

# A F R O S Y N C R E T I C

**THE LATINX PROJECT  
EXHIBITION**

**NOVEMBER 8th - MARCH 1st**

**KING JUAN CARLOS I OF SPAIN CENTER  
53 WASHINGTON SQ SOUTH  
NY, NY 10012**

Image by  
Patricia Encarnación



# WELCOME STATEMENT

## Exhibition Description

**AFRO SYNCRETIC** - presents the work of nine artists foregrounding the African roots of the Latinx diaspora. Collectively, the works center the vibrancy of diasporic blackness within Latinx culture urging viewers to confront dominant narratives of what it means to be Latinx.

These artists are part of a contemporary reassessment of African influences in Latinx communities that rejects trends to separate and undermine blackness. They provide pathways to appreciate the richness of contemporary Afro-syncretic interventions, breaking through dominant views of history and inspiring alternative futures. Some of the works reference Afro-derived music, food, and religious practices.







# AFROSYNCRETIC



Others recreate memories that inspire new narratives about familiar, quotidian environments like a Nuyorican apartment while addressing the displacement of longtime residents. Others disrupt dominant beauty standards by challenging consumer goods. Some artists invite viewers to reflect on key social and political issues of the times by emphasizing the policing of black bodies and the problem of eroticizing and romanticizing a colonial past.

Together, these artists challenge viewers into a dialog that deliberately pays attention to African diasporic traditions in vernacular culture and their historical and living references. Most importantly, Afro Syncretic makes clear that visual artists are central to conjuring a social imaginary that centers Afro-Latinx in popular culture and all facets of life.

**Curated by:**

**YELAINE RODRIGUEZ**

**Featuring:**

**Elia Alba, Tiffany Alfonseca, David Antonio Cruz,  
Patricia Encarnación, Lucía Hierro, Fabiola Jean-Louis,  
Carlos Martiel, Joiri Minaya, and Melissa Mislá**

# THE LATINX PROJECT

Statement

Founded in 2018, The Latinx Project at NYU is an initiative dedicated to fostering critical and comparative Latino/a/x studies within the framework of culture, art, and activism. Through high impact arts programming, The Latinx Project aims to bring greater visibility to Latinx' generative role in U.S scholarship and society at large. For information on upcoming events follow us @latinxprojnyu.

Co-sponsored by NYU King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center  
NYU-Steinhardt Office of Faculty Development and Diversity,  
and Dean of the Social Sciences David Stasavage

## MEET THE CURATOR

### Yelaine Rodriguez

Bronx-born, Afro-Dominican American curator and interdisciplinary artist Yelaine Rodriguez received a BFA from The New School (2013) and an MA from NYU (2021). Rodriguez conceptualizes wearable art and site-specific installations drawing connections between black cultures in the Caribbean and the United States through fashion, video, performance, and photography. Their interfaith and intercountry narratives examine identity and race.

Rodriguez' curatorial practice centers around the fundamental contributions of African Diasporic communities. Her latest curatorial projects include "Resistance, Roots, and Truth" at the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute, and "(under) REPRESENT(ed)" at Parsons the New School for Design.

Rodriguez is the recipient of The Bronx Museum AIM Program in (2020), The Latinx Project Curatorial Fellowship at NYU (2019), Wave Hill Van Lier Fellowship in (2018), and



Innovative Cultural Advocacy Fellowship from the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute (2017). Her work has been included at Art Basel Miami Beach, Longwood Art Gallery, American Museum of Natural History, Wave Hill, Rush Art Gallery, El Centro Cultural de España, and Centro León Biennial XXVII in the Dominican Republic. Rodriguez currently teaches at The New School.

# MEET THE ARTISTS

## Elia Alba



Elia Alba was born in Brooklyn, NY in 1962. She received her Bachelor of Arts from Hunter College in 1994 and completed the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program in 2001. She has exhibited throughout the United States and abroad. Those include The Rhode Island School of Design Museum; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; The Science Museum, London; ITAU Cultural Institute, Sao Paolo; National Museum of Art, Reina Sofia, Madrid and the 10th Havana Biennial. She is a recipient of numerous awards and residencies for example, Studio Museum in Harlem Artist-in Residence Program in 1999; New York Foundation for the Arts Grant, Crafts 2002 and Photography 2008; Pollack-Krasner Foundation Grant, 2002 and Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant 2002 and 2008; Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC) Workspace Program, 2009, and Recess Analog, 2012. Her work is in the collection of the Smithsonian Museum of Art, El Museo del

Barrio, Lowe Art Museum to name a few. Her book, Elia Alba, The Supper Club, critically acclaimed by The New York Times, produced by The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation, published by Hirmer June 2019, brings together artists, scholars and performers of diasporic cultures, through photography, food and dialogue to examine race and culture in the United States. She is currently Artist-in-Residence at The Andrew Freeman Home in the Bronx and a recent recipient of the Anonymous Was A Woman Award.



This installation is composed of disembodied hand objects formed from photographs printed onto fabric. Each hand is of an artist of color. The items they hold or the inscription on their skin reveal their stories. Blue feathers clenched in a hand speaks to a Santero/a performing a ritual while another hand with a tattoo of the sacred heart indicates this person is a believer of the Catholic faith.

“Ivan (Study #4)” (2019) - Silk screen transfer on fabric, glitter, silk flowers, thread, wire, poly-fil, zipper, 8 x 10 x 8 in

“Judy (Study #4)” (2019) - Silk screen transfer on fabric, mini plastic toys and notions, thread, wire, poly-fil, zipper 8 x 4 x 6 in

“Kenya (Study #3)” (2019) - Silk screen transfer on fabric, French lace, pearls, thread, wire, poly-fil, zipper, 16 x 8 x 4 in

“Judy (Study #3)” (2019) - Silk screen transfer on fabric, dyed rooster feathers, wire, poly-fil, zipper, 7 x 10 x 4 in

“Kenya (Study #1)” (2019) - Silk screen transfer on fabric, plastic flower, pin, thread, wire, poly-fil, zipper, 8 x 4 x 5 in



“Judy (Study #3)” (2019) - Silk screen transfer on fabric, dyed rooster feathers, wire, poly-fil, zipper, 7 x 10 x 4 in



## Tiffany Alfonseca



Tiffany Alfonseca is a Mixed media artist from The Bronx, NY currently working on obtaining a BFA from The School Of Visual Arts.

Her field of work revolves around a sense of feminine identity and Latina/o/x culture. Tiffany's main focus is portraiture and she uses acrylic paint to depict the figures. Embroidery is occasionally used to add three-dimensionality, tying together techniques that create a sense of depth and engage viewers physically.



**“What a Real Barbie Looks Like” (2018) - Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 in**

**“What a Real Barbie Looks Like” exemplifies Black women who historically are erased or misrepresented in the media. Her existence challenges society’s dominant standard of beauty. This vivid painting demonstrates self-healing, empowerment, and ownership of oneself.**

## David Antonio Cruz



David Antonio Cruz is a multidisciplinary artist and a Professor of the Practice in Painting and Drawing at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University. Cruz fuses painting and performance to explore the visibility and intersectionality of brown, black, and queer bodies. Cruz received a BFA in painting from Pratt Institute and an MFA from Yale University. He attended Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and completed the AIM Program at the Bronx Museum. Recent residencies include the LMCC Workspace Residency, Project for Empty Space's Social Impact Residency, and BRICworkspace. Cruz's work has been included in notable group exhibitions at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, Brooklyn Museum,

El Museo del Barrio, Performa 13, and the McNay Art Museum. Most recently, at Monique Meloche Gallery. His fellowships and awards include the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters & Sculptors Award, the Franklin Furnace Fund Award, the Urban Artist Initiative Award, the Queer Mentorship Fellowship, and the Neubauer Faculty Fellowship at Tufts University. Recent press includes The New York Times, Art In America, Document Journal, Wall Street Journal, WhiteHot Magazine, W Magazine, Bomb Magazine, and El Centro Journal.

