

# RAFAEL SORIANO | Biography

(1920-2015)

Born in 1920 in the town of Cidra in the province of Matanzas, Rafael Soriano manifested an early inclination for painting. After completing seven years of study at Havana's prestigious Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes San Alejandro, he graduated in 1943 as Professor of Painting, Drawing and Sculpture. He then returned to Matanzas where he taught visual arts for close to two decades. He was one of the founders, and later Director, of the Escuela de Bellas Artes de Matanzas, the most important art school in Cuba outside of Havana. During this time, he participated with *Los Diez Pintores Concretos* known for bringing the geometric abstraction movement from Europe and the Americas to Cuba.

In 1962 Soriano went into exile, settling in Miami with his wife Milagros and his daughter Hortensia. He worked as a graphic designer and occasionally taught, first at the Catholic Welfare Bureau, and later at the Cuban Cultural Program of the University of Miami. He continued to paint tirelessly in the evenings.

Soriano avoided vernacular themes which dominated Cuban art from its emergence with the first Vanguard in the mid-twenties. His work proceeded along the paths of geometric abstraction in the course of 1950's, but by the late 1960's, Soriano's work took a radical turn. His brush began to create amazing shapes; abstract expressions related to the emotions, feelings, meditations and mystical introspections. A novel treatment of light and color, transparencies and forms placed Soriano in a new aesthetic dimension and freed him from his earlier attachments to schools and tendencies. Through a highly refined technique, he became a master of luminosity, of the pictorial metaphor and of the metaphysical language of forms. In his amazing and highly complex images, light acts as both form and content. It is this unity of purpose and means of representation that constitutes Soriano's transcendental contribution to contemporary visual discourse and elevates his artistic creation to universal rank noted by many scholars.

Since his first exhibition in 1947 in Havana's Lyceum and Lawn Tennis Club, Rafael Soriano's work has been represented in numerous individual exhibitions and over 200 collective shows. His paintings have traveled throughout the United States, Latin America and Europe. His work is included in numerous private and public collections including the Art Museum of the Americas | Organization of American States, Washington, DC, Blanton

Museum of Art, Austin, TX, Bacardi Imports, Miami, FL, Banco Bozano-Simonsen, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Continental Bank, Miami, FL, CIFO Collection | Cisnero Fontanals Art Foundation, Miami, FL, Cuban Museum of Arts and Culture, Miami, FL, Denver Art Museum, CO, Galeria de Arte Moderno, Santa Domingo, Dominican Republic, Grupo DEARMAS, Caracas, Venezuela, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum | Rutgers, New Brunswick, NJ, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA, Lowe Art Museum, Coral Gables, FL, McMullen Museum of Art at Boston College, Boston, MA, Museo de Arte, Matanzas, Cuba, Museo de Arte Zea, Medellin, Colombia, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, Cuba, Museum of Art, Ft. Lauderdale, FL, Nations Bank Corporation, Charlotte, NC, Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum, Miami, FL, Pérez Art Museum Miami, FL and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC.