



JUAN SÁNCHEZ

¿What's The Meaning of This?
Painting | Collage | Video

BRIC

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CURATED BY

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of Contemporary Art
BRIC

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Mariposas para las Hermanas Mirabal, 2014

INTRODUCTION

Elizabeth Ferrer

¿What is the meaning of this? With the title of this exhibition, artist Juan Sánchez questions, exhorts, and pleads. He demands our thought and our participation. The question is direct and pointed, and with it he establishes his work as an arena of creative and political inquiry that encompasses the individual (himself and others), the communities with which he engages, and the world at large. For some 35 years, Sánchez has produced an extensive body of work—including paintings, works on paper, photography, and video—that consistently addresses issues that are as relevant now as they were in the 1980s when he began his career—race, class, cultural identity, equality, and independence.

From the beginning, Sánchez has taken an activist stance, aligning himself firmly within populist concerns rather than with an art-world elite. He came of age as a painter in New York in an era when the downtown Manhattan art scene was in full flourish, and when artists like Leon Golub (Sánchez' teacher and mentor), Nancy Spero, Rupert Garcia, Faith Ringgold, David Hammons, and the collectives Group Material, ABC No Rio, Bullet Space, and PAD/D¹ were demonstrating the possibility for art to not only take a hard stand on political issues, but to act in itself as a form of protest and resistance. About this era, Sánchez once stated, "I think the '80s really reinforced and reaffirmed that art and politics are not really separate but that art is politics, that art is about society, about culture, about the rejuvenation and the evolution of humanity."²

This outlook informs his work today—explorations of his Puerto Rican culture that examine such disparate influences as indigenous Taíno culture, Spanish colonization and Catholicism, the Puerto Rican independence movement, contemporary Nuyorican³ culture, media and pop culture, and his own family and history. Born in Brooklyn to Puerto Rican parents, Sánchez expresses the way that Puerto Rican culture survives and yet struggles, alluding to its complexity through layered, visually dense compositions. His artistic language includes a rich symbology of forms, photographs (his own, and those he appropriates from the mass media and other sources), objects, and texts, along with passages of both representational and abstract painting. These works demand an unusual level of looking and thinking; each encompasses a narrative, a history, made potent by the way Sánchez connects the disparate realms that contribute to individual and cultural identity.

This exhibition includes several paintings from one of Sánchez's key bodies of work, *Cries and Wounded Whispers*. He began the ongoing series of large-scale paintings in 2001 to memorialize individuals who sacrificed their life for a cause—figures like Mahatma Gandhi, Angel Rodríguez Cristóbal, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Malcolm X. *Mariposas par alas Hermanas Mirabal* is a tribute to the Mirabal sisters, four Dominican women who took part in the political movement against the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo.⁴ For their efforts, two of the sisters were imprisoned and three were ultimately murdered in 1960, clubbed to death by Trujillo's henchmen. Sánchez's rendition of this decisive episode in Dominican history is a darkly painted canvas holding four oval picture frames; three are etched with the image of a butterfly and the name and dates of one of the sisters. The fourth contains a photograph of a woman's face and upper body; she is seen upside down to symbolize martyrdom. A monetary bill circulated in memory of the women, folded to suggest wings, covers her eyes. The dark outline of a butterfly is repeated in the background. In life, the sisters claimed this symbol as their own; in their death, Sánchez invokes it to suggest the possibility of redemption and transcendence, even amidst darkness. Indeed, their murder acted as a catalyst, paving the way for Trujillo's assassination a few months later and for the Mirabals' ascension in status to national heroines.

A colorful play of lines that cohere into a circular framework mark the bottom half of *Mariposas*. Intentionally ambiguous, it seems to heave upward, as if directing our eye to the framed images and to the dark butterflies painted upon the canvas surface. Another element in the work, seen in all the paintings in this series, is a repeated disc-shaped form containing a picture of a crying baby (a photo of the artist's own child). Sánchez notes that the *Cries and Wounded Whispers* series was inspired in part by Edvard Munch's *The Scream*. "When I saw it," he says, "I could have sworn I heard the holler."⁵ Although the image of the child's howl is never clearly visible in these works—it functions more as an abstract form than a representational one—it is omnipresent and insistent—it is the cry of protest, of inquietude, of a longing for redemption.

The symbols and visual forms in Sánchez' commemoration of the Mirabal sisters are didactic, meant to communicate specific meaning. But the artist's question—*¿What is the Meaning of This?*—goes beyond interpretive exercise. Sánchez is making a statement, declaring a point of view, but he is also exhorting us to place ourselves within this artwork, within this story. He is searching for answers, asking

why such atrocities repeatedly occur, whether he focuses on historical figures like Che Guevara or Rosa Luxemburg, or more recent ones like Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, a hero of the Puerto Rican Independence Movement, or Neda Agha-Soltan, the student who was shot dead in 2009 during demonstrations against the disputed Iranian presidential election. And he's urging us to ask the same thing.

