



Media Contact: Terri Dixon
LAGRANT COMMUNICATIONS
323.469.8680, ext 232
terridixon@lagrant.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM UNVEILS THE ART EXHIBITION OF AFRO-CUBAN ARTIST MANUEL MENDIVE COUPLED WITH A RARE PUBLIC ART PERFORMANCE OF 'MEDITACIONES'

***Things That Cannot Be Seen Any Other Way:
The Art Of Manuel Mendive***

Now On View through October 20, 2013



Photo Courtesy of CAAM/Marty Cotwright

Kia Smith, a dancer with the Lula Washington Dance Theatre, takes center stage during Afro-Cuban artist Manuel Mendive's art performance of *Meditaciones* at the California African American Museum's opening reception.

LOS ANGELES, CA – May 3, 2013 – At a recently held opening reception and art performance, the California African American Museum (CAAM) unveiled its ambitious exhibition *Things That Cannot Be Seen Any Other Way: The Art of Manuel Mendive*. On view at CAAM through October 20, 2013, the exhibition is a retrospective of Afro-Cuban artist Manuel Mendive's career, charting his artistic development over several decades. As compiled, it is one of the largest exhibitions of Mendive's *oeuvre* to ever take place on the West Coast.

--more--

“Over the years, CAAM has created and produced more than two dozen exhibitions highlighting the interconnectedness of the art and culture of the people of the African Diaspora,” said Charmaine Jefferson, CAAM's Executive Director. “What makes this exhibition unique is to have the opportunity to engage with the artist in the contemporaneous creation of work that is so reflective of past and present influences.”

Emerging from a generation of Cuban artists who studied at Cuba's San Alejandro National School of Fine Arts, Mendive is highly regarded as one of the foremost contemporary artists in Cuba and the Caribbean.

“It is an honor for me to exhibit my work at such a well-respected cultural institution as the California African American Museum. I cannot give enough praise to all who have contributed to the success of the exhibition and its opening,” said Mendive through an interpreter. “I am especially grateful to the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, the Frost Museum and Fundación Amistad. I would be remiss if I did not give special thanks to Dr. Bárbaro Martínez-Ruiz who has brought the full weight of his vast scholarly knowledge to this project. Clearly, one can see that CAAM's Mar Hollingsworth and Charmaine Jefferson have poured themselves into this massive undertaking which has been one of the most satisfying and rewarding experiences of my career as an artist,” continued Mendive.

In addition to being a prolific painter, Mendive is a critical proponent of performance pieces that combine his painting with improvisational dance. During CAAM's opening reception, Mendive created an art performance entitled, *Meditaciones*, during which he painted the bodies of dancers Kia Smith and James Dixon of the Lula Washington Dance Theatre, and Rogelio Lorda, a choreographer from Spain.

The dancers served as canvasses for Mendive who literally created a piece of “living art” as he brushed their bodies with paint. Then, as they began their sensual moves across the museum's courtyard, Mendive turned his attention to the prepared canvas set before him on an easel. With the exception of the lush and hypnotic music accompanying the two dancers, CAAM's entire courtyard was enveloped with quiet as attendees devoted their attention to Mendive's painting and the movements of the dancers. This performance was similar to the street performance Mendive held in Cuba titled *Las Cabezas*. During *Las Cabezas*, Mendive moves through the streets of Cuba with close to 350 people dancing and wearing masks that resemble his paintings.

--more--

ABOUT MANUEL MENDIVE AND THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition, *Things That Cannot Be Seen Any Other Way: The Art Of Manuel Mendive*, is centered on the 50-year career of the prominent Afro-Cuban artist Manuel Mendive. This is the first exhibition in the United States to focus exclusively on the contemporary visual and material culture of the Afro-Cuban religion *Lukumí*, and the general way in which the cultures of the countries of the African Diaspora through telluric and mystically-charged subjects. The selected works at CAAM have rarely been exhibited together.

Mendive began his career in the early 1960s during a period when dominant Cuban Abstract Expressionism was waning. This paved new ground by moving beyond the reliance on mainstream western art forms such as Cubism and Surrealism. Each section of the exhibition bears witness to both the time and place of its making, depicting Mendive's artistic growth and development. It also testifies to his deep commitment to Afro-Cuban culture, the art and craft of painting, and his concerns about the nature of religion and its visual language.

The exhibition starts with an exploration of Mendive's formative years - early drawings, clay works and small textiles. It continues with his mythological paintings, appliquéd works (*Sacred Cloths*) and abstract pieces. It concludes with some of his bronze and soft sculptures as well as an installation of masks that surround the screening of the video *Las Cabezas*. The video captures a 2012 performance during the Havana Biennale. In addition to the use of religious themes in the exhibition, his work incorporates the concepts of nationalism, mysticism and history.

After the exhibition closes, it will go on tour with its first stop at The Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum at Florida International University in Miami. Preliminary discussions are underway to tour the Mendive exhibition in other cities throughout the United States.

"It is deeply rewarding to have the 50-year career of an artist as important as Maestro Mendive in our midst," said Olga Garay-English, Executive Director of the City Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs. "This highly complex project was two years in the making, and would not have been possible without the tireless dedication of all the partners. My hope is that of the artist's: that the exhibition travels to other venues throughout the U.S. once it concludes its stay at FIU's Frost Museum."

--more--

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

CAAM will host a number of public events surrounding the exhibition that include the following:

Sunday, May 19, 2013, 2 p.m.

The Art of Manuel Mendive

Dr. Bárbaro Martínez-Ruiz will discuss the work of Manuel Mendive in the context of the exhibition.

Saturday, June 15, 2013, 2 p.m.

Painting The *Orishas*

Lili Bernard, visual artist and actor, will facilitate a workshop on Afro-Cuban religion and folklore.

Saturday, July 27, 2013, 2 p.m.

Afro-Cuban Beats

Museum visitors are invited to participate with their own drums, listen to the lecture or simply watch the performance.

Saturday, August 17, 2013, 2 p.m.

Cuba Today: A Visitor's Reflection

Ruby Quallsgray, from CAAM's History Council, will take visitors on a journey to Cuba detailing her recent nine-day immersion into the culture, lifestyle and political landscape of the island.

Saturday, October 19, 2013, 2 p.m.

DOCUMENTARY FILM SCREENING "Black and Cuba" (2013, 83 min)

Director/writer Robin J. Hayes' documentary is the diary of minority students, who traveled from the Ivy League halls of Harvard University to Cuba.

CREDITS

This exhibition is made possible due to the generous sponsorships from the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, Fundación Amistad, and The Frost Art Museum at Florida International University in Miami.

ABOUT THE CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM

The California African American Museum (CAAM) researches, collects, preserves and interprets for public enrichment the history, art and culture of African Americans. Chartered by the California State Legislature in 1977, CAAM is a State-supported institution, and a partner with the 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization Friends, the Foundation of the California African American Museum. In addition to its permanent collection of over 3,000 objects of art, artifacts and historical documents, CAAM also houses a research library

--more--

containing more than 20,000 volumes, employs and trains high school students through its *Young Docents* program, and hosts in-house curated exhibitions and traveling exhibitions on a regular basis. The museum also tours CAAM exhibitions throughout California and the nation.

CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM INFORMATION

CAAM's exhibitions, programs and events are free and open to the public. CAAM is located at 600 State Drive, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, CA 90037. Hours of operation include Tuesday – Friday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. and closed Mondays. Parking is \$10 in the lot adjacent to CAAM at 39th and Figueroa Streets. For more information about CAAM and its exhibitions, programs and events, please visit: www.caamuseum.org or call (213) 744-7432.

Follow CAAM on Twitter @CAAMinLA and “Like” the CAAM Facebook page at www.Facebook.com/CAAMinLA.

Exhibition Sponsors:  DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS
City of Los Angeles  fundacion  amistad  FIU  Frost Art
Museum
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

**THINGS THAT CANNOT BE SEEN ANY OTHER WAY:
THE ART OF MANUEL MENDIVE
APRIL 26 – OCTOBER 20, 2013**



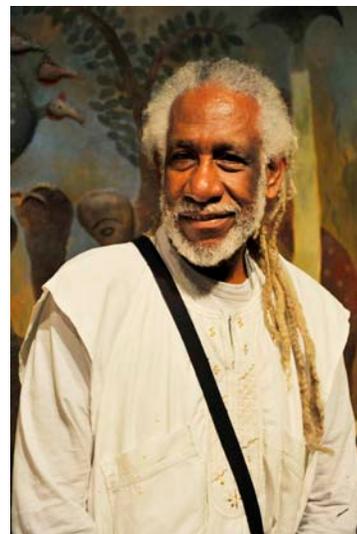
De la serie Energias Vitales, 2010. Mixed media, oil on canvas, metal. Courtesy of the artist.



Mito de la Creacion (Myth of Creation), 1985. Mixed media on heavy paper. Courtesy of Cernuda Arte.



Pano Sagrado (Secret Cloth), 2010. Mixed media on canvas. Collection of Donna Brown.



Afro-Cuban Artist Manuel Mendive.
Courtesy of Marty Cotwright.