

PRESS RELEASE

LEHIGH UNIVERSITY ART GALLERIES PRESENTS PRIVATE COLLECTION OF DRAWINGS BY WIFREDO LAM EXHIBITED OUTSIDE OF CUBA FOR THE FIRST TIME

The Drawings of Wifredo Lam: 1940 – 1955

From the personal collection of
Juan Castillo Vázquez, Havana, Cuba.

LUAG Main Gallery, Zoellner Arts Center

August 30 – December 10, 2017

Lecture and Readings of original Wifredo Lam Poetry
by Juan Castillo Vázquez: September 21, 2017

Lecture by Lam Scholar Lowery Stokes Sims on
Wifredo Lam's drawings in the post WWII period: November 9, 2017



Wifredo Lam in his Havana studio, circa 1955.

For Immediate Release – 7/17/2017

Lehigh University Art Galleries is pleased to present **The Drawings of Wifredo Lam: 1940 – 1955**, the first monographic exhibition of works by Lam from a prestigious private Cuban collection to travel to the United States. Comprised of twenty-one rarely seen works on paper the exhibition will open to the public this August 30 and will remain on view until December 10, 2017.

Ricardo Viera, Director and Chief Curator of Lehigh University Art Galleries stated: “This exhibition is the result of a decades-long collaboration with Wifredo Lam’s grandnephew Juan Castillo Vázquez. To bring these works, to the US is truly a dream come true for me. Since August 1974, I have dedicated myself to bringing not just a collection of ideas to LUAG Teaching Museum, but to harnessing a collection of ideas that transcend the ordinary for the Lehigh community and general public to enjoy. This exhibition is a culmination of these efforts. It is extremely gratifying to retire from Lehigh with this swansong of an exhibition.” Juan Castillo Vázquez stated: “I am honored that this collection of works

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LUAG is the Teaching Museum at Lehigh University. LUAG inspires, develops, and promotes visual literacy and cultural understanding through cross-disciplinary educational opportunities that supplement formal classroom study. LUAG’s core educational resource is its world-class art collection, which it uses, along with traveling exhibitions from outside the university, to create settings for experiential learning.

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will finally be exhibited in the United States and especially at Lehigh University Art Galleries Teaching Museum, a space that has, for decades, supported the work of Latin American artists. I wish to thank Ricardo Viera for having the foresight and perseverance to bring this project to fruition.”

These original drawings are from the private family collection of Lam’s grandnephew, Juan Castillo Vázquez. Ricardo Viera first viewed the works when he traveled to Cuba with the Philadelphia based Brandywine Workshop in 1997, as part of their Cuban Project. But it was not until 2015, with restored diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba, that the idea of exhibiting the drawings in the United States became a reality. Relations between the United States and the island nation had been strained for well over fifty years before the thawing of diplomatic relationships under the Obama Administration. With this small but important show, Lehigh University Art Galleries is working to bridge cultures and is one of the first cultural exchanges between the two nations.

Wifredo Lam (1902-1982) is Cuba’s most internationally acclaimed 20th century artist. Lam was a descendent of Cuban, Chinese and West African heritage. As a child, he witnessed the hallucinatory mixture of Catholic ritual and African rites that characterizes Cuban *Santería*. Throughout his life, these visions would continue to stir his imagination. In Europe, Lam became part of the inner circles of modernism and surrealism alongside Pablo Picasso, André Breton, and Joan Miró. With the onset of WWII in the early 1940s, Wifredo Lam, various artists, and other members of the intellectual elite, fled Europe for the Americas and the Caribbean.

Returning to his birthplace after nearly a twenty-year absence, Lam immersed himself in the culture of his homeland. His work evolved rapidly, fusing cubist and surrealist approaches with Afro-Cuban motifs, resulting in hybrid figures – with mask-like faces and exaggerated, angular bodies – that combined elements of humans, animals, and plants. From roughly 1940 – 1955, Lam exhibited

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extensively, traveling between Cuba, France, and the United States, settling eventually in Paris and later, Italy. In a world that is increasingly intertwined, Wifredo Lam's work provides a historical perspective on our international connection.

The Drawings of Wifredo Lam: 1940 - 1955 continues until December 10, 2017. The Main Gallery is open Wednesday 11am – 5pm, Thursday 11am – 8pm, Friday – Saturday 11am – 5pm, and Sunday 1pm – 5pm. Two special events will be held in support of the exhibition. On September 21 a reading and lecture of poetry by Wifredo Lam will be presented by Juan Castillo Vázquez. On November 9 LUAG will host a lecture on the work of Wifredo Lam by art historian Lowery Stokes Sims.

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