

HOLLIS TAGGART

Hollis Taggart Presents Mini-Retrospective of Cuban American painter Rafael Soriano

Rafael Soriano: Elegido recuerdo (Chosen Memory) On View October 16 – November 22, 2025

October 2, 2025 – Hollis Taggart is pleased to present a major exhibition of works by Rafael Soriano (1920-2015), a key figure in Cuban art history and one of the major Latin American artists of his generation. *Rafael Soriano: Elegido recuerdo (Chosen Memory)* will function as a mini-retrospective, tracing the trajectory of Soriano's oeuvre from his early geometric abstractions in the 1950s and 60s, to the more organic and biomorphic forms of the 1970s, through to his unparalleled explorations of light and color in the 1980s and 90s. The exhibition, which follows the launch of the artist's catalogue raisonné last year, is the largest presentation of Soriano's work to ever take place in New York City and will span the entire first floor of Hollis Taggart's main location in Chelsea. On view from October 16 through November 22, 2025, *Elegido recuerdo (Chosen Memory)* will be celebrated with an opening reception on Thursday, October 16, from 6-8PM. There will also be a presentation about the artist by Alejandro Anreus, Ph.D., emeritus professor of art history and Latin American and Latinx Studies at William Paterson University and editor of Soriano's catalogue raisonné, on Saturday, November 1, at 2PM.

Soriano was born in 1920 in the province of Matanzas, Cuba. Encouraged to pursue his artistic talents by his parents, Soriano received art lessons at a private academy at a young age before attending the San Alejandro Academy of Fine Arts in Havana on a scholarship. When he returned to Matanzas in 1943, he helped found the School of Fine Arts there, teaching and then becoming the director until his exile from Cuba in 1962. During this time, Soriano rose to prominence in Cuba's artistic circles and played a critical role in introducing geometric abstraction and Concrete Art to the country. As a professor for nearly two decades, he also made an indelible mark on future generations of Cuban artists. *Elegido recuerdo (Chosen Memory)* will include the painting *Formas en la luz (Forms in the Light)* from 1955, which was part of a historic exhibition that took place at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Havana that year.

In the wake of the 1959 revolution, Soriano fled to Miami with his wife and daughter, who would later set up the Rafael Soriano Foundation there. The trauma of exile led Soriano to stop painting for two years. When he returned to the canvas, his geometric shapes had given way to more organic and biomorphic forms that appear to flow across his paintings. The aptly titled *El Profeta (The Prophet)* from 1969, on view in the exhibition, gives a hint of what is to come as Soriano begins to experiment with gradations of light and shadow. By the 1980s, Soriano had developed an unparalleled ability to capture luminosity. Out of the darkness of his canvases, rendered in deep browns, purples, and grays, we witness shimmering and radiation that has an almost spiritual presence. At times, Soriano's images appear sinewy and even fetal, as if something is forming in the depths of the canvas. Other works are more cavernous, with forms suggestive of luminescent underwater creatures hidden within.

By presenting paintings from across his career, *Elegido recuerdo (Chosen Memory)* demonstrates how Soriano mastered illumination over time, with the mystical and spiritual dimension being central to his work from the very beginning. The gradations of light and shadow in the artist's later works feel almost transcendental, encouraging slow viewing and meditative study. As Anreus describes in his essay in the exhibition catalogue, "In a world seeking meaning, Soriano's paintings are cosmic journeys, offering us rescue and redemption."

Over the past couple of years, Soriano's work has received increased institutional attention, with the National Gallery of Art acquiring three paintings (from 1955, 1968, and 1992) and the Whitney Museum of American Art acquiring a work from 1970 last year. His paintings are also held in the

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Smithsonian American Art Museum, Denver Art Museum, and the Pérez Art Museum, among others. The exhibition at Hollis Taggart coincides with the major Wifredo Lam retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art (opening November 10). Lam and Soriano both had solo shows at Havana's Parque Central and attended each other's openings. Their concurrent exhibitions in New York invite a closer look at the 1950s art scene in Havana and this seminal moment in Cuban art history.

About Hollis Taggart

Founded in 1979, Hollis Taggart presents significant works of American art, showcasing the trajectory of American art movements from the Hudson River School to American Modernism and the Post-War and Contemporary eras. Its program is characterized by a deep commitment to scholarship and bringing to the fore the work of under-recognized artists. The gallery has sponsored several catalogue raisonné projects, most recently for the American Surrealist artist Kay Sage, and has been instrumental in advancing knowledge of such artists as Alfred Maurer, Arthur B. Carles, and more recently, Theodoros Stamos, Marjorie Strider, and Michael (Corinne) West. In the summer of 2019, the gallery announced the formal expansion of its primary market business and focus on the presentation of contemporary work. It continues to expand its roster of contemporary artists, focusing on emerging and mid-career talents. With more than 40 years of experience, Hollis Taggart is widely recognized by collectors and curators for its leadership, expertise, and openness, on matters of art history, market trends and opportunities.

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For press inquiries, please contact Aga Sablinska at aga.sablinska@gmail.com or 862-216-6485.