

RAIMUNDO FIGUEROA

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Flowers, Ships & Other Dreams
Flores, Botes y Otros Sueños

Foreword

La Universidad del Sagrado Corazón y la Galería de Arte se sienten honradas en presentar la obra de Raimundo Figueroa, considerado como uno de los artistas más completos de la plástica puertorriqueña. Su recia personalidad, su particular sensibilidad complementada con su evolutivo talento ha validado su éxito internacionalmente. En cada trazo, en cada dibujo, en cada composición encontramos un discurso plagado de evocadoras emociones que nos transportan hacia un inesperado espacio lleno de paz y misticismo. Su obra provoca un estímulo en nuestro inconsciente que a su vez activa nuestra imaginación a bordo de este agradable viaje de *Flores, Botes y Otros Sueños*. Con esta muestra damos paso a una serie de exhibiciones de vanguardia en la que se destaca la instalación como medio interactivo. Mucho éxito a Raimundo en sus nuevos proyectos y bienvenido a nuestro espacio artístico.

Adlín Ríos Rigau

Directora, Galería de Arte Universidad del Sagrado Corazón y Proyecto Museo de Puerto Rico

The University of the Sacred Heart and the Art Gallery are honored to present the work of Raimundo Figueroa, considered one of the most complete artists of our Puerto Rican fine arts community. His strong personality, particular sensibility complemented by his evolutionary talent have validated his success internationally. In each stroke, in each drawing, in each composition we find a dialogue full of evocative emotions, which transport us to an unexpected space full of peace and mysticism. His work stimulates our unconscious, activates our imagination through this enchanting trip of *Flowers, Boats and Other Dreams*. With this show we begin a series of avant-garde exhibitions in which the installation as an interactive mode is highlighted. The best of success to Raimundo in his new projects and a warm welcome to our artistic space.

Adlín Ríos Rigau

Sacred Heart University Art Gallery and Puerto Rico's Museum Project Director

Timeless Signs

Raimundo Figueroa's works on paper

The echoes and the shadows. The secret forms. The timeless signs. The pulsing tongues of New York. The essential dreams from the Orient. The fairness of the white and the forces of the black. The souls of the grays. A way of poetry: The drawings of Raimundo Figueroa.

During the last 20 years, Raimundo Figueroa has established himself as a forceful and educated voice within the excellent choir of Puerto Rican abstract artists.

Encouraged, inspired and stimulated by the effervescent world of international abstractionism, he decided to construct an elaborate hymn of his own.

From very early in his career, his drawings and paintings reveal an innate abstract artist who needs to touch us through his work. Once in New York, surrounded by creators who were not afraid to enter new aesthetic dimensions, this diligent artist begins constructing the sophisticated and provoking visual discourse for which he is known today.

Through his compositions Figueroa challenges us to become refined poets capable of combining the essence of Western abstractionism and the energy of Zen philosophy.

In the present exhibition, *Flowers, Ships & Other Dreams*, we see the work of a resourceful artist who has been able to integrate successfully

the most refined elements of his distinctive visual syntax. The drawings on view can be read as three long and splendid poems. Composed of individual metaphors which take us to many different harbors, also as precious separate poems which contain the elegance, the mysteries Raimundo Figueroa is capable of as an artist.

Ships, flowers, hearts, circles, planets, wounds, wings, dreams, are all part of an enigmatic topography where drawing, the subconscious, beauty and freedoms become part of a celebratory ritual.

These drawings, which were conceived in New York, (at Annie Plum's loft) 1995-1996, contain both, Raimundo Figueroa's formal lyricism with the terrains of abstractionism and his passionate approach to expressionism. In them we will see fragments of our soul as we approach the end of the millennium, parts of a future and unknown map we have to construct in order to survive.

The dry volcano and the flower. Quicksilver. The memory of the circle. The short colors of desire. The aschen archangel. WE FLY.

Manuel Alvarez Lezama

San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1997

Manuel Alvarez Lezama is a professor at the University of Puerto Rico (Rio Piedras Campus) and at the School of Plastic Arts of Puerto Rico. He is the art critic for The San Juan Star newspaper and member of the International Association of Art Critics. (A.I.C.A)

Signos Eternos

Obras sobre papel de Raimundo Figueroa

Los ecos y las sombras. Las formas secretas. Los signos eternos. Las lenguas pulsantes de Nueva York. Los sueños esenciales del Oriente. La palidez del blanco y las fuerzas del negro. Las almas del gris. Una forma de poesía. Los dibujos de Raimundo Figueroa.

Durante los últimos veinte años Raimundo Figueroa se ha dado a conocer como una voz llenada de fuerza y a la vez educada, dentro del excelente coro de los artistas abstractos puertorriqueños.

Animado, inspirado y estimulado por el efervescente mundo del arte abstracto internacional, decidió construir un elaborado himno propio.

Desde muy temprano en su carrera, sus dibujos y pinturas revelan un artista abstracto innato que quiere llegar a nosotros a través de su obra. Una vez en Nueva York, rodeado de creadores sin miedo a penetrar nuevas dimensiones estéticas, este diligente artista comienza a construir el discurso sofisticado y provocante por el cual se le conoce hoy.

Mediante sus composiciones Figueroa nos reta a que nos convirtamos en poetas refinados capaces de combinar la esencia del arte abstracto y la energía de la filosofía Zen.

En la presente exhibición, *Flores, Botes y Otros Sueños*, vemos la obra de un artista lleno de recursos que ha podido integrar exitosamente los más refinados elementos de su característica sintaxis visual.

Los dibujos exhibidos pueden leerse como tres largos y magníficos poemas. Compuestos de metáforas individuales que nos llevan a diferentes puertos, también como preciosos poemas separados que contienen la elegancia y los misterios de los cuales es capaz Raimundo Figueroa como artista.

Barcos, flores, corazones, círculos, planetas, heridas, alas, sueños, todos son parte de una enigmática topografía donde el dibujo, el subconciente, la belleza y la libertad se vuelven parte de un ritual de celebración.

Estos dibujos, concebidos en Nueva York, (en el apartamento de Annie Plum) 1995-1996, contienen el lirismo formal de Raimundo Figueroa con el arte abstracto y su enfoque apasionado del expresionismo. En ellos veremos fragmentos de nuestra alma a medida que nos acercamos al final del milenio, partes de un mapa futuro y desconocido que tenemos que construir para poder sobrevivir.

El volcán seco y la flor. Mercurio. La memoria del círculo. Los cortos colores del deseo. El arcángel de cenizas. VOLAMOS.

The Infinite and Infinite Voids

When M. Merleu-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception* writes "of the waking time in which eternity takes roots as the field of presence in the wide sense, with its double horizon or primary past and future, and the infinite openness of those fields of presence that have slid by or are still possible", his commentary becomes apt in light of the precise calibration and control of gesture, color contrasts, and scale. Raimundo Figueroa's achievement in this body of work is to have come out with works that are not pictorially engaging of formal levels but that also philosophically teasing and profound images on the sublimity of infinity.

The physical manifestation of the primal nature of the unchanging metaphysical ground of infinite space in painting has traditionally been expressed by monochromatic color fields representing a shift of attention from figure to ground starting in the Modernist epoch with Turner's later seascapes devoid of horizon lines and slightly later Whistler's Nocturnes. In pre-modern times we need only think of the gold background space of Byzantine icons, and in the early twentieth century to Malevich's ruminations on Ouspensian-inspired intuition of fourth-dimensional awareness of infinity exemplified by his painting 1918 *White on White*. In late Modernism the minimal geometric abstractions (exemplifying infinite expansion) of, for example, Yves Klein, Lucio Fontana, Barnett Newman and the stark interruptions on those surfaces implying man's relation to the absolute had become part of a firmly established modernist cannon of formalism. Figueroa's new paintings manipulate these conceits of elemental residual formalism by incorporating the ground of the monochrome with the pictorial introjection of the gesture defining the solitary stroke.

