



Arte Morfosis



Gilberto Frómeta
TROPICAL LIGHT

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November - December 2015

ArteMorfosis - Galería de Arte Cubano

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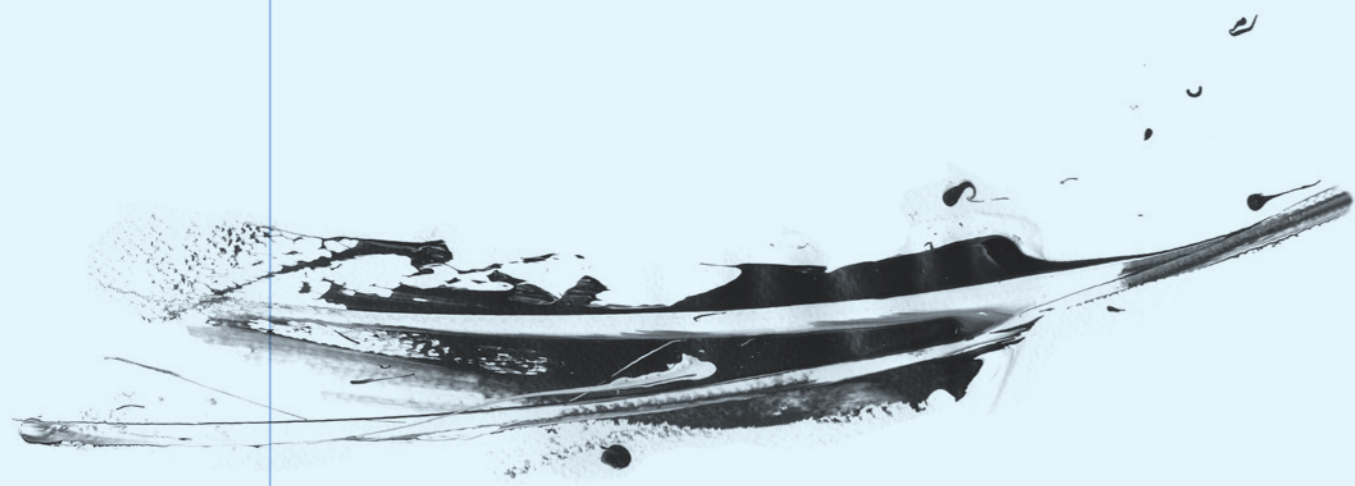
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On cover, fragment of *Rebirth*
(displayed on page 21)

Colorful Images of the Subconscious Identity

On the Abstract Visual Language
of Gilberto Frómeta Fernández



DOLORES DENARO
Art Historian and Curator

Gilberto Frómeta Fernández (Havana, Cuba, 1946), the third artist presented by the ArteMorfosis Gallery in 2015, is also part of the first generation of post-revolutionary Cuban artists. He was initially known in the Caribbean island state, and later internationally, for his images of horses painted in black on a white background. However, the focus of the artist's first Swiss exhibition *Tropical Light* is the abstract painting that has appeared in his work since 2001. A selection of powerful color paintings from the years 2005 to 2015 are presented. 3

The artist offers the following explanation of why and how he evolved from the initially monochromatic realistic themes to the strongly colored abstraction: "I reached abstraction because I wanted to include color in my works. My previous work had been monochromatic for many years. Until then I had feared that colors would make my paintings frivolous. That is how I arrived at abstract expressionism without having a specific artist as ideal. At the same time I observed children scribbling when they learn to hold a pencil as well as the airbrush painting technique. Overall, the road to abstraction was a culinary act that lasted several years."¹ The liberation from realistic painting to abstraction is an evident step, and said development may be retraced in his work.

While the horses in the black and white drawings and the works on paper in black ink from the early years were often inspired by photographs, the transition to abstraction and to the color palette allowed him greater freedom of artistic expression. In 1987 the first abstract horse head appeared in the painting *Celos* (Jealousy) which, in addition to black, also contains red. In 1993/94 Frómeta began to work with acrylic colors, and the horses first became increasingly surrealist and then abstract. Newly added is the non finito. That is, he takes the liberty of leaving subjects unfinished. Consequently, the successive motifs were increasingly more abstract. In *Daring* (2001), he presented his first abstract horse – a brightly hued painting of intense colors in different tones of blue with a red accent. Starting then, the artist concentrated for several years on the development of non-figurative painting. There followed numerous color experiments with the airbrush, dripping and scraping techniques and action painting. In the act of painting, in applying layer over layer of industrial colors – acrylic on the

¹ Author's e-mail interview with the artist in September 2015.

bottom and oil above – he now employs the most diverse tools such as paintbrushes, spatulas, mason’s trowels, brushes or whatever is at hand. His aim is to highlight the unknown, the subconscious.

In contrast, the titles of the works, which in most cases he designates after the paintings have been completed, limit the viewer’s reading of the images or lead them in a specific direction. So, for example, due to its application and structure which resemble drops, we easily understand the light gray color layer on top in the 2005 painting *Rain* (Page 18) as water running down the window when it rains. The red, blue and yellow paint layers that remain below and their partially transparent brown and green mixed shades enable us to see the artist’s free working spirit. In certain places the colors have been eliminated or removed using different tools, as if the surface had been damaged. Above, on the right side of the painting, one can see the eye of a horse, which confirms that Frómeta had painted over one of his horse paintings. On numerous occasions he painted over his works in that way during his four-year stay in China.² With this process the artist liberated himself of the horse, his inspiration for many years, which he sees as man’s best friend. His fascination with the powerful animal, without which the western man could not have achieved everything he has created (think of agriculture, the first means of transportation and construction) has remained until today.

As stated by Frómeta himself, his abstract works should be regarded as a continuation of abstract expressionism. This artistic style developed in the United States from the early 1940’s through the early 1960’s with Jackson Pollock (action painting) and Barnett Newmann and Mark Rothko (*color fields*) as main representatives. As in their case, the Cuban artist’s interests lie in the expressive creation of the subconscious. The artistic trend of abstract expressionism, although initially disliked by the conservative sector in the U.S., was used in exhibitions during the cold war as a means to present the United States as a modern, liberal country.

² Thanks to his horse images, the Cuban artist was invited to exhibit in China.

Presumably because of this, abstract art was not recognized and even considered too imperialistic for decades after the revolution in Cuba. Only in recent years has abstract art been accepted officially in Cuba, and now enjoys increasing popularity. Some Cuban artists saw in it the opportunity to achieve success rapidly, because they assumed that abstract motifs have a merely decorative role.³ In Frómeta’s work it is not so much a question of aesthetic beauty as of the visualization of the unconscious identity.

