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Meet Carlos Gamez de Francisco



VoyageChicago

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Today we'd like to introduce you to Carlos Gamez de Francisco.

Every artist has a unique story. Can you briefly walk us through yours?

I was born in post-revolutionary Cuba in 1987 and educated in an academic style heavily influenced by Soviet dogma. This presence, as well as the censorship of contemporary art and the limited access to information, was the academic environment that existed for me. After living twenty-one years in Cuba, I immigrated to the United States in 2009. Moving to this incredible country was one of the most important decisions of my life. During the first year, I had to adapt to a different culture and language. I had to deconstruct the myths of what I had read from Cuban history books about the United States. I noticed history was not necessarily written to depict events through time, but it was often intentionally changed to support one group's point of view and actions and demystified others. Consequently, I understood that decontextualizing epochs and artistic symbols was the tool I could use to establish a connection between the present and the past.

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THE CHICAGO ARTS & CULTURE WEEKLY REVIEW



AN ARTISTIC VOYAGE: EXPLORING LOCAL CREATIVE AND ARTISTIC WORKS



FLASHES & STROKES: A TALE OF TWO MEDIUMS



THE INFLUENCERS

As a Cuban, history has influenced me in a variety of ways. It is rich in Spanish culture and art. It has a history of conflict, struggle for freedom and revolutionary legends. On the one hand, it allows me to rethink the way storytelling is part of our memories. On the other, it allows me to question the accuracy of history and how it is told and documented. This conflict absorbed me during my early years and continued to engage me as I completed my artistic education at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2016. Currently, this near-obsession with the past translates into figures, scenarios, and most importantly, the recreation of my own stories.

The resulting work provides an escape from reality and creates an illusory world. I am more interested in altering history than depicting it accurately. My art reflects this constant internal debate and the result is that history is a figment of my imagination.

Please tell us about your art.

In my work, I am inquiring about the problematic and subjective notion of power by altering the historical role of portraits in society. For centuries, portraiture was used as a method for the bourgeoisie to demonstrate their wealth and success through the use of extravagant decorations and garments. My intention is to deconstruct the representation of power and opulence.

In my most recent series, the photographs respond to the need to portray ordinary people of Cuba. The models, apparently dressing in sumptuous costumes were using regular objects found in their homes such as curtains, table covers, bedspreads, plastic bags, clothes pegs, and stainless steel scouring pads. The photographs ironically recreate what power means by using repurposed objects to depict minorities (people in conditions of poverty, with special needs, from different genders and races).

This series is about the uncertainty of what real power means and who has it. It presents critical issues that tend to remain silent. It is about repurposing the meaning of power and constructing hope. The hope to be, the hope to succeed, and the hope of being remembered.

Given everything that is going on in the world today, do you think the role of artists has changed? How do local, national or international events and issues affect your art?

Artists have the responsibility to critique social injustice, especially in this time where minorities need more support than ever. Art is a strong tool to talk about political, religious, and social topics that could remain in silence. It expresses emotions and reveals truth from different perspectives. Artists must engage with their audiences to make changes for the good of the planet.

How or where can people see your work? How can people support your work?

I am currently represented by Kenise Barnes Fine Art in Larchmont, NY,