Figueroa's neo-abstractions appear at first to be comprised of the basic expressive unit of gestural abstraction, the painterly mark of the brushstroke against brightly saturated colors. These simple gestural loops are foregrounded calligraphic marks whose optical intensity quiver against their overall backgrounds. The artist purposefully combines the vibratory contrasts of colors between the large brushstrokes that partially define the infinity symbol (a stylized "8") and its backdrop to create luminous pictorial fields of stunning grace and amplitude. Figueroa's works, consisting of magnified brushstrokes floating, colliding or intersecting in space, emphasize the touch as a constitutive element in a larger image and as a self contained expressive element in its own right. Since the artist's challenge in this body of work is to give the visual sensation of an endless extent of space, time of any series the seemingly random painterly mark meanders but it does so through markmaking that is harnessed to give a wide range of sensations. Figueroa tackles the definition of the infiniteness of heroized things through synecdoche (outsized brushstroke demarcating parts of infinity signs) on groundless infinite space to pose rich

metaphysical conundrums on our place within the flux of space and time. Given the nature of the intellectual dimensions of these paintings (that is to express the inexpressible by alluding to beginnings and endings without entirely visually defining either notion), Figueroa's measured painterly loops are properly and positively ambiguous; they oscillate between the two poles of the mark seen as constructive/deliberate and expressive/random. The artist gives the sensation of an essence that is poised, (in Scholastic terms) halfway *in fieri*, that is, when it is beginning to be, but is not yet complete, and *in facto* when it exists completely in the nature of things with those constituent parts with which it remains.

Figueroa's looming and tremulous brushstrokes evoke both the gathering point of fading perceptions and the locus of new, emerging, visual interpretations that include the persuasive unraveling of closed systems. As I mentioned before teasing conundrums abound in these works. One of these involves the age old issue of relativity that allows us to conceive of parts of infinite spaces within larger infinite spaces, voids within fullness. To delineate this entropic situation, Figueroa uses the space of his canvasses and the positioning of this gestures as if the strokes of his infinity signs were being cinematically panned into view as they enter the "screen" of his canvasses. At times his panning will stop and he will give us a close-up of an end loop of one of his signs. At other times he will show us two end loops cavorting in space but not touching and, yet, at other times meeting as in an embrace. In his diptych one part of the end loop of his infinity sign is itself cut into two parts as if to defy the mind to think in the impossible term of half infinity. The outsized segments of the loops of the artist's crooked infinity sign careen and hover inside the picture planes of brightly colored over-all-grounds and metaphorically suggest a range of metaphysical musings on time and existence while inducing psychologically dense and emotionally expansive readings. Raimundo Figueroa's art works and their reflections on the impossibility of visually defining or embodying godhead reminds us of Shelling's comment that art was the resolution of an infinite contradiction in a finite object. In light of his painterly ambitions I do not think it would be stretching the point to claim that within Figueroa's paintings rest a (nearly) infinite amount of visual impetuosity that quite matches their intellectual verve.

DOMINIQUE NAHAS
N.Y.C. 1997

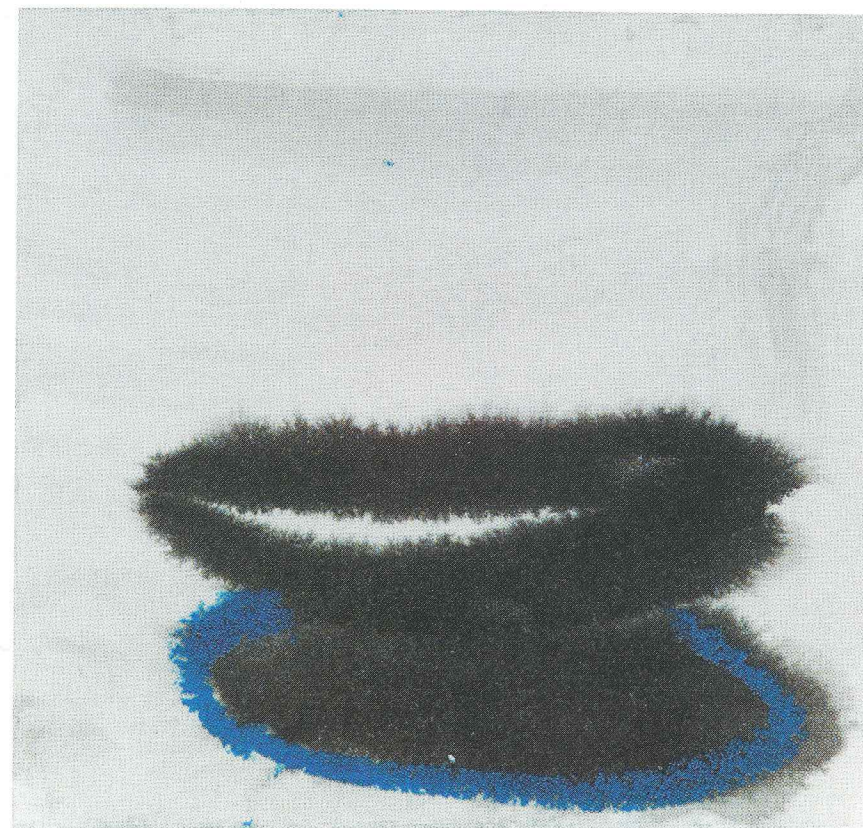
Dominique Nahas is a critic, independent curator and art historian residing in New York City. He is the former Chief Curator of Contemporary Art of Everson Museum, Syracuse, New York, and former Director of the Neuberger Museum, SUNY-Purchase.