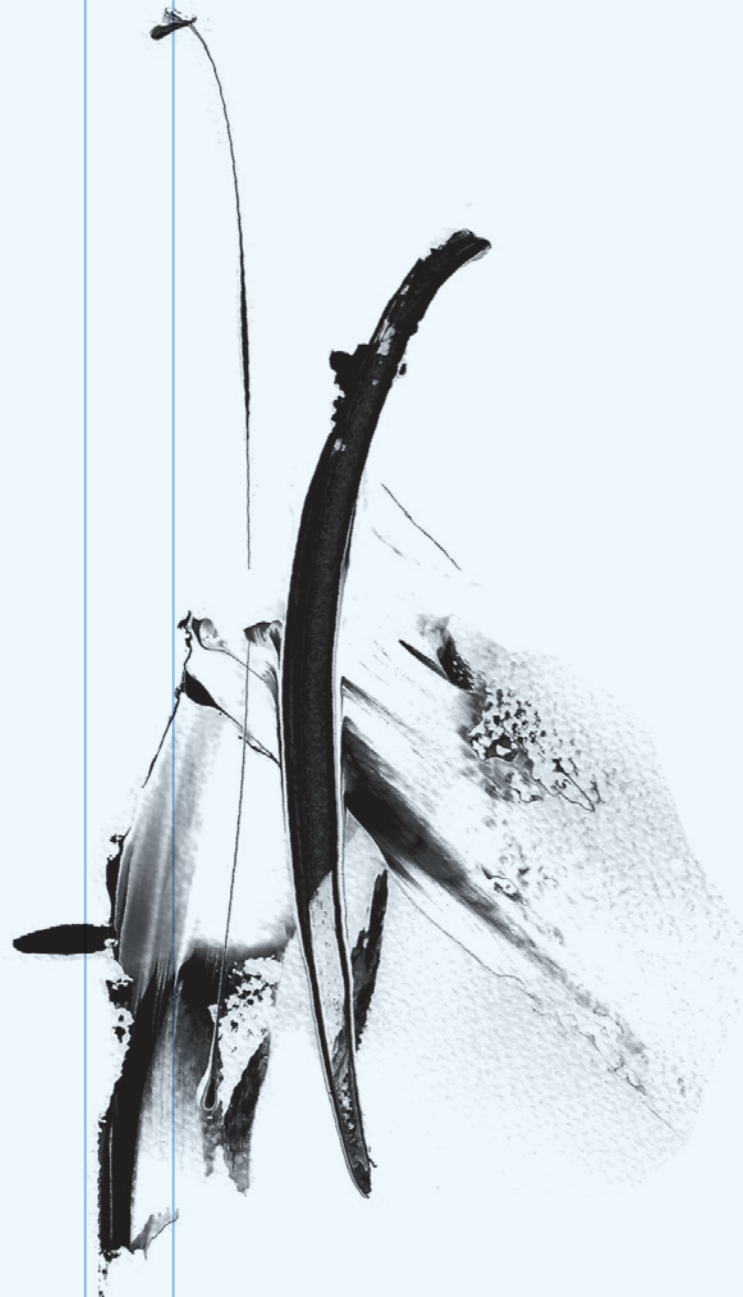
Cuban Raúl Martínez (1927-1995), Chinese (Shanghai) resident Xiaobai Su (1949) and Spanish artist Antoni Tàpies (1923-2012) are painters who have impressed Frómeta on his road to abstraction. By the way, Tàpies, who has been praised as one of the great artists of last century and genius of abstraction, contrary to the opinion of many art critics, did not see himself as an abstract artist but as a “realist who sees his work as an attempt to capture reality and represent it for the observer”. Perhaps the concrete titles of Frómeta’s abstract paintings should be understood in this way. Of course, he is also familiar with the works of Vassily Kandinsky, the pioneer of abstract art. And although he ignores the contents of Kandinsky’s theoretical works, Frómeta’s paintings recall his thoughts, as expressed in Kandinsky’s essay *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (About the Spiritual in Art), first published in 1912. In it, the Russian artist defined, among other things, three types of images: impressions, improvisations and compositions.⁴ Accordingly, the compositions emerge from the subconscious. Such abstract painting, whether constructed consciously or subconsciously, is a composition of structures, colors and shapes (or non-shapes), and the distances between them. Frómeta’s abstractions, developed in the island state without the possibility of outside influence, are alive with bright colors. For him, color is, “the most universal language that reaches and directly affects all layers of society.”⁵ Or as formulated by Kandinsky, color touches the soul and makes it vibrate, for Frómeta, in the clear tropical light.

³ Alex Fleites, *Work in Movement*, manuscript, www.pinturagfrometa.com/gilberto_frometa/?en_remarks,18

⁴ In: Wassily Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*. Insbesondere in der Malerei. Originalausgabe von 1912, 3. Auflage, München: R. PIPER & CO., VERLAG, S. 29.

⁵ Author’s e-mail interview with the artist in September 2015.

When Autumn Has No End



ALEX FLEITES
Poet, Curator and Art Critic

I once wrote, "In Cuba there is no autumn, but a slow rumor that sticks to things, and a biting wind that bends the flowers." And those old words that surely received the erosion of the Island's salty wind come back to my mind when I review the works that make up *Tropical Light*, the collection of paintings with which Gilberto Frómeta wants to appear (expose himself?) before the Swiss public.

Regarding this Cuban artist, there are several things that should be fixed from the beginning if one pretends to penetrate the shimmering forest of his creation: he is a master in his craft (in both design and informalism), experimentation is one of his everyday tools, and he faces the mystery of art – that foundational moment where everything is known and at the same time forgotten – in the face of the wonder of creation - with a joy, a lack of prejudice and a passionate lack of responsibility that are hard to find in men his age.

Since he is a communicator par excellence, Frómeta does not keep his works to himself or to the greedy darkness of the market. From time to time he goes out in search of the public, both in Cuba and abroad, and surprises because of the riskiness of his proposal. He convinces us that, beyond the so-called abyss of the blank space, painting is a joy, a permanent rite of initiation, a shock and a surprise. And if not, it is not worthwhile.

While he already enjoyed fame as figurative painter earned with his expressive horses of deep human appearance¹, Frómeta reacted with "disproportionate gestures", rabid abstractions that included graphic elements, texts, combination of pigments, textures added to the canvas including vegetal fibers and whatever he found along the way. It was the difficult beginning of the 1990's; when previously stable socialist countries were falling down and the small island of the Caribbean touched bottom in one of the worst economic and social crises of its history. He could have begun to shout. He could have gone out into the street with a poster listing his frustrations and doubts. He could have left the country and traveled to those regions where he was already well known, but instead he began to paint. And at times – what a contradiction! – the works turned out frankly optimistic. It was as if he were saying that he could only create from generosity and happiness.

Although he had already begun to experiment with informalism since 1985² in a diptych that deconstructed the emblematic figure of the horse in sunset fragments, it was the generically entitled *Samples* exhibition in the Pomaire Gallery in Quito, Ecuador that the painter assumed as his initiation in that field of the arts regarded by some as style, by others as sub-genre, and still by others (myself included) as art form. If we were to ask Frómeta why he reached that point in his work at such relatively late date, he would not be able to give a single answer. He says that during his learning period³ he found abstractionism alien. It should be recalled in the initial decades of the Revolution in Cuba, it was considered to be a decadent exercise, deprived of the contingences of a society dedicated to the feverish construction of a luminous future⁴. Although non-representational artists were not persecuted as they were in the former USSR, they did not receive any promotional benefits.

¹ That part of his work is represented in the Collection of Cuban Art of the National Museum of Fine Arts in Havana.

² Pieces *Ocaso 1* and *Ocaso 2*. Mixed on canvas, 180 x180 cm. Located at Topes de Collantes Hospital, Sancti Spiritus, Cuba.

³ He belongs to the first generation of the National School of Art, 1962-1967.

⁴ Terms of those days.

The truth is that his encounter with the work of Italian Pierpaolo Calzolari guided him to a moment of full consciousness of the painting event, not only in itself but also for itself. The “theme” or “message” would no longer be necessary (for a long period of time). The artistic gesture became self-referential, autonomous - changing from denotation to connotation.

And, naturally, the assemblage trend assumed later on bears the imprint of Antoni Tàpies, but also of Xiaobai Su, which he has absolutely no shame in admitting, since he thinks that influences nourish rather than limit; everything lies in “being capable of cooking them with your own fire”.⁵

It was then that the use of the airbrush, direct colors (a hint of Henri Matisse, “mentor” of his early student years), the detached, “cosmic” compositions that have been well described by Alejandro G. Alonso appeared. He fully delved into lyrical abstractionism, but with a trend where the blot is not disdainfully thrown on the surface, but “placed”, adjusted, weighed with that good design he cannot easily resist.

8 Let us take the case of a work like *Rain* (page 18). The elements, as stripes or shreds falling from above, are perfectly contained by the lines and float on top of a leaden background that clearly shows traces of condensed water. In *Unexpected Love* (page 28), in turn, he exploits once more the reds he took such liking to during his stay in China; he presents a blue element (an unrecognizable spatial body?) that is going to impact on that sort of magma or igneous broth not randomly, but precisely where a welcoming field opens, as in puzzles where the pieces only fit where they belong.