This exhibition also includes works on paper from Sánchez' UNKNOWN BORICUAS series, collaged works made on multiple sheets of paper that explore varied themes and artistic approaches. If some compositions in this series are overtly political, many portray a more personal side of the artist, conveying aspects of his own biography while underscoring the central role that formal elements and even abstraction play in his oeuvre. Among the most poignant is *Poema para Mami: Missing You*, an homage to the artist's mother which includes a photograph of her feet in worn sandals and such objects as lace, cowrie shells (an Afro-Caribbean spiritual symbol), and a Catholic prayer card with an image of the Virgin Mary. Here, Sánchez conveys a beloved mother as well as the culture she bequeathed him. The work includes handwritten words as well as erasures describing love and loss, connoting the entire image as a highly personalized votive image.

Similarly, *Self-Portrait Trying to Trace Back and Find Myself* delineates the myriad cultural influences that comprise his cultural and personal identity. An intimate memory of childhood, it displays overlapping copies of a black-and-white photograph of the artist at his fourth birthday party. Like many of his drawings, the composition also incorporates images of flags: the Puerto Rican flag, a constant symbol in his work across media; the flag of the United States; and the Pan African flag, the red, black, and green striped flag that is also known as the Afro-American or Black Liberation flag. Sánchez declares the complexity of his Afro-Boricua identity, one that is simultaneously personal and political.

Other works on paper consider popular culture, like *Niña Vejigante Vuelve* (cover image), presenting the ornately masked trickster character, the *vejigante*, a frightening but playful figure that takes part in Puerto Rican festivals, especially carnival. While rooted in Spanish traditions, this processional figure has taken on a new face in Puerto Rico thanks to African and Taino influences. Reflecting this, Sánchez includes symbols of his Afro-Caribbean identity—fragments of African textiles, cowrie shells, and the colors of the pan-African flag. In other works he draws upon more recent manifestations of pop culture. *Taino Television* appropriates the once common, now-archaic Indian-head television test pattern; the circle in the original test patterns uncannily resemble the large circles that Sánchez frequently uses in his work. Adding a level of comic irony, the Indian heads are

hanging car deodorizers, a reminder of the multiple ways in which racism creeps into everyday life.

The geometric elements seen throughout Sánchez's oeuvre point to another key concern for the artist: abstraction. He clearly enjoys the juxtaposition of representation and abstraction, as well as the ambiguous role that certain compositional elements can play—a cross may be a compositional element that divides a drawing into quadrants, but it is also crucifix, a reference to Kasmir Malevich's depiction of crosses in his quest to articulate pure abstract form, or, conversely, a Santería symbol. The works in the UNKNOWN BORICUAS series are also united by a grid-like structure. The grid is another form of abstraction, a pervasive element in modernist painting. But with Sánchez, a grid is not just a grid. Each square contains the partially obscured image of a human face (a photo of his daughter) hooded with a Puerto Rican flag. This is perhaps the artist's most potent symbol, representing a people whose identity has been taken away, disenfranchised. And yet it is insistent and inescapable; in its repetition it sears itself in our memory.

In an era when painting is no longer at the forefront of visual art practice, Sánchez demonstrates the potential for the two-dimensional artwork to maintain a compelling presence, to project meaning and to ask pointed questions. Painting for Sánchez becomes a way of speaking, a way of visually connecting the personal and the political, the visceral and the intellectual. Whether illuminating the realm of the personal, social issues related to Puerto Rican people (and more broadly, to communities of color) or figures in global history, Sánchez offers a message of transcendence: in culture we find ourselves, in self-determination, we find freedom.

NOTES

¹ Political Art Documentation and Distribution, active from 1980-1986.

² Glenn Harper, ed. *Interventions and Provocations: Conversations on Art, Culture, and Resistance* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 78.

³ Nuyorican is a term broadly adopted by members of the Puerto Rican diaspora in New York.

⁴ Rafael Trujillo was president of the Dominican Republic from 1930 to 1938 and again from 1942 to 1952 but he ruled for a much longer period as a military strongman until his assassination in 1961. Trujillo was one of Latin America's most brutal and violent dictators, known for his oppression of free speech and civil rights, numerous human rights violation within his own country, as well as for the massacre of tens of thousands of Haitians.

⁵ Juan Sánchez, interview with the author, August 15, 2014.