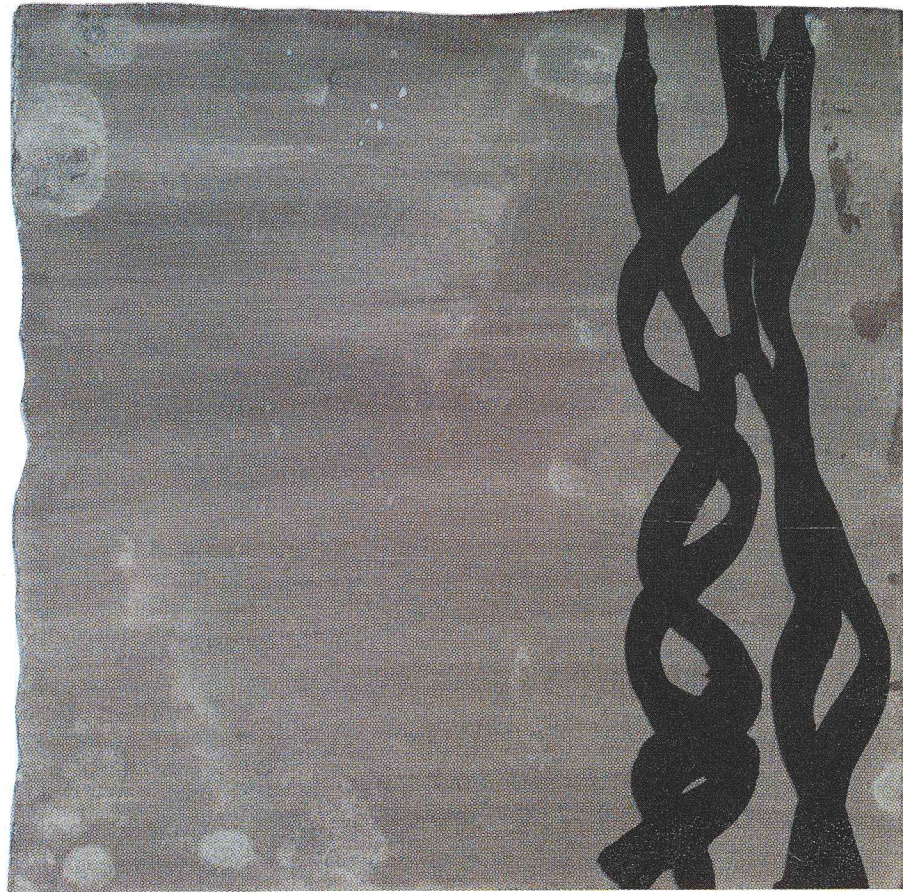
1996, Untitled (Flower), Coffee and ink on paper, 3 3/4 x 3 3/4 in.



1996, Untitled (Flower), Coffee and ink on paper, 7 1/2 x 7 1/2 in.



1996, Untitled (Boat Reflects), Coffee and ink on paper, 3 3/4 x 3 7/8 in.



1996, Untitled, Coffee and ink on paper, 7 1/2 x 7 1/2 in.



1996, Untitled (Two Boats), Coffee and ink on paper, 7 3/4 x 7 3/4 in.

Raimundo Figueroa was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1957. At the early age of six, he began drawing, taking piano and violin lessons.

His professional artistic career began at the age of 14 when his work was praised by local critics, obtaining national painting and drawing awards.

His interest in nature and the humanities has been a continuous tendency in the development of his work and artistic life.

From his early award-winning days up to date, he has not ceased to produce and exhibit extensively in the local and international scene, elevating the artistic values of the Puerto Rican community.

Raimundo Figueroa nace en San Juan de Puerto Rico en el 1957. A la temprana edad de seis años, comienza a dibujar conjuntamente con estudios de piano y violín.

Su carrera artística profesional da inicio a los 14 años cuando, elogiado por críticos locales, recibe varios premios en certámenes nacionales de pintura y dibujo.

Su interés en la naturaleza y las humanidades ha sido una tendencia constante en el desarrollo de su trabajo y su vida artística.

Desde sus primeras premiaciones hasta el presente, no ha dejado de producir y exhibir extensamente tanto en la escena local como en la internacional, poniendo en alto el valor artístico de la comunidad puertorriqueña.

Raimundo Figueroa born in San Juan, P.R. in 1957

RECENT ONE MAN SHOWS

- 1997** Galería de Arte Universidad del Sagrado Corazón
- 1996** Artopia Gallery, N.Y.
Liga de Arte de San Juan, P.R.
Vrej Baghoomian Gallery, N.Y.
- 1995** Museo Arsenal de la Puntilla, I.C.P., San Juan, P.R.
Virginia Miller Galleries, Coral Gables, Miami, FL.
- 1992** Luigi Marrozzini Gallery, San Juan, P.R.
- 1991** Luigi Marrozzini Gallery, San Juan, P.R.
- 1989** Art and History Museum, San Juan, P.R.
- 1987** Hermes, Book/Art Gallery, San Juan, P.R.
Forbes Gallery, Long Island
Art and History Museum, San Juan, P.R.
Bellas Artes Museum, San Juan, P.R.
Botello Gallery, San Juan, P.R.
- 1986** The Art Shop, Arecibo, P.R.
- 1985** Henri Gallery, Washington D.C.
Bell Book & Candle, San Juan, P.R.
- 1984** Fine Art Gallery, Caribe Hilton Hotel, San Juan, P.R.
- 1983** Botello Gallery, San Juan, P.R.
Arthur Charles Gallery, Washington D.C.
- 1982** City Hall, Washington D.C.

SELECTED COLLECTIVE EXPOSITIONS (Most Recent)

- 1996** Comisión de Arte Fraternitas, (4ta Selección Nacional de Pintura Religiosa Fraternitas '96), Argentina
Nahan Gallery, New York City
- 1995** Vrej Baghoomian Gallery, New York City
Kenkeleba House,
(El Puerto Rican Embassy) New York City, U.S.A.
- 1994** Villa Du Park, (Carte Blanche a Editart), Geneve, Switzerland
- 1993** Galería Palomas, (Collector's Choice), San Juan, P.R.
Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, (Muestra de Arte Puertorriqueño 93, V Centenario), San Juan, P.R.
- 1992** VIII Bienal Iberoamericana de Arte, Ciudad de Mexico
(Selección del Jurado Calificador)
Luigi Marrozzini Gallery, (Pequeño Formato), San Juan, P.R.
Virginia Miller Galleries, (Latin America Invitational), Coral Gables, Miami, FL.
Museo Casa Cautiño, (Modern Art in P.R.), Guayama, P.R.
Anne Jaffe Gallery, (Summer Selections II), Bay Harbor Islands, FL.
Banco de Desarrollo Económico, (De la A a la Z) Hato Rey, P.R.
- 1991** Patiño Foundation, (Los Autores de la Conquista), Geneve, Switzerland
XXV Prix International D'Art Contemporain de Monte-Carlo, Monaco
Galerie Editard, Geneve, Switzerland
Virginia Miller Galleries, (Latin American Invitational), Coral Gables, Miami, FL.
Forbes Gallery, New York
- 1990** Luigi Marrozzini Gallery, San Juan, P.R.
- 1989** Gloria Luria Gallery, Miami, FL.
Naham Gallery, New York, N.Y.
Luigi Marrozzini Gallery, San Juan, P.R.
- 1988** VI Bienal Iberoamericana de Arte, Mexico City
Botello Gallery, San Juan, P.R.