**"whenthefirestartstoburn" (2016) - Oil and enamel on wood panel, 10 x 10 in**

**"whenthefirestartstoburn" is from 'The Black Series,' a response to the invisibility of Black and brown bodies in the United States and wider queer theory and discourse.**



**"Untitled" (2016) - Collage, 5 x 8 in**

**This painting references the famous 1863 painting 'Olympia' by Edouard Manet which depicts a nude sex worker in repose being offered flowers from a black figure in the backgrounds -- the art model Laure. This piece speaks to the invisibility and dehumanizing factors Black and brown communities experience.**



## Patricia Encarnación

Patricia Encarnación, is an Afro-Dominican Artist, who explores the perception of being black/ brown Caribbean, through the quotidian objects, landscapes and aesthetics she was exposed to growing up in her homeland. The intention of her work is to dismantle impositions of social roles and biased history by showcasing their effect on herself and surroundings. Encarnación, began her BFA education in 2009 at the School of Design Altos de Chavon, receiving an AAS in Fine Art two years later. She continued her studies in the Communication Art program, getting her associate degree in 2012. After getting a full tuition scholarship, in May 2014, she completed her degree at Parsons The New School of Design, New York. Later she participated at The Centro

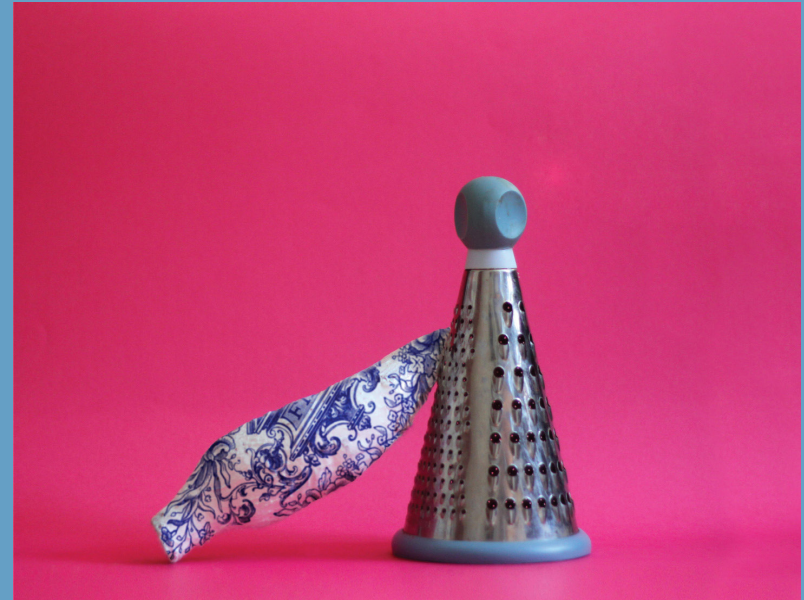


Leon Jiménez Biennial and won the prize awarded by the city of Cadiz for cultural immersion. A couple years later she participated in multiple residencies with institutions like MuseumsQuartier Vienna & Kovent Catalonia. In 2018, Encarnación was selected again to participate at The Centro Leon Jiménez Biennial, winning the special nomination by the French consulate in Martinique.

**The ‘black behind the ear’ is an old Dominican idiom first used in the 1883 poem by Juan Antonio Alix. The poem is a criticism of racial prejudice when Dominicans prioritize their European or white heritage while simultaneously rejecting their African roots.**

‘El negro tras de la oreja’  
El blanco que tuvo abuela  
Tan prieta como el carbón,  
Nunca de ella hace mención  
Aunque le peguen candela.  
Y a la tía doña habichuela,  
Como que era blanca vieja  
De mentarla nunca deja;  
Para dar a comprender,  
Que nunca puede tener  
“El Negro tras de la Oreja.”

“The white one”, who had a grandmother  
As black as coal,  
Never mentions her  
Even if they are set on fire.  
And to their aunt Mrs. Beans,  
Since she was white  
They never stop mentioning her;  
To make people understand,  
That they never had  
“The Black behind the Ear.”