Poema para Mami: Missing You, 2013



Self Portrait Trying to Trace Back and Find Myself, 2013

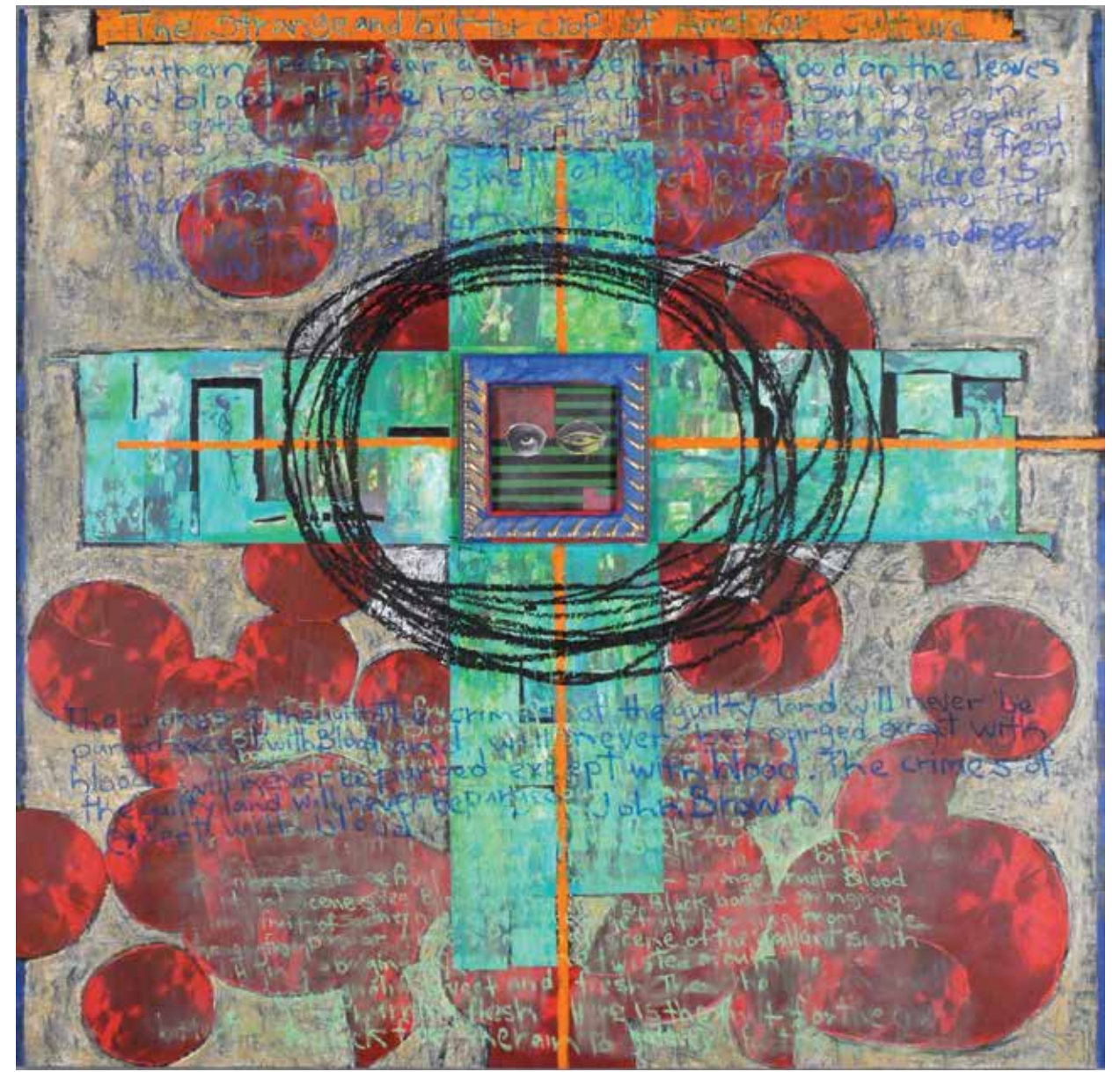


Taíno Television (detail), 2011

SONY



Para Angel de Vieques. 2006



Strange and Bitter American History. 2005

ARTIST STATEMENT

Art can express an urgency, a feeling, even a breath of the human spirit. It can compel, influence, inspire, and empower. This is what I want to engage with art.

Cries and Wounded Whispers

Like street murals that act as memorials, this series of mixed media collage paintings echoes society's outcry, struggles, and spirit against oppression and injustice. The work also revolves around individuals whose passion for truth, equality, and justice led to their death, including Jesus Christ, Mohandas K. Gandhi, Rosa Luxemburg, Pedro Albizu Campos, Robert F. Kennedy, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Archbishop Romero. **Cries and Wounded Whispers**, interpreted in this way, considers how these martyrs' advocacy and sacrifice for justice and peace began to transform humanity.

Images of these fallen heroes carried a multitude of intentions, one of them being to painfully discourage. The shedding of their blood is dreadful but there is a sense of redemptive release, a cry against tyrannical bondage. These post-mortem "portraits" ascended to another level of consciousness. The merging of these photographs with other images, icons, symbols, and text, through painting, drawing and collage, surfaced a sense of spirituality and transcendence. It also speaks to the constant battles waged against the evil forces in our world today. This is spiritual warfare.

Moving Collages and Sound

There is something creatively edifying about time-based mediums like video, with its shifting registers of meaning and context becoming quite transcendent. Images, color, textures, and text take on a deeply personal immediacy and magnifying power over time and with time.

Madre Selva, a video homage to Ana Mendieta (1948-1985), a Cuban American performance artist, sculptor, painter, and video artist best known for her earth-body works, is a dialogue with her art. Mendieta's often autobiographical work focused on themes of feminism, place, longing, violence, death, and rebirth. Her raw intimacy, coupled with the ritual and symbiotic bonds she created with nature, always dwelled between the body and the spirit world. Her art is provocative and profound, empowering and beautiful. It has continued to impact and influence generations of artists. Ana was a friend. Whenever I see her art or feel her absence, I also feel her presence. I am hoping that **Madre Selva** will reflect some of that spirit that is so prevailing in her breathtaking art.