Pandora (page 33) goes from geometry to informality; but note that the parallel line element has not remained intact – it is scorched, broken on the borders. If in a reductionist analysis of the painting we would like to consider that zone as the “rational” one, we would have to conclude that it is a chaotic rationality, in crisis, or to say the least, in a process of destruction.

It is already known that the spectator cannot avoid connecting blots with elements of the most concrete reality. Here he will “see” roots, there an insect climbing a vegetal fragment, in another piece a half moon – but none of that is real. Nor is anything else that one would like to see, because that is the case with abstraction: like jazz, it whistles a familiar tune and each one harmonizes, constructs or deconstructs the melody according to his personal history and temperament.

The titles given by Frómeta to his works appear afterwards. Initially the piece is just a visual event, not a conceptual one, and he uses the title to joke with the public; or perhaps it is a rope he throws at the public to hold on to and not be dragged completely by the explosions, the color abysses that burst and open before their surprised eyes: *Mystic Flight* (page 25), *Rebirth* (page 21), *White Collar* (page 32), *Yellow Scream* (page 15), *Ardent Emotion* (page 16)...

In 2006 Frómeta came in contact with Asia, when he exhibited for the first time in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Symbolically, that collection is entitled *Following My Own Trail*, and today it may be regarded an answer to a certain critical trend that pretended to ignore the past and deny the validity of a whole generation of active artists who were accused, among other insults, of “painting to sell”, as if making a living from one’s work was not a long-cherished dream since the Renaissance.

He arrived in China for the first time in 2007. The BB Gallery welcomed him with his collection of abstract work.⁶ There he was also asked to prepare an exhibition of... horses! – a theme

⁵ This text is based on numerous conversations with the artist.

⁶ “Light and Color”.

that, despite having brought him great satisfaction, he considered ended at that time. Nevertheless, he set himself the challenge.⁷ Again he achieved success with the public and the critics. He was in a moment of artistic fulfillment. He was able to experiment with materials that were unattainable in Cuba, and found the way to create for himself a pleasant life; a very productive and gratifying life of work that allowed him to experience an environment he had not known up to that moment. He interacted with new colleagues, shared with them knowledge and techniques, and achieved a truly professional relationship with the complex gallery circuit there.

In total, Frómeta has exhibited four times with remarkable success in the Asian giant, and a highly significant fact is that our artist lived almost five years as an equal in a country that had become a center of contemporary art, preferred in fairs and biennials and highly considered by collectors and art dealers. He went to the very center of the volcano and returned renewed from it – his faith in art as means of human enrichment intact – equipped with a lack of prejudice that makes him capable of following any road, technique or style demanded by his sensibility.

That is why the exhibition *Desde mi jardín* (From My Garden)⁸, entirely comprised of photographic manipulations of soft surreal shades, was understood by the critics not as a diversion or deviation from a long-prepared road, but as another episode of his restless temperament, another escape valve for a creative tension that is necessarily going to express itself in opposition to “isms”, falsely established hierarchies, and preconceived concepts that restrict the creative act to a series of empty explanations. Because, if indeed the cognitive function of art is in the foreground of Frómeta’s work (it is his instrument for exploring and explaining the world), it is no less true that the playful aspect plays an outstanding role in his work, since, in the end, he thinks, life is nothing but a big risky game that everyone plays with greater or lesser composure.

I have followed Frómeta’s work since 2006, when I collaborated in the creation of *Abstracción sincrética* (Syncretic Abstraction).⁹ I had already admired him for some time, but had not had the opportunity to penetrate into his Renaissance-style workshop, to see him work, to have long conversations with him about everything human and divine. And I can attest that his shield against disillusion, tricks and bad attitudes is impenetrable. He works under all circumstances, whether his work arouses enthusiastic commentaries or the critics or the market disregard him; he creates with the devotion of Byzantine icon painters and finds gratification, the greatest prize, in the work itself.

Finally, I must say once again I admire and am again disturbed by the segment of Frómeta’s work being exhibited today in Zurich. Once more I recognize his good work, his nervous pulse and his audacious devotion. I have examined his works over and over again, at different hours of the day and with various states of mind. And they not always produce the same effect on me. Those I prefer, those I would like to have in my small space in Havana, are changing. And it is because I do not succeed in “appropriating” them completely – there is always an element I missed or an artist’s gesture that now produces a new emotion in me, as if instead of observing I were the one observed. They are living beings, I say to myself; they are moved by that “slow rumor” that, in lack of a better name, we call autumn in Cuba. An autumn that, since it does not exist, since it does not reflect on the red sunsets of the Island, will also have no end.

Havana and July, 2015

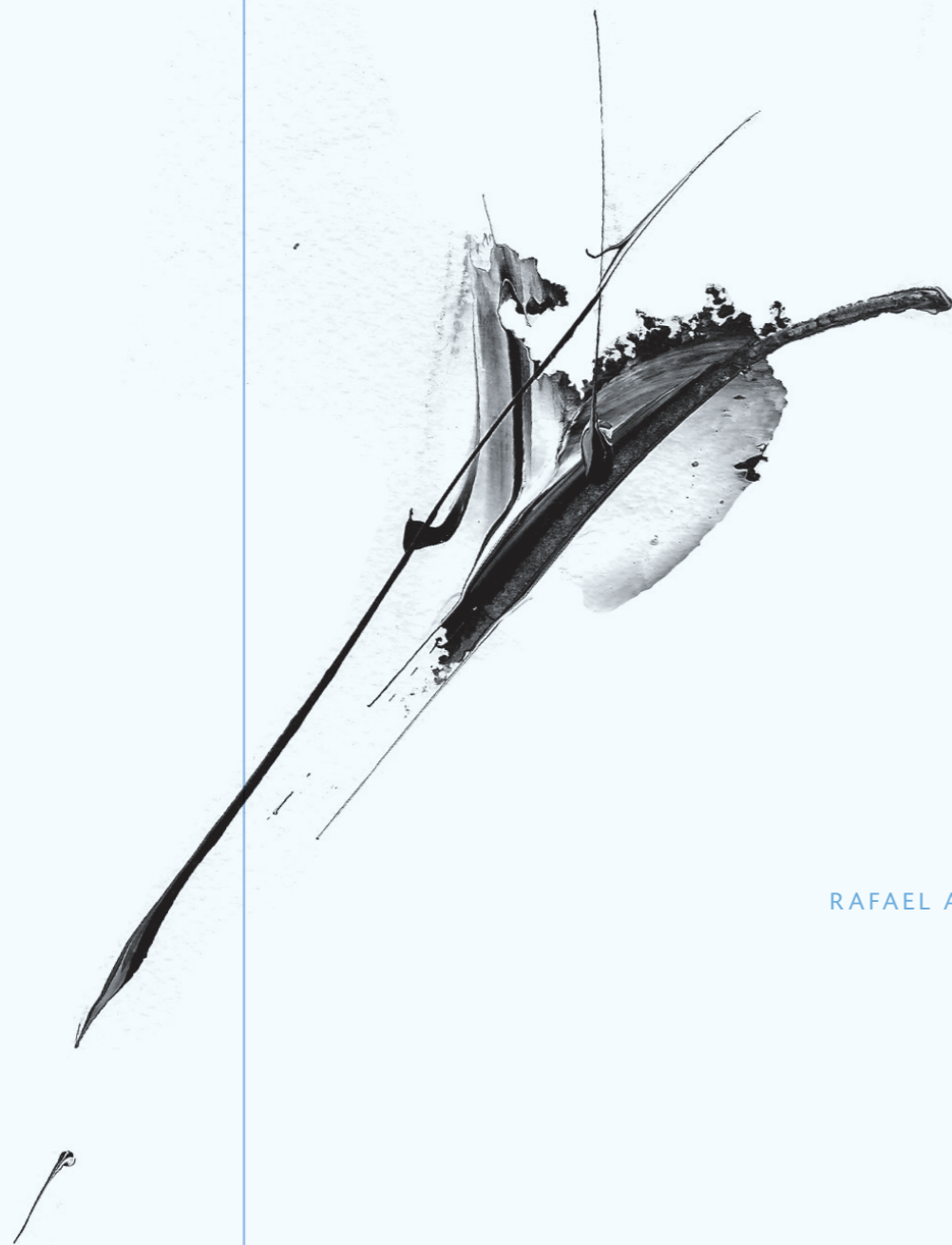
⁷ *Contra viento y marea* (Against Wind and Tide). BB Gallery, Beijing, China.