“Guayando La Yuca” - from the series “El Negro Detrás de la Oreja” (2014) -  
Digital print, 18 x 24 in



“De Verde a M'aduro” - from the series “El Negro Detrás de la Oreja” (2014) -  
Digital print, 18 x 24 in



## Lucia Hierro

Born in New York City, Lucia Hierro received a BFA from SUNY Purchase (2010) and an MFA from Yale School of Art (2013). Her work has been included in solo and group exhibitions at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art and Storytelling, Elizabeth Dee Gallery, Independent Art Fair with LatchKey Gallery, Casa Quién, Santo Domingo; the Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco; Jeffrey Deitch, Los Angeles and most recently Sean Horton (presents), Dallas



Texas. Residencies include: Yaddo, Redbull Arts in Detroit, Fountainhead Residency, Bronx Museum's Artist in the Market program, and Casa Quién. Her work is part of the JP Morgan Chase art collection and the Rennie collection in Vancouver. Hierro lives and works in New York.

The artist presents a loving homage to her father, a merengue musician, and by extension to the key role merengue music plays sustaining communities. The depiction of singer Juan Luis Guerra alludes to his wide popularization for Dominicans but for Latinx and Latin American communities across the hemisphere. The placing of the drum at the front of the image anchors the African roots of merengue, challenging the whitening campaigns to which rhythm was originally subjected to in the Dominican Republic.



"Poetry, Music & Identity" (2018) - Digital print fabric, felt, cotton & foam, 36 x 24 in

## Fabiola Jean-Louis

Born in Port-Au-Prince Haiti and raised in Brooklyn, NY, Fabiola's body of work is that of visual activism as she challenges the hegemony of society. Fabiola's, ongoing series, Rewriting History, a two-part series consisting of period paper gowns, and painterly photographs, opened as a solo exhibition at Smithsonian affiliates, DuSable Museum of African American History, Alan Avery Art Company, and Andrew Freedman Home to critical acclaim. Residencies include the Museum of Art and Design (MAD), New York City, and in September 2019, LUX Museum, San Diego. Fabiola was invited to join and participated in a BRIC Media group exhibition, Bordering



the Imaginary: Art from the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and their Diasporas.

Fabiola now sets her sights on large, paper installations that not only continue to tell stories, but integrate light, sound, projection, and architecture. Her works have been featured in the Huffington Post, Chicago Tribune, Modern Luxury, Artnet News, Art Critical, Hyperallergic, Atlanta Art Constitution, Chicago Sun-Times, The Fashion Journal, The Haitian Times, and more.



"Marie-Antoinette Is Dead" (2017) - Archival pigment print, 23 x 26 in

'Marie-Antoinette is Dead is a photograph that presents a Black woman adorned by a gown composed of paper emulating the European nobility from the 15th through 19th centuries. The work addresses the treatment of Black Americans, the inflicted trauma, and the value of Black life. Simultaneously it celebrates the Black and brown body and interacts with a new vision of the future.

## Carlos Martiel



Carlos Martiel b. 1989 Havana, Cuba - Lives and works between New York and Havana. He graduated in 2009 from the National Academy of Fine Arts "San Alejandro," in Havana. Between the years 2008-2010, he studied in the Cátedra Arte de Conducta, directed by the artist Tania Bruguera. Martiel's works have been included in the Biennial of the Americas, USA; 4th Vancouver Biennale, Canada; 14th Sharjah Biennial, UAE; 14th Cuenca Biennial, Ecuador; 57th Venice Biennale, Italy; Casablanca Biennale, Morocco; Biennial "La Otra", Colombia; Liverpool Biennial, United Kingdom; Pontevedra Biennial, Spain; Havana Biennial, Cuba. He has had performances at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; La Tertulia Museum, Cali, Colombia; Centro de Arte Contemporáneo, Quito, Ecuador; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA; The Museum of Fine Arts Houston (MFAH), Houston, USA; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo del Zulia (MACZUL), Maracaibo,

Venezuela; Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan, Italy; Robert Miller Gallery, New York, USA; Nitsch Museum, Naples, Italy. He has received several awards, including the Franklin Furnace Fund in New York, USA, 2016; "CIFOS Grants & Commissions Program Award" in Miami, USA, 2014; "Arte Laguna" in Venice, Italy, 2013. His work has been exhibited at The Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA), Long Beach, USA; Zisa Zona Arti Contemporanea (ZAC), Palermo, Italy; Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum, Miami, USA; Benaki Museum, Athens, Greece; National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba; Torielli Museum, Ameno, Italy; Museum of Modern Art of Buenos Aires, Argentina; among others. His works are in public and private collections such as The Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation, New York, Museum de Arte do Rio, Rio de Janeiro; National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation, Miami.