It took thousands of still images and collages to produce **UNKNOWN BORICUA STREAMING: A Nuyorican State of Mind**. Assertively fast-paced and densely layered, my stream of consciousness is at the heart of this video. These collaged elements are charged with an array of images, iconography, comic book characters, celebrities, Catholic, African, and Taino symbolism, and global historical and political events. Like a stream of consciousness, these images ignite, emerge, push, and overwhelm with split-second twists and turns. Graffiti, patterns, and color flashes mix and flip through places, time, family and historical photos, and newspaper clippings. Colonialism, genocide, civil rights, human rights, and global struggles for freedom are presented with rapid overlapping successions. A recurring background are collages of female/male nude figures, their heads draped with a Puerto Rican flag boxed within a disjointed grid. Here, I represent a colonized nation and its political prisoners. **UNKNOWN BORICUA STREAMING: A Nuyorican State of Mind** is intended to stimulate the viewer to reflect, retrieve, determine, share, and transcend our human experience, and to continue the fight for change. The struggle for equality, social justice, freedom, and peace continues.

UNKNOWN BORICUAS Collages

The mixed-media collaged grids that were scanned and digitally incorporated into the **UNKNOWN BORICUAS STREAMING: A Nuyorican State of Mind** later evolved into larger mixed-media collage works on paper. Several pieces in this series are personal, self-reflective, formal and abstract.

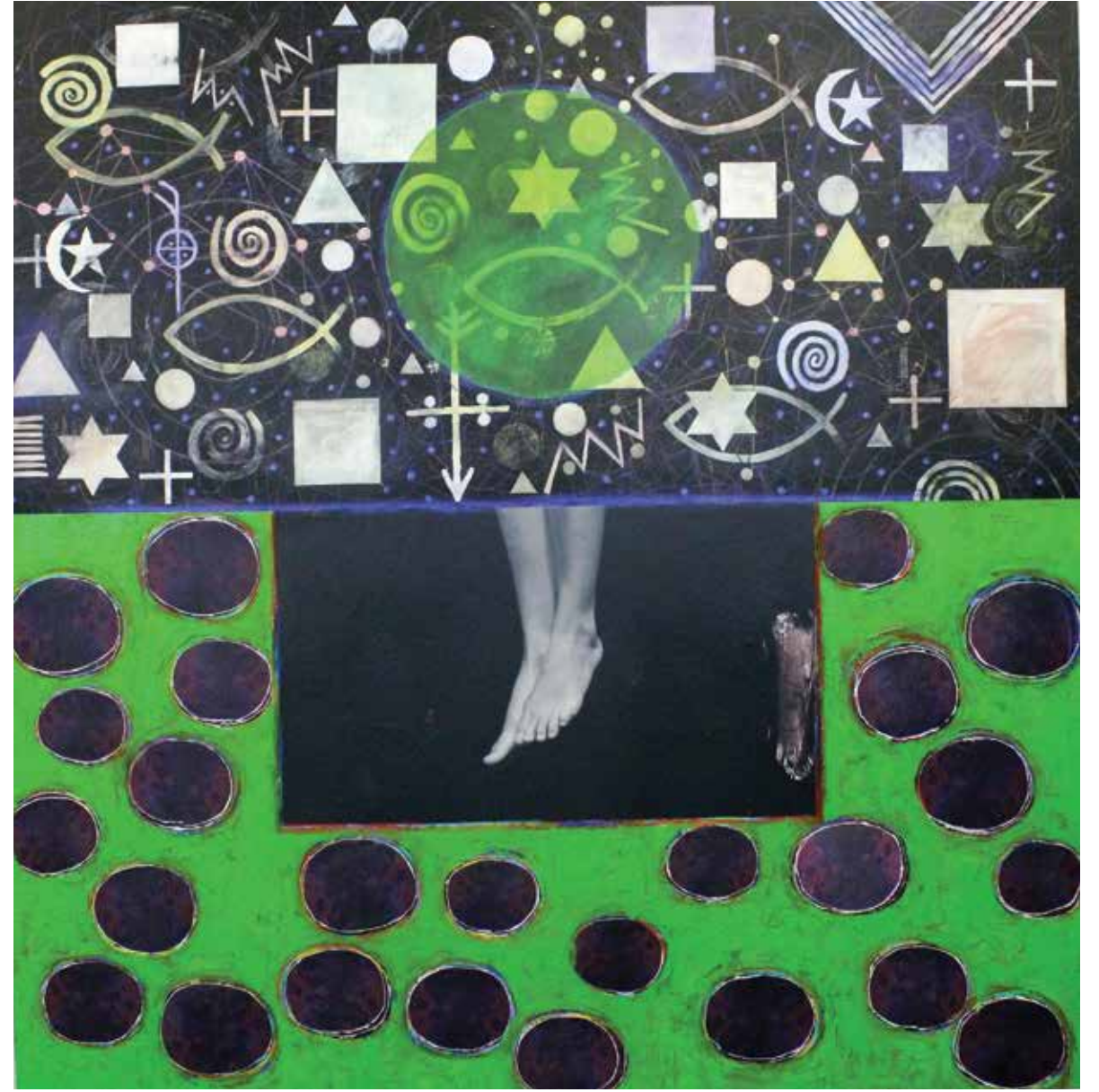
Juan Sánchez



Mariposas, Mariposas y más Mariposas. 2014



Para Rosa Luxemburg, 2004



Resurrección, 2005

JUAN SÁNCHEZ: A DIALOGUE WITH ANA MENDIETA AND BEYOND

Susana Torruella Leval

I have been carrying on a dialogue between the landscape and the female body (based on my own silhouette). I believe this has been a direct result of my having been torn from my homeland (Cuba) during my adolescence. I am overwhelmed by the feeling of having been cast from the womb [nature]. My art is the way I reestablish the bonds that unite me to the universe. It is a return to the maternal source. Through my earth/body sculptures I become one with the earth...

—Ana Mendieta¹

Silence. Darkness. A female face emerges, eyes closed—beautiful, timeless, aboriginal. She screams in surprise, in fear. Then opens her eyes and looks at us, calm, centered. She has conquered the darkness that engulfs the bottom of the split screen.

A second female face emerges, and, after that, a third, repeating an identical sequence. The second cries out in pain; the third, as if in childbirth. Each face echoes the other two, yet is different. Their open eyes, once open, bespeak ancient wisdom, eternal calm, primeval memory.

We are in a dense, primordial forest, its magic enhanced by hypnotic percussion that evoke distant thunder, the sudden whoosh of predatory wings, crashing branches, a tinkling drop.

The three faces now emerge as fully formed nude females, who occupy the top of a split screen. One after another, each performs the same graceful hieratic ritual against the trunk of a giant tree: opens her arms in an angular U; brings her hands together across the breast, stretches them forward in a giving gesture, and returns her arms to the starting position; rotates her head slowly from side to side, then back to center. Each figure rises from the tree's roots to perform her ritual and returns there. A huge tree trunk fills the bottom of the split screen. Inside the trunk, shifting drawings of stylized silhouettes animate the tree.

A new transfiguration occurs. The female presences are now closer and split by the double screen: the head, seen in the screen above; the torso, in the one below. They are frontal, now thickly encrusted by primal sludge. They breathe fully, torso muscles rippling with life, gaze alert. The three faces and torsos slowly replace one another in a masterfully collaged sequence.

The next transformation occurs within a triple split screen. Arising from the tree's roots, each figure rises to her full height. Once upright, all three repeat the earlier ritual arm movements, then coordinate their head movements until all return to center. The three-layered structure amplifies the power and grace of the choreography.

In a stunning final sequence, a full-size mud-covered figure stands against the tree, her arms in ritual position, gaze steady, breathing easily. Imperceptibly, subliminally, a second, then a third, figure replaces the previous one, her legs fused with the tree's roots. The metamorphosis is complete.

Juan Sanchez's masterful video *Madre Selva*² is a sensitive, keenly-felt homage to his friend, Cuban artist Ana Mendieta, whose violent, unsolved death shocked the art world in 1985. Mendieta is now seen as a leader of avant-garde trends of the 1960s and '70s, who dared to use her body as a powerful symbol—in earth-body works, in earthworks inspired by the ethnography of early cultures, in artistic actions of feminist rage, and in conceptual works addressing gender.

The sequential images of grace and beauty in Sánchez's *Madre Selva* video bring back to life Mendieta's finest series: *Siluetas* (1973-80), *Tree of Life* (1976-77) and the extraordinary *Rupestrian Sculptures* series, figures carved into the live rock at Cueva del Águila, Jaruco, in 1981 when Mendieta visited Cuba for the last time. From her earliest works as a graduate student in Iowa, to her mature work in Mexico, Iowa, and Cuba, Mendieta was obsessed with fusing her naked body with the surrounding natural landscape by stamping her silhouette into soft sand, mud, and clay; sodden riverbeds and banks; blasted wood trunks; live rock; and grassy fields. Sunken or three dimensional, on fire or soaking wet, covered with flowers or dripping life-giving blood, Ana Mendieta's form sought union with nature.

Juan Sánchez and Ana Mendieta met in New York in 1982. It was a moment of high artistic ferment, at the intersection of minimalism, feminism, conceptualism, and the emergence of cultures reclaiming self-expression. At the root of their friendship were profoundly-shared passions: love of a lost homeland; indignation on behalf of oppressed peoples; fervid allegiance to social justice struggles; and intensity for feminist causes. A child of the Puerto Rican diaspora, Sánchez, like Mendieta, felt torn from his native land. He, too, had found an affinity with ancestral African and pre-Columbian visual languages to give expression to his pain. Their artistic and spiritual bonds ran deep.



Madre Selva, 2009 (video stills)



UNKNOWN BORICUA STREAMING: A Newyoricán State of Mind (video stills), 2011



Since 1980, Juan Sánchez expressed his personal and socio-political beliefs in paintings and prints of distinctive esthetic: collaged images of persecuted Puerto Rican political figures and resistance leaders; family photographs; visual signs and symbols inspired by the spiritual belief systems of the Taíno and Afro-Caribbean cultures predating the Conquest; images and figures from popular culture; and scraps of newsprint covering controversial political events—all against densely-painted tapestries of vibrant color and form. From the first, he rendered homage to his mother, Carmen María Colón, who lovingly raised him through great difficulty. Later, his wife, poet and playwright Alma Villegas, and their artistic daughter Liora took their rightful place as adored, honored figures in the work. Sánchez's multivalent, layered work embodies a lifetime of dedicated socio-political activism.

This lifetime of work found renewed life and expanded expression in Sánchez's 2011 *UNKNOWN BORICUA STREAMING*, a "video sound collage" that places him in the avant-garde of this 21st-century medium. Sánchez synthesizes thirty-five years of advocacy for freedom and justice into a dazzling, seven-minute collage—iconic

heroes of political struggles for oppressed peoples, national symbols from world cultures, images of struggle and resistance from newspapers, history texts, and popular culture. Complemented by the sounds of Afro-Puerto Rican rhythms, political speeches, and protest songs, a rushing stream of images present fragments of Puerto Rico's struggle for independence since the Conquest, as well as of the massive migration of Puerto Ricans to the US in the 1950s, a cruel offshoot of the current colonial status.

Gradually, Sanchez expands the narrative, inserting the Puerto Rican resistance and independence movements into an all-encompassing history of recent social protest in the US and beyond. In rapid-fire sequence, anonymous Boricuas—a seamstress in the garment industry, a young Puerto Rican soldier who cannot vote for the President that sent him to war, a farmer plucked from the island to pick tomatoes in Connecticut—find an equal place next to images of heroic seekers for justice: Mahatma Gandhi, José Martí, President Obama, Julia de Burgos, Martin Luther King, John F. Kennedy, Che Guevara, Frederick Douglass.

The video begins and ends with serial flashes of a signal image, synonymous with Sánchez's work: the torso of a naked woman, head and shoulders wrapped in the Puerto Rican flag. She is emblematic of the most vulnerable, oppressed citizens of a country deprived of its nationhood. Just as Mendieta's silhouette yearned for union with her lost patria, this defenseless woman seeks integration with a national identity still denied her. Ana Mendieta sacrificed her own body in complex works of social protest whose significance transcended her life and work. With *Unknown Boricua Streaming*, Sánchez also attains larger significance, encompassing international issues and global human rights causes.

In a forthcoming segment related to *Madre Selva (Indígena)*, 2015, we are startled by the split-second sight of Mendieta's blood-red hand reaching out to us. It is Sánchez's life-affirming sign that he rejoins Mendieta, whose strong voice was silenced by untimely death, through his life's work—"bringing life back to the spirits of those who refused to be denied, muted or buried."

Susana Torruella Leval has been an art writer and curator of Puerto Rican, Latino and Latin American contemporary art in New York City since 1970. She was Director of El Museo del Barrio, from 1994–2002, after serving there as Chief Curator, and named Director Emerita by its Board. Ms. Torruella Leval was Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) in New York, and Vice President and President Elect of the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD.) She has recently joined the editorial board of the International Center for Art of the Americas (ICAA) at The Houston Museum of Fine Arts, and has been named to the board of the IMLS (Institute of Museum and Library Services) by President Obama.