⁸ 2011, Galería Orígenes, Havana.

⁹ Collage Habana Gallery.

The Shades of a Temperament

RAFAEL ACOSTA DE ARRIBA
Poet, Essayist and Art Critic



Gilberto Frómeta's painting belongs to the imagination of quite a few generations of Cubans, including mine. I followed his work with interest and admiration since I was a young man interested in the visual arts; way back then I understood that his painting is an act of faith. Time went by and Frómeta became famous to critics and experts – I would say even more – one cannot write about visual arts in Cuba and ignore the poetics of this artist who is recognized to have occupied a distinctive and original place in the island's art.

In his exhibition *Tropical Light*, Frómeta once more shows the mastery of his abstract painting. It should be added that he has no less expertise in figurative work, but that theme should be handled at another point. From the first glance, one recognizes in these pieces aspects of his previous work, precisely the one that made him well known in the Cuban painting scene. It could be said that it is like the elaborated sediment, the presence of a style refined with the years, or better yet, the result of maturity in its fullness now displayed in a discourse constructed for the occasion.

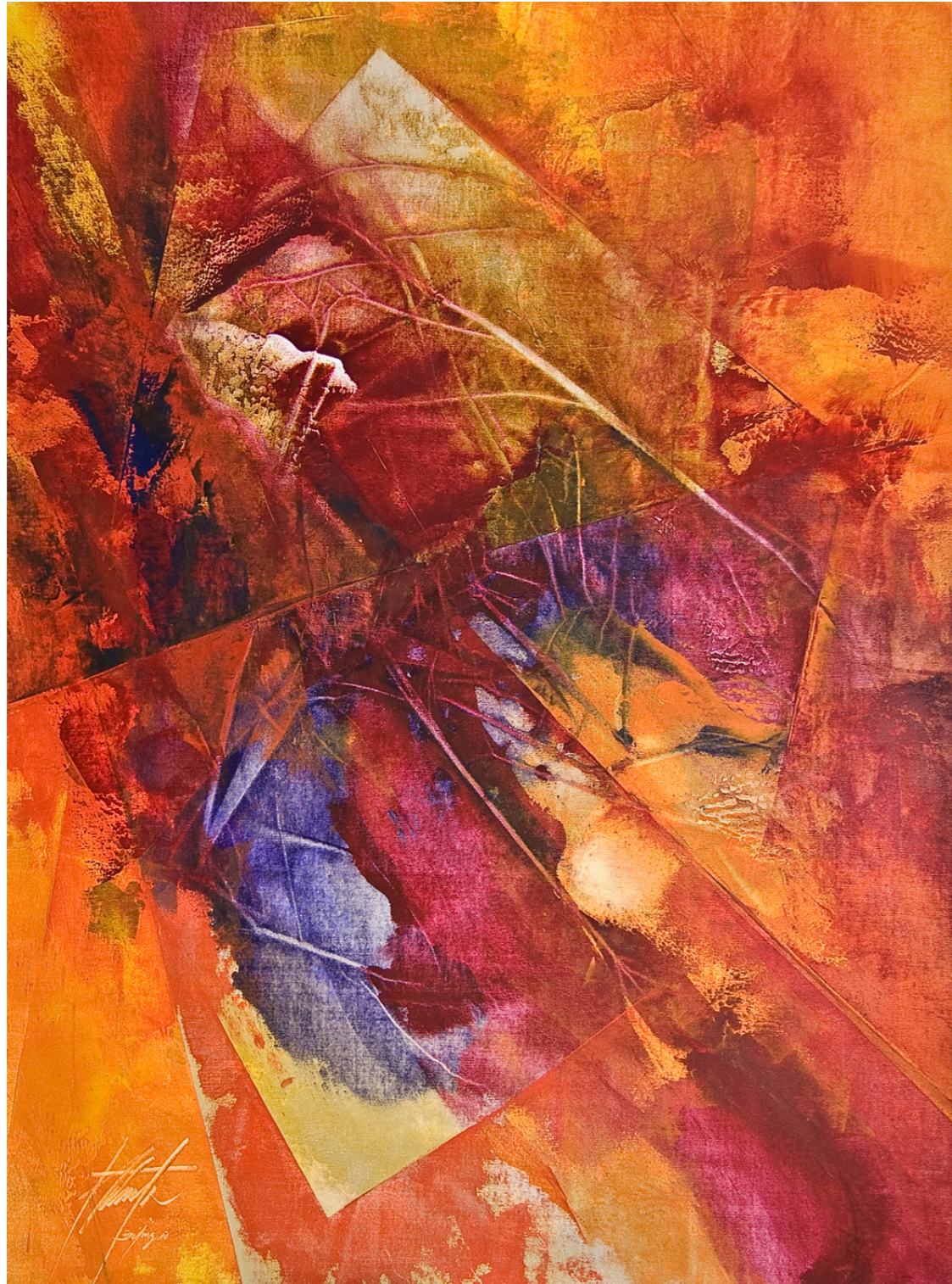
Textures and colors, veins and arteries of the image are laid bare; stripes of colors that irrupt like cuts on the canvas surface; superimposed layers of shades and tones, drippings of colors – in short, signs of violence in the images that harmonize and attain balance in a talent that does not resist domestication by the orthodoxy of art. There is no restraint in these pieces, but indeed a sense of composition that prevents the distinctive features to overwhelm or disrupt the final result. The artist's pure temperament is captured in each painting.

The artist's subjectivity nourishes his style; in this case it is his emotion that dictates the strokes. The mystery of color; the cryptic nature of abstractionism encourage the poetry contained in the metamorphosis of the images in his paintings. Some works have been implanted with pieces of jute (or sack) fabric, which grants them additional uniqueness. The geometrical aspect is also present – not to define, but acting in support of the images; it is perhaps the central element of the composition.

Frómeta's abstract painting does not ask questions about the frontiers of art, something that belongs more to the attempts of the so-called conceptual art (from Duchamp to the present); what it does is to exercise freedom of creation within those limits. Neither does it question itself about the limits of abstraction, a genre that became academic at a given point in twentieth century art. Therefore, I insist, what our artist's abstract painting intends is to recreate to the convulsions the meta-language of abstraction. I could state that his work was always a denial of that odd idea that decreed "the death of painting". Instead, it is a vital and expressive painting; signs ranging from the silent blue (evocation, of course, of the Caribbean Sea) to the striking red and similar, going through gradations of the dark shades – a gradual descent to the shadows, the luxury of gloom. They are signs that crescendo from the silent murmur to the uninhibited shout of Pollock.

These paintings evoke various sensations in us; one of them is the idea of infinity, often associated with abstraction. "The infinite is demonic and borders the romantic vertigo.", said Octavio Paz in reference to twentieth century abstract painting. This assertion and my knowledge of Frómeta's work lead me to suppose that he is one of the old school romantics, a creator in search of the totality of signs. The artist fills the empty space with blood, with fury, with the sharp remarks produced by the most passionate creation, with his character. The work features poetry of movement and transmutations of color, lyrics of a frenzy that does not stop until the conscious abandonment of the piece.

The visual discourse of *Tropical Light*, its essence, is rhapsodic. Gilberto Frómeta has recreated the diorama of lights of varied intensity characteristic of the Tropics in this exhibition. There is light on top of the colors and underneath them; supporting, fragmenting, and illuminating them. Light is like the latent soul of the pieces of the exhibition. The artist has chosen the solar luminosity of these latitudes and has materialized them in paintings that synthesize and express the Dionysian nature of the Caribbean Sea or of Cuban art, of which he is one of its indisputable masters.



Beijing Autumn
2010, acrylic and oil / canvas
115 x 85 cm



Sudden White
2011, acrylic and oil / canvas
100 x 70 cm



Eternity
2010, acrylic and oil / canvas
120 x 100 cm

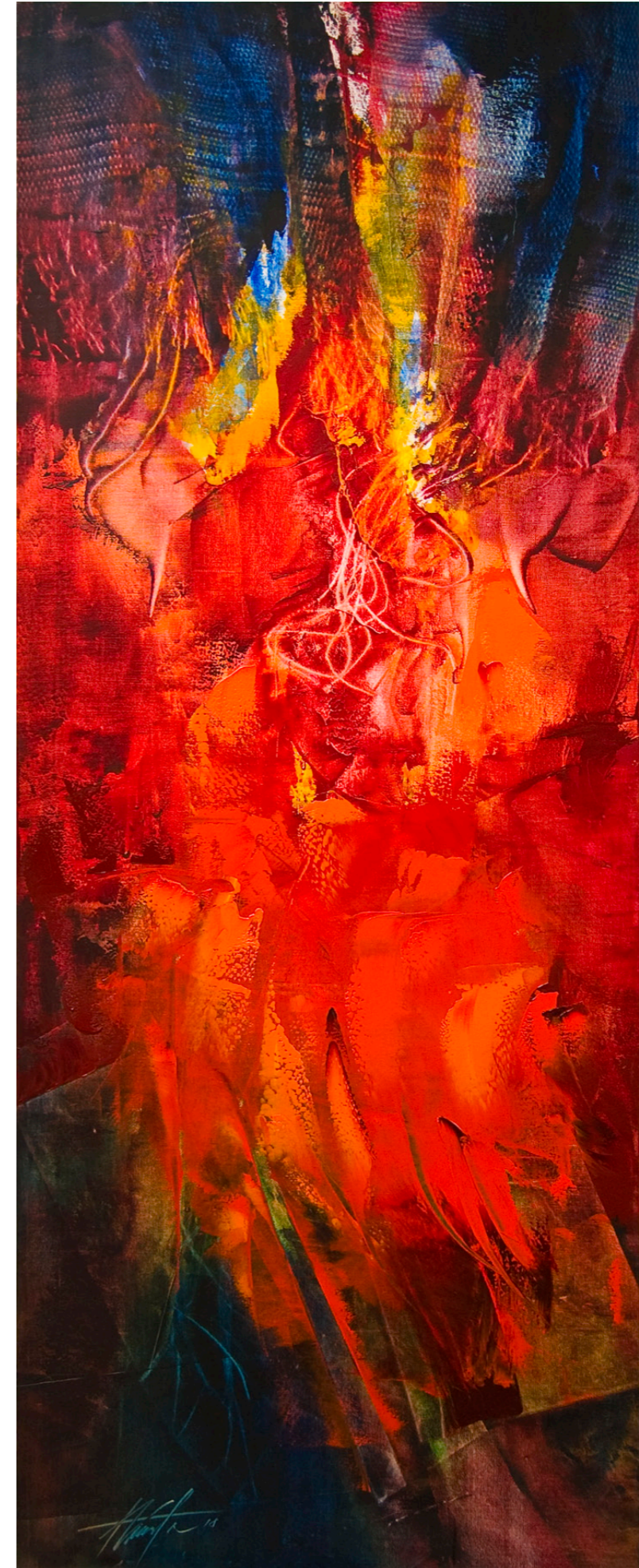


Yellow Scream
2011, acrylic and oil / canvas
100 x 80 cm



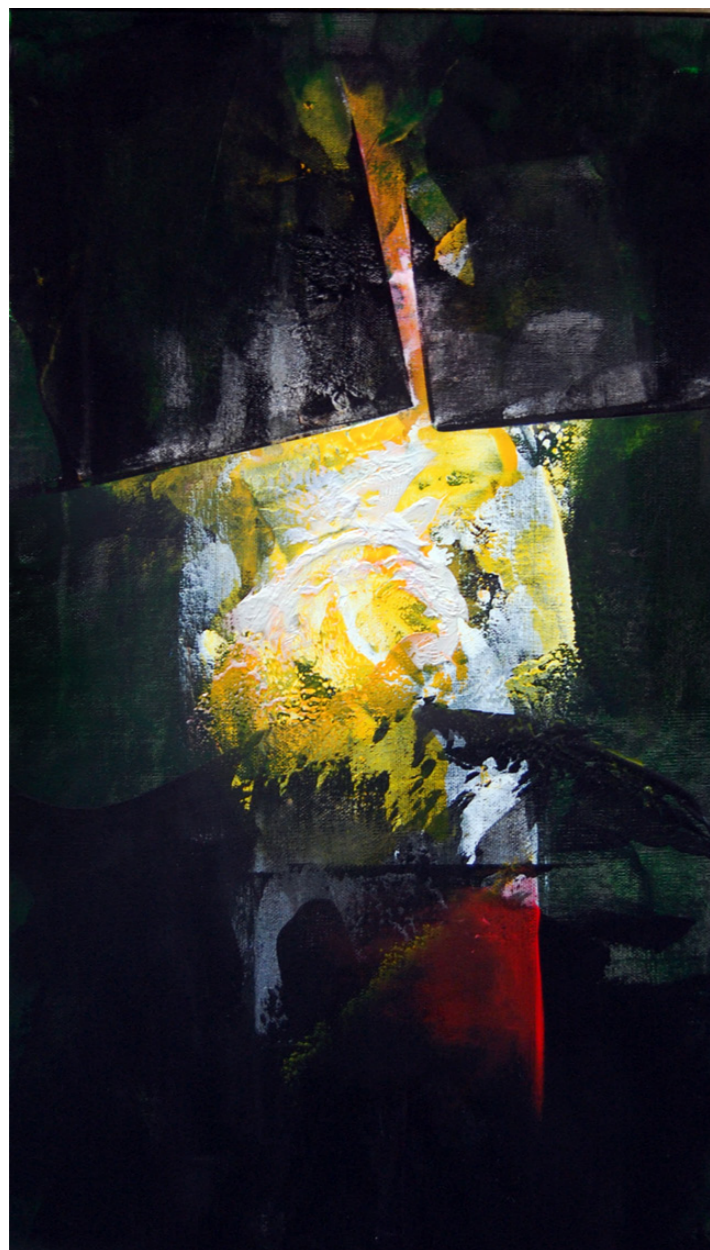
Ardent Emotion
 2010, acrylic and oil / canvas
 110 x 56 cm

page 17 *Warm Stream*
 2010, acrylic and oil / canvas
 210 x 80 cm



Rain
2005, mixed media / canvas
100 x 120 cm





Hidden Light
2010, acrylic and oil / canvas
100 x 45 cm

page 21 *Rebirth*
2010, acrylic and oil / canvas
120 x 90 cm





Approach
2011, acrylic and oil / canvas
80 x 100 cm



Green Sprouts of Life
2010, acrylic and oil / canvas
80 x 100 cm



Vortex
 2011, acrylic and oil / canvas
 100 x 110 cm



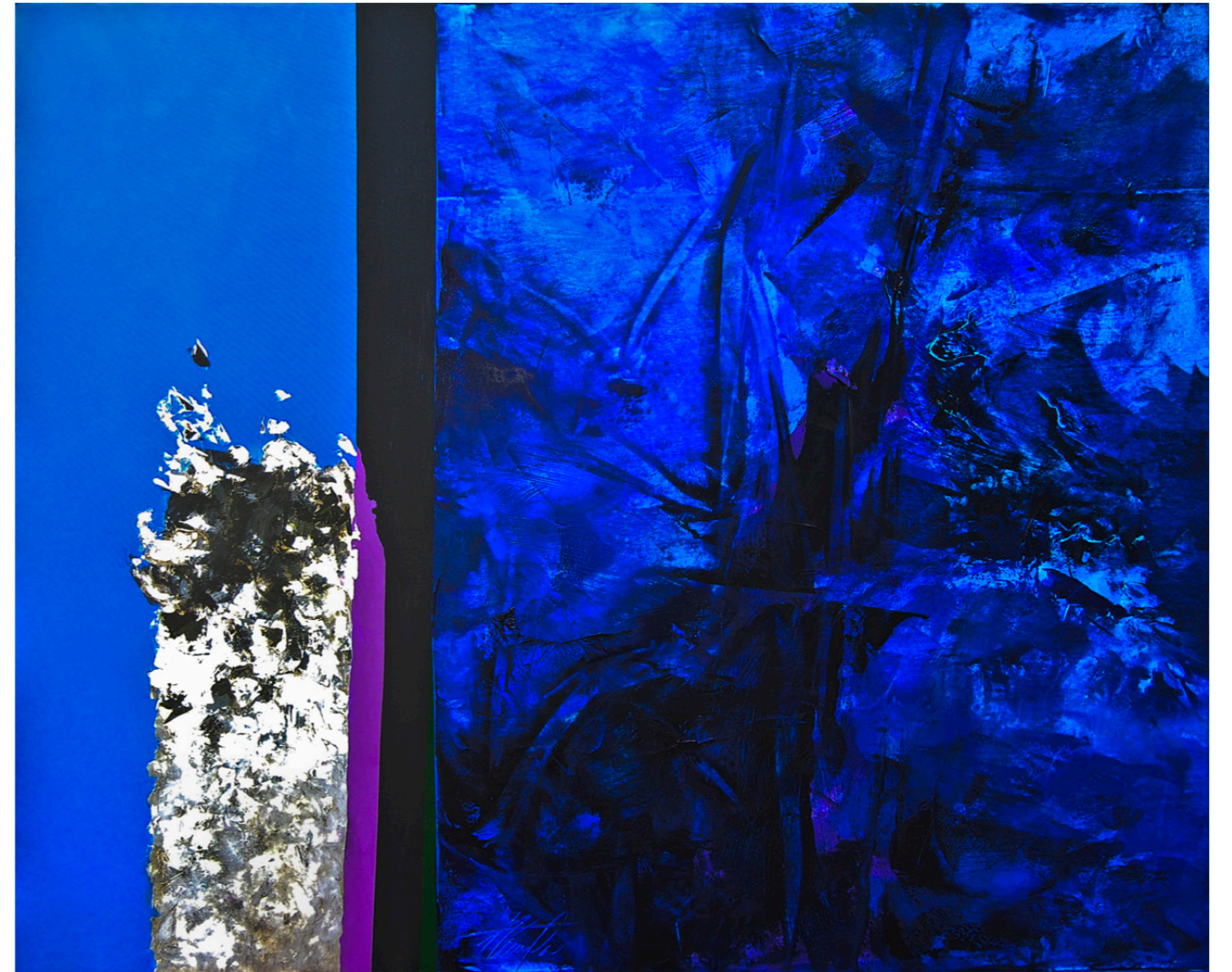
Mystic Flight
 2011, acrylic and oil / canvas
 100 x 120 cm



Red Vastness
2010, oil / canvas
125 x 210 cm



Unexpected Love
2010, acrylic and oil / canvas
120 x 100 cm



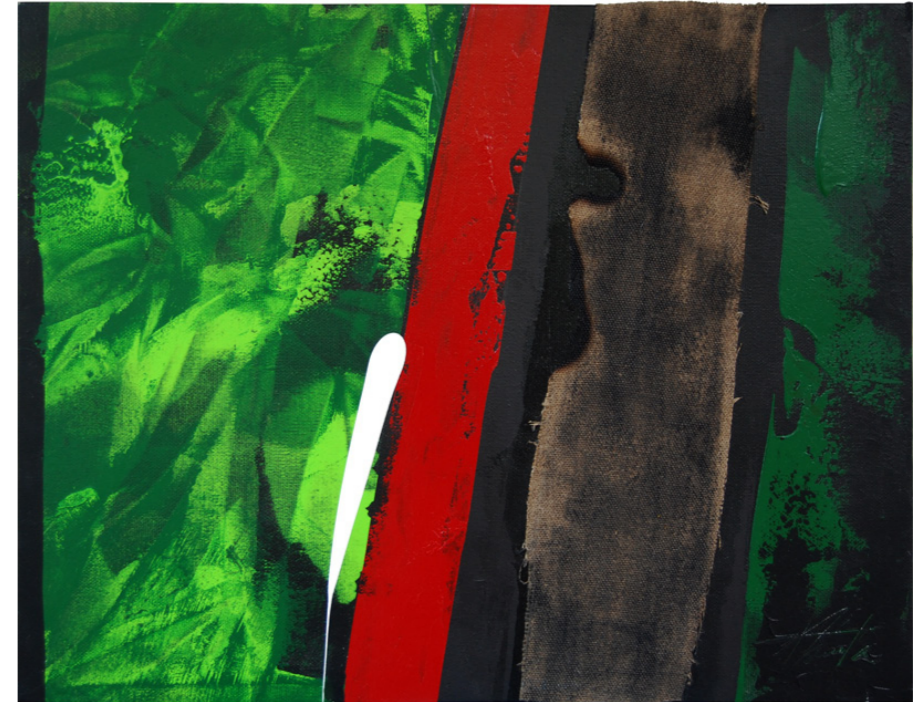
When Autumn Ends
2015, acrylic and oil / canvas
150 x 185 cm

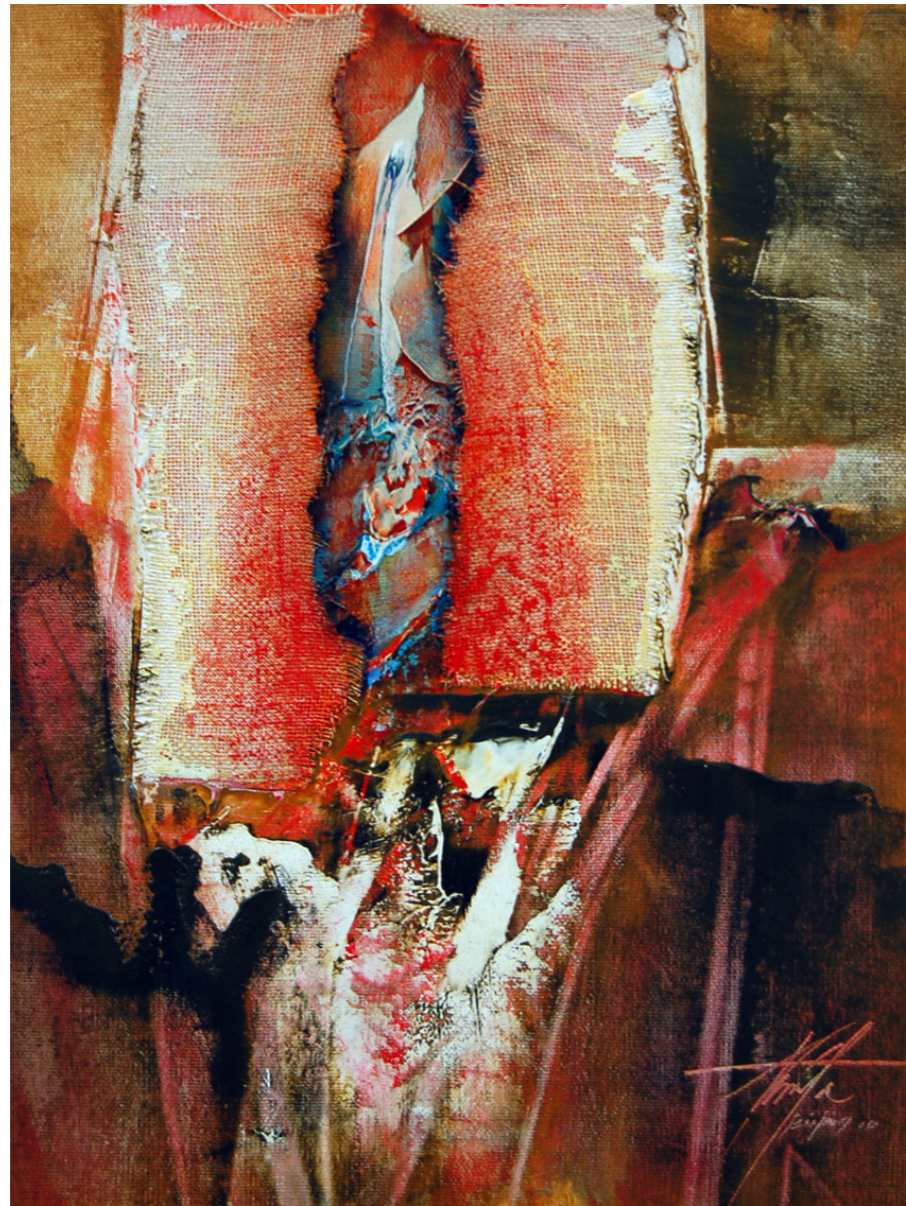


Reddish Verse
2010, acrylic and oil / canvas
126 x 200 cm

page 31 above *Intimacy*
2015, acrylic and linen / canvas
53 x 68 cm

page 31 below *Belated Relation*
2014, linen, jute and acrylic / canvas
80 x 105 cm





White Collar
 2010, sisal cloth, acrylic and oil / canvas
 60 x 45 cm



Pandora
 2010, sisal cloth, acrylic and oil / canvas
 100 x 80 cm



Exotic
 2015, linen, acrylic and oil / canvas
 68 x 53 cm



Male
 2014, jute, linen and acrylic / canvas
 85 x 70 cm

GILBERTO FRÓMETA FERNÁNDEZ

Havana, 1946

He is a well-known draftsman, painter, engraver and graphic designer. Having studied Commercial Art in the United States in 1958-60, he graduated in 1967 from the National School of Art (ENA) in Havana, and in 1984 obtained a bachelor degree in visual arts, with specialization in graphics, from the Higher Institute of Art (ISA) in Havana. His working experience began as a graphic designer for the magazine *Cuba Internacional*. Later he was an advisor to the Directorate of Artistic Education of the Cuban Ministry of Culture and in 1978 was director of the National School of Design in Havana. He also worked as a teacher of drawing at the National School of Art. Since 1985 he has been an independent artist, extending his teaching activity to several Latin American countries, among them Mexico, Ecuador and Venezuela. He is a member of the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC) and of the Experimental Graphics Workshop of Havana.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (SELECTED)

- 36 **2015** *To Fly!* Collateral Exhibition *Zona Franca*, 12th Havana Biennial Historical Park Morro-Cabaña, Pavilion I, Havana, Cuba
Marks on the Road. In honor of the artist's father and the city of Baracoa. Eliseo Osorio C. Gallery, Guantánamo, Cuba
- 2014** *No perder la tabla* (Don't Lose your Temper). Villa Manuela Gallery, Havana, Cuba
- 2012** *Noble Whispers from Afar*. Art in Capitals Gallery, Shanghai, China
- 2011** *From my Garden*. Orígenes Gallery (Collage Habana), García Lorca Theater, Havana, Cuba
- 2010** *Spring Thunder*. Huitai Art Center, Tianjin, China
- 2009** *Against Wind and Tides*. BB Gallery, Beijing, China
- 2007** *Light & Color*. BB Gallery, Beijing, China
- 2006** *Following my Own Trail*. Penang University, Sains, Malaysia
Recent Horse Paintings. City Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Syncretic Abstraction. Collage Habana Gallery, Havana, Cuba
- 2005** *Making Headways*. Soka Gakay Foundation, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Cuban Painting. City Art Gallery, Melaka, Malaysia
- 2003** *Sons of the Wind*. Fernando Pessoa Art Gallery, Coral Gables, Florida. U.S.A.
Sons of the Wind and of the Absurd. La Acacia Gallery, Havana, Cuba
Paintings. Varadero Gallery, Meliá Varadero Hotel, Varadero, Cuba
- 2001** *Paradoxes*. FP Gallery, Lisbon, Portugal
- 1996** *If Faith is Lost...* La Acacia Gallery, Havana, Cuba
- 1995** *Frómeta*. Torres Gallery, Bilbao, Spain
- 1994** *The Mysteries of Colors*. Nader Art Gallery, Dominican Republic
Frómeta. Torres Gallery, Bilbao, Spain
- 1993** *Land of Dreams*. Quintero Gallery, Barranquilla, Colombia
Dreams of the Island. Habana Gallery, Havana, Cuba
- 1991** *Havana-Maracaibo-Havana*. La Acacia Gallery, Havana, Cuba
The Voracious Space of Silence. Díaz Manzini Gallery, Caracas, Venezuela
Presence of Havana. Musas Workshop Gallery, Maracaibo, Venezuela
- 1990** *Suggestions among Curtains*. America Gallery, Caracas, Venezuela
- 1989** *Paintings by Frómeta*. Modern Art Museum Gallery, Cuenca, Ecuador
Oils. Pomaire Gallery, Quito, Ecuador
- 1988** *My Neighbors... Photoprints*. Wifredo Lam Center, Havana, Cuba
- 1986** *Paintings 1984-1986*. National Fine Arts Museum, Havana, Cuba
First Havana Biennial Prize. Engravings and Photoprints. Latin American Space Gallery, Paris, France
- 1980** *Drawings by Frómeta*. Habana Gallery, Havana, Cuba.
- 1977** *Photoprints by Frómeta*. National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba
- 1970** *The Swindle of Freedom. Drawing*. La Rampa Gallery, Habana Libre Hotel, Havana, Cuba

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (SELECTED)

- 2015** *AB + C*, second edition. Collateral to the 12th Havana Biennial. Taganana Hall, Hotel Nacional de Cuba, Havana, Cuba
- 2012** *AB + C*. Collateral to the 11th Havana Biennial. Taganana Hall, Hotel Nacional de Cuba, Havana, Cuba
Latin-American Artists' Collective Show. Xuhui Art Museum, Shanghai, China
- 2010** *Cuba Avant-Garde Beijing*. Xin Dong Cheng Space for Contemporary Art, 798 Art Zone, Beijing, China
Crossover 2010. 6th Culture and Art Festival of Songzhuang, Sunshine International Museum, Beijing, China
- 2009** *CIGE 2009*. International Art Fair, Embassy of the Republic of Cuba & BB Gallery, Beijing, China
- 2008** *Art Beijing 2008*. BB Gallery, Beijing, China
- 2007** *Art Beijing 2007*. BB Gallery, Beijing, China
- 2004** ARCO Fair. Madrid, Spain
- 2001** International Contemporary Art Biennale. Florence, Italy
- 1994** Plastic Arts Biennial. Cuenca, Ecuador
- 1993** International Art Fair, Miami, U.S.A.
- 1992** Sevilla '92 Art Fair. Seville, Spain
- 1986** *40 Artists, 40 Years, 40 Countries*. UNESCO, Paris, France
- 1985** *11th International Independents' Exhibition*. Kanagawa, Japan
1st Havana Biennial. Havana, Cuba
- 1975** Poster Biennial. Warsaw, Poland

DISTINCTIONS

- 2001** Diploma for Artistic Merit. Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba
- 1996** National Culture Distinction. Ministry of Culture, Cuba
- 1990** 1st Prize. VI Biennial of Small Format Prints. TAGA, Caracas, Venezuela
- 1984** Prize in 1st Havana Biennial. Latin American Space, Paris, France
Francisco Javier Báez National Prints Prize. 1st Havana Biennial, Havana, Cuba
- 1981** Prize. 1st National Exhibition of Small Format Prints, Havana, Cuba
- 1977** Prize. 1st National Exhibition of Drawing, Pinar del Río, Cuba
- 1976** Prize. Design of Magazine Cover. National Exhibition of Graphic Propaganda, Havana, Cuba

COLLECTIONS (SELECTED)

National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba; Modern Art Museum, Lodz, Poland; Wilanow Poster Museum, Poland; Szczecin National Museum, Poland; Janus Panonius Museum, Budapest, Hungary; Indian Art Museum, Moscow, Russia; Metropolitan Council, Bradford City, UK; Modern Art Museum, Cuenca, Ecuador; Cuban Art Museum, Vienna, Austria; and works in both institutional and individual collections in Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Germany, Holland, Jamaica, Japan, Luxemburg, Malaysia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Russia, Spain, Syria, U.K., U.S.A. and Venezuela

ARTEMORFOSIS - GALERÍA DE ARTE CUBANO

ArteMorfosis is a gallery for Cuban art in Zurich. Its aim is to make the work of contemporary Cuban artists accessible to an interested audience. ArteMorfosis initially focuses on well-established Cuban artists, with proven international track records, but who remain yet to be discovered in the German-speaking part of Europe.

The gallery is a piece of Cuba in Zurich; it irradiates Cuban warmth and transmits Cuba's carefree nature, joy of living and wealth of improvisation to the visitor. Strong coffee, a drink of rum, music, and at times too many paintings hanging on the walls create an atmosphere like the one you also find in Cuban private galleries. While it highlights distinctive Cuban characteristics, the Gallery finds ever-new paths of its own: ArteMorfosis is self-confidently different, and is aimed at like-minded visitors.

38

The name "ArteMorfosis" and the butterfly in its logo symbolize the gallery owners' understanding of the creative process. The metamorphosis of a butterfly – from larva to cocoon to butterfly, to laying eggs and again to larva – is an eternal biological development cycle. A comparable cycle exists in art: an artist, inspired by his culture, his environment, experiences and intuitions, creates a work of art with paints and a canvas, presents it to the public, sells it and uses the proceeds for his next work. The gallery is dedicated to the part of the cycle in which art is presented and sold.

Participating in a cultural development cycle that still has no name, the gallery owners without further ado named this cycle and named their gallery, "ArteMorfosis".

The gallery considers itself as ambassador of Cuban art in Switzerland and a meeting place between art creators and collectors. Its first priority is to promote the lively, creative work of Cuban artists, since Cuba is (still) today a little-known art market. The country's transformation and opening provide vast opportunities for the discovery of - in Switzerland hitherto unknown - art treasures.

THE GALLERY OWNERS

Idalmys Burkhard - García Negrín (1967) was born in Cuba. She grew up in a culturally interested family; her father was a founding member of the Cuban National Chorus and throughout her working life her mother was involved in different activities connected with the theater. Thus, performing artists were frequent house guests. As a nurse working at higher level art schools for many years, she was able to stay in touch with the artistic community. She lives in Switzerland since 2002.

Johann Burkhard (1961) is a Swiss Internet pioneer. As co-founder of the Swiss Internet comparison website, www.comparis.ch, he quickly embraced the potential of the new media and was one of the few who achieved commercial success. For the last 13 years he has operated a classifieds portal (www.cubisima.com), which ranks amongst the most used websites in Cuba. Johann will contribute his experience of the digital media, new technologies and decision-making to ArteMorfosis. Idalmys and Johann have been married for 13 years and have a 10-year old son.

THE GALLERY

ArteMorfosis - Galería de Arte Cubano Rämistrasse 31, 8001 Zürich
+41 44 252 41 41 - info@artemorfosis.com - www.artemorfosis.com
Exhibit hours: Wednesday to Saturday, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

THE AUTHORS

Dolores Denaro, born in 1971, read Modern Art History, Architectural History, and Monument Preservation as well as Religious Studies at the University of Bern. She holds an MAS in Cultural Management from the University of Basel. Until 2001 she was freelance publicist and curator as well as research assistant at the Paul-Klee-Stiftung and later the Johannes-Itten-Stiftung at Kunstmuseum Bern. From 1999 until 2001 director and curator at Kunsthau Grenchen. From 2002 until the end of 2011 (ten years) director and curator at Kunsthau CentrePasquArt in Biel. From 2012 until 2013 external expert consultant for the Julius Bär Kunstsammlung (art collection). Since 2012, president of the Swiss national Kiefer Hablitzel Preis für bildende Kunst (fine arts award). Since 2013, freelance curator and publicist. Numerous exhibitions and publications with the focus on contemporary art as well as board member of various art foundations and jury member on several panels.

39

Alex Fleites (Caracas, Venezuela, 1954). Bachelor in Philology from the University of Havana. Poet, narrator, editor, journalist, curator and art critic. He has been editor-in-chief of the cultural page of the newspaper *Juventud Rebelde*, of the magazines *ArteCubano*, *Unión* and *Cine Cubano*. He is currently art director of *Amnios*, a Cuban poetry magazine. Among his most outstanding curatorships are *Calma locura del color paciente. Homenaje de veinte gráficos cubanos a José Luis Cuevas*, University of Xalapa, Veracruz, Mexico, and *Bola viva. Pintura cubana de hoy*, an exhibition which brought together thirty masters of Cuban painting and was visited by eighty thousand people as it traveled for two years to the Colombian cities Barranquilla, Santa Marta, Cartagena, Montería and Bogotá.

Rafael Acosta de Arriba (Havana, Cuba, 1953) Art critic, poet, essayist, professor at the University of the Arts (ISA) and at the Faculty of Arts and Literature of the University of Havana. Doctor in Historical Sciences (1998), and Doctor in Sciences (2009). He works as a researcher at the Juan Marinello Institute for Cultural Research in Havana. He has received several prizes and distinctions, among them, on four occasions (1994, 2010, 2012 and 2014) the Annual Prize of Research granted by the Ministry of Culture. In 2011 he received the Guy Pérez Cisneros National Prize of Art Criticism. He presided over the 7th and 8th Havana Biennials. He has lectured at conferences, postgraduate and master courses in Cuba, Spain, Brazil, Mexico, Italy and Israel. He was chief editor and director of several cultural magazines. In 2005 he founded and was first director of the magazine *Fotografía Cubana*. From 1999 to 2005 he was President of the National Council for Visual Arts. He has been curator of numerous exhibitions, both in Cuba and abroad. He has published six books of poems and seven books of essays. His essays and articles have been published in specialized magazines.

GILBERTO FRÓMETA. TROPICAL LIGHT

The present catalogue is published on the occasion of the exhibition of the same title that is presented from November 7 to December 24, 2015 at the Cuban Art Gallery ArteMorfosis, Zurich.

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Catalogues of previous exhibitions at ArteMorfosis - Galería de Arte Cubano

FLORA FONG ART: ELIXIR OF LIFE APRIL - JUNE 2015

ERNESTO GARCÍA PEÑA ISLAND LYRICS AUGUST - OCTOBER 2015



VIGNETTES FOR A FRIEND

Difficult? Yes, when you have had his friendship, it is difficult to do without it, because you feel that you find yourself in a "space" that excludes second parts.

If so, then you have the privilege of sharing his plans, seeing him laugh like a big boy and listening to him tell about his last mischief with color, which one day he gives out with his "mason's flat brush" like a child who plays to raise a building, to make a world of colors appear that everyone knows could only have been made by him, or perhaps to tell you that his ideas are already others, that now he thinks that his pigments should be caught between jute threads and tiny water drops. He tells you all of this in a whisper and one also remains silent, conscious that one is being part of a new and silent plan and simply because, since you are his friend, he makes you his accomplice. Suddenly one day you enter his domains with him and find paintings with kites, rocks like phalluses, vulvas emerging from erotic stains, small wooden horses – as far as I know, even apparitions. I have seen Cachita* appear on his canvases in order not to miss his feast of colors, and it seems to me that she even laughs, that she is also happy seeing so much "creation" together. [...]

* Diminutive for the feminine name Caridad (charity). In this case he is referring to the Virgin of Charity, Cuba's patroness in the Catholic religion, also known as the deity Oshún in the Afro-Cuban Santería religion.

CARLOS MARTÍ BRENES
Cuban Writer



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