Carlos Martiel

"Gente de color" - (2018)

14th Cuenca Biennial, Plaza Cívica, Cuenca, Ecuador.

Photo Credit: Galo Mosquera

"Gente de Color" (2018) - Single channel video, 07:47 minutes

Estructuras vivientes, 14th Cuenca Biennial, Plaza Cívica, Cuenca, Ecuador.

Curated by Jesús Fuenmayor

**Gente de Color brings visibility to the Black, mestizo and indigenous population in Ecuador who still suffer from isolation and social injustice. Martiel's performance entices passersby to peer into the sculpture forcing them to be confronted by his figure representing the lack of representation of Afro-descendant in Ecuador society.**



## Joiri Minaya



Joiri Minaya (b. 1990) is a Dominican-United Statesian multi-disciplinary artist whose recent works focus on destabilizing historic and contemporary representations of an imagined tropical identity. Minaya attended the Escuela Nacional de Artes Visuales in Santo Domingo (2009), the Altos de Chavón School of Design (2011) and Parsons the New School for Design (2013). She has participated in residencies at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Guttenberg Arts, Smack Mellon, the Bronx Museum's

AIM Program and the NYFA Mentoring Program for Immigrant Artists, Red Bull House of Art, the Lower East Side Printshop and Art Omi. She has been awarded a Socrates Sculpture Park Emerging Artist Fellowship as well as grants by the Joan Mitchell Foundation, the Rema Hort Mann Foundation and the Nancy Graves Foundation. Minaya's work is in the collection of the Museo de Arte Moderno and the Centro León Jiménez in the Dominican Republic.

**“Siboney” (2014) - Single channel video, 10:00 minutes**

**“Siboney Blue” (2019) - digitally printed wallpaper, 8 x 10 ft**

**“Siboney” is about the objectification of women of color in the Caribbean. It speaks about cultural appropriation, colonialism, and eroticism. As the video develops the artist takes ownership of her body. She gives voice to those who have experienced objectification, and although she tells you “I am not here for you to look at” she wants you to see her but on her terms.**



## Melissa Mislá

Mislá is a Native New York artist whose works acknowledge both the loss and survival of culture through colonization, immigration, and gentrification. With a focus on her Nuyorican community, the Puerto Rican diaspora in New York, she employs mixed media to create immersive works. Primarily using painting and collage in combination with animation and installation, her pieces use imagery related to the precarious nature of home within a threatened community. She acquired her BFA with the support of the Kossok Fellowship Award at Hunter College, and her MFA at Queens College. Her show with the artist collective NeoCreos, recognized most notably by Remezcla and the Queens Tribune, held local interest



touching on the socioeconomic and political conditions affecting Jackson Heights. Mislá's recent full gallery installation Apt.9D, featured in New York Latin Magazine, depicted an interactive Nuyorican apartment interior. Portions of this work has been exhibited by Plaxall Gallery and Aquarius Studios in Queens, and Art Miami. She is currently working with Praxis Gallery for a solo show in May 2020.

**'La Cocinita' is part of the series Apt 9D which recreates a Nuyorican apartment through life-size painting collage. Objects commonly found in a Latinx home such as calderos, grecas, and a magnet of Jesus on the fridge reminds the diaspora of home. The absence of the figure makes us think about the displacement of longtime Black residents in El Barrio. This painting reveals our shared history.**



**"Apt 9D (La Cocinita)" (2019) - Mixed media on canvas , 70 x 96 in**

## EXHIBITION PROGRAMMING Afro Syncretic

Opening reception  
November 8th, 2019  
6 - 8 pm

Closing reception  
March 1, 2020  
6 - 8 pm

Artist Talk  
February 21, 2020  
6 - 8 pm

Admission  
Free with RSVP

Gallery Visits  
November 8th, 2019 - March 1, 2020  
Monday, Tuesdays, Wednesdays,  
Thursday and Fridays  
9am- 6 pm

Guided tours welcome and are arranged

This exhibition is made possible  
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NYU King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center  
NYU-Steinhardt Office of Faculty Development  
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David Stasavage



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