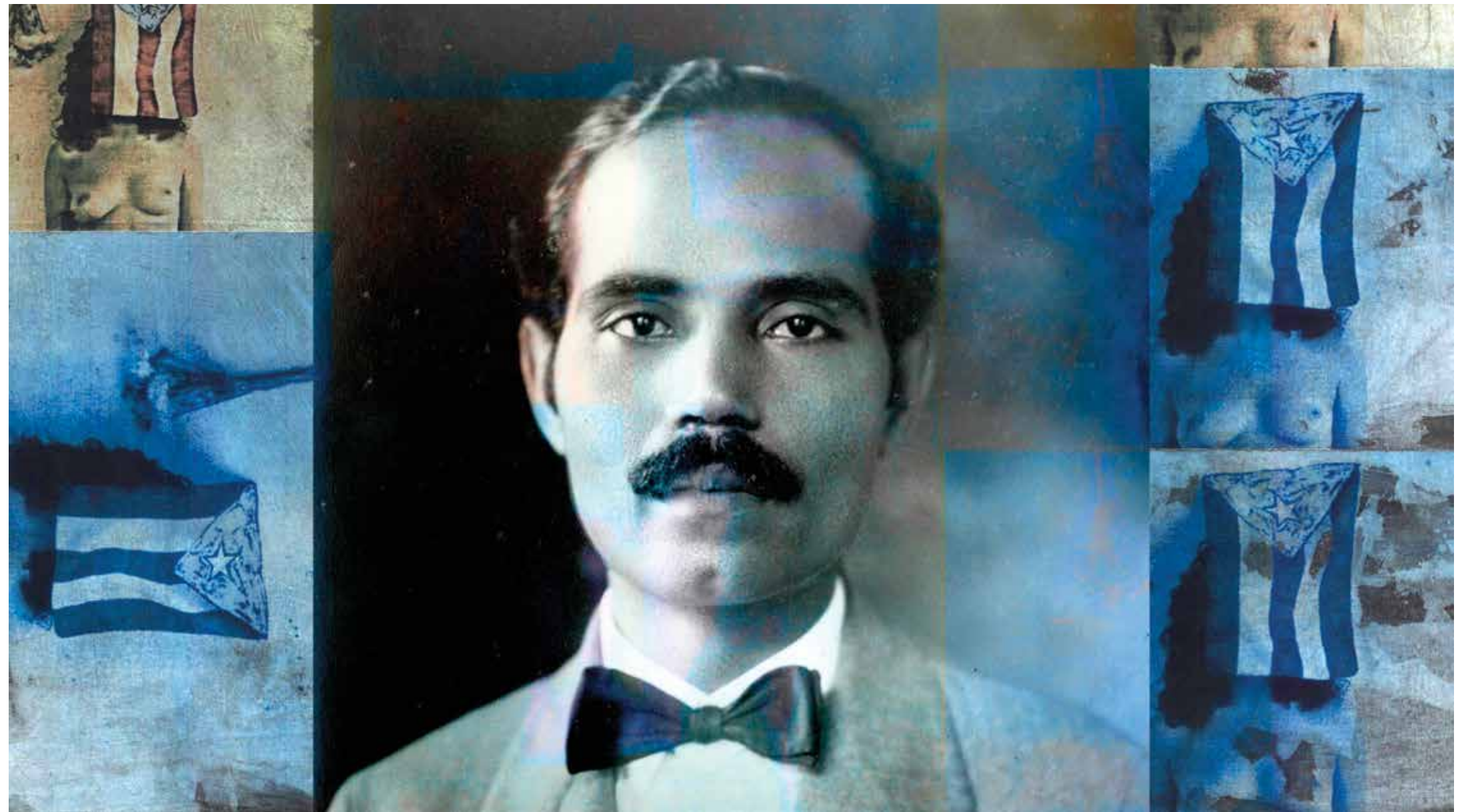
NOTES

¹ Ana Mendieta, 1981, Unpublished Statement in John Perreault, "Earth and Fire: Mendieta's Body of Work", p.10, in *Ana Mendieta: A Retrospective*, New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1987.

² The *Madre Selva* theme, inspired by a poem written by Ana Mendieta in 1982, was conceptualized by Alma Villegas in 1991 as a ritual performance in honor of Mendieta. Written and directed by Villegas, it included dance, movement, and poetry readings. Juan Sánchez and Jolie Guy designed the costumes.

³ Video premiered in *LABOR*, an exhibition curated by Antonio Martorell and Susana Torruella Leval, shown at Hunter College East Harlem Art Gallery, New York City, September 2011 – January 2012. Discussed in the exhibition catalogue *LABOR*, pp. 22-25, 41-43, New York: Hunter College, 2011.

⁴ Artist statement in *Juan Sánchez: The Unknown Boricuas + Prisoner: Abu Ghraib*, Taller Puertorriqueño Inc., exhibition catalogue, Philadelphia, February – March, 2010, n.p.



UNKNOWN BORICUA STREAMING: A Newyorican State of Mind, 2011 (video still)



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Juan Sánchez

Juan Sánchez (b. 1954) is an influential American artist and one of the most important Nuyorican cultural figures to emerge in the second half of the 20th century. Born to migrant working-class Puerto Rican parents in Brooklyn, New York, Sánchez earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from The Cooper Union School of Art in 1977, and a Master of Fine Arts degree from the Mason Gross School of the Arts of Rutgers University in 1980. A politically committed artist, he was inspired early on by the political teachings of the Young Lords and by the collective El Taller Boricua. Sánchez grew to be part of a generation of artists that include such figures as Coco Fusco, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Pepón Osorio and Papo Colo, who in the 1980s and '90s explored questions of ethnic, racial, and national identity in their work, be it through painting, video, performance or installation. He became known for producing brightly hued mixed-media canvases that addressed issues of Puerto Rican life in the United States and on the island. Of his work, critic Lucy Lippard once wrote, "it teaches us new ways of seeing what surrounds us." He is the recipient of grants and fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the Joan Mitchell Foundation, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and the Pollock-Krasner Foundation.

Sánchez's mixed-media paintings, prints, photographs and video installations have been exhibited throughout the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Egypt. His major solo exhibitions include *TRIPTYCH/TRIPTICO: RETRATOS/PORTRAITS*, Zoellner Arts Center Main Gallery, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA, 2009; *Juan Sánchez: RicanStructions: Paintings of the 90's*, MoMA PS1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, 1999; 1898: *Rican/Struction, Multilayered Impressions*, Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York, 1998; *Juan Sánchez: Printed Convictions/Convicciones Grabadas*, Jersey City Museum, NJ, 1998; and *Juan Sánchez: Rican/Structed Convictions* at EXIT ART, New York, 1998. Sánchez has taken part in major groundbreaking group exhibitions such as *Our America: The Latino Presence in American Art*, Smithsonian Museum of American Art, Washington, DC, 2014; *I, You, We: Activism in the 1980s*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2013; *This Will Have Been: Art, Love & Politics in the 1980s*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA, 2012; *Multiplicity*, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, 2011; *On Being Human*, Whitney Museum of American Art, 2003; *Think Print: Books to Billboards, 1980-95*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1996; *American Voices: Latino Photographers in the United States*, FotoFest, Houston, 1994, and the Smithsonian Institution, 1997; and *Latin American Artists of the*

Twentieth Century, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1992, traveling to Estación Plaza de Armas, Sevilla, Spain, 1992; Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France, 1992; Hôtel des Arts, Paris, France, 1992-1993; and Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany, 1993.

Works by Juan Sánchez are included in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and El Museo del Barrio, all in New York; El Instituto de Cultura Puertorriquena in Río Piedras, Puerto Rico; and El Centro Wilfredo Lam in Havana, Cuba, among others.

Sánchez is a Professor of Art at Hunter College, City University of New York.

A Special Thank You to Elizabeth Ferrer for curating this exhibition. It was wonderful working with you and your fine staff. It also gives me special pleasure to have this compilation of paintings, works on paper, and videos exhibited in good old Brooklyn. This show is dedicated to my beloved family, my wife, Alma Villegas, and daughter, Liora Sánchez-Villegas; my dear brother Samuel Sánchez-Colon, fighting for justice, facing challenges and victoriously prevailing; Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, a Puerto Rican freedom fighter murdered on the anniversary of Grito de Lares in 2005; and Oscar López Rivera, a Puerto Rican political prisoner who after 35 years of incarceration should have already been freed. Last but not never least...God is good.
—Juan Sánchez



Para Neda Agha-Soltan, 2011

CHECKLIST OF WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

All works courtesy of the artist

From the Series

Cries and Wounded Whispers:

Mariposas para las Hermanas Mirabel, 2014
Oil and mixed-media collage on wood
74 x 72 in.

Para Neda Agha-Soltan, 2011
Oil and mixed-media collage on wood
74 x 72 in.

Para Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, 2008
Oil and mixed-media collage on wood
74 x 72 in.

Para Angel de Vieques, 2006
Oil and mixed-media collage on wood
74 x 72 in.

Strange and Bitter American History,
2005
Oil and mixed-media collage on wood
74 x 72 in.

Para Rosa Luxemburg, 2004
Oil and mixed-media collage on wood
74 x 72 in.

Lindo Rayos, Lindo Colores, 2003
Oil and mixed-media collage on wood
74 x 72 in.

San Ernesto de la Higuera, 2001
Oil and mixed-media collage on wood
74 x 72 in.

Resurrección, 2005
Oil and mixed-media collage on wood
74 x 72 in.

From the Series UNKNOWN BORICUAS:

Mariposas, Mariposas y más Mariposas,
2014
Mixed-media collage on paper
35 ½ x 37 ½ in.

Mujer Vejiganta Jodie, 2014
Mixed-media collage on paper
35 ½ x 37 ½ in.

Niña Vejiganta Vuelve, 2014
Mixed-media collage on paper
35 ½ x 37 ½ in.

Icarus, 2013
Mixed-media collage on paper
35 ½ x 37 ½ in.

Poema para Mami: Missing You, 2013
Mixed-media collage on paper
35 ½ x 37 ½ in.

Red, White and Blue II, 2013
Mixed-media collage on paper
35 ½ x 37 ½ in.

*Self Portrait Trying to Trace Back
and Find Myself*, 2013
Mixed-media collage on paper
35 ½ x 37 ½ in.

Ave Quiere Volar, 2012
Mixed-media collage on paper
35 ½ x 37 ½ in.

Love for Someone: Still Searching, 2012
Mixed-media collage on paper
35 ½ x 37 ½ in.

Taino Television, 2011
Mixed-media collage on paper
35 ½ x 37 ½ in.

Red Square, 2011
Mixed-media collage on paper
35 ½ x 37 ½ in.

Untitled, 2011
Mixed-media collage on paper
35 ½ x 37 ½ in.

Círculos, 2010
Mixed-media collage on paper
35 ½ x 37 ½ in.

¿Cross or Crucifix?, 2010
Mixed-media collage on paper
35 ½ x 37 ½ in.

Video:

*UNKNOWN BORICUA STREAMING:
A Newyoricán State of Mind*, 2011
Single-channel HD video
8:09 min.

Madre Selva, 2009
Single-channel HD video
7:18 min.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABOUT BRIC

BRIC is the leading presenter of free cultural programming in Brooklyn, and one of the largest in New York City. We present and incubate work by artists and media-makers who reflect the diversity that surrounds us. BRIC programs reach hundreds of thousands of people each year.

Our main venue, BRIC Arts | Media House, offers a public media center, a major contemporary art exhibition space, two performance spaces, a glass-walled TV studio, and artist work spaces.

Some of BRIC's most acclaimed programs include the BRIC Celebrate Brooklyn! Festival in Prospect Park, several path-breaking public access media initiatives, including the newly renamed BRIC TV, and a renowned contemporary art exhibition series. BRIC also offers education and other vital programs at BRIC House and throughout Brooklyn.

In addition to making cultural programming genuinely accessible, BRIC is dedicated to providing substantial support to artists and media makers in their efforts to develop work and reach new audiences.

BRIC is unusual in both presenting exceptional cultural experiences and nurturing individual expression. This dual commitment enables us to most effectively reflect New York City's innate cultural richness and diversity.

Learn more at BRICartsmedia.org

FRONT COVER:

Niña Vejiganta Vuelve (detail), 2014

BACK COVER:

Red Square (detail), 2011

SUPPORTERS

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