Salvo. Spanish artists: Salvador Dali, Pablo Picasso, Velazquez, Goya.

**Artists find inspiration from unusual sources. What sparked you to visualize your stories?**

In many ways, my work represents parts of my past, my present and my future. I take references from history. I'm inspired by the rules of the Renaissance portrait and traditional Asian painting. I focus on complex character relationships where the simple background acts as an echo of their inner universe. Historical context is central to all of my work. My life as a Cuban, and now an American, has taught me that when history is represented in storytelling of any kind, it is distorted through the eyes of the one telling — or writing or painting — the story. It is then further distorted through the eyes or ears of the one who is hearing that story. All history is revised. Only the present is pure.

**Is there a local artist you think is doing great work that hasn't been noticed yet?**

I think there are some very talented artists in Louisville. Also, I believe that people in Louisville support art and the scene is growing fast. One artist I admire greatly in Louisville is Ross Gordon. His recent exhibition at Swanson [Contemporary] titled "Americans" was very inspiring. Ross also happens to be a good friend of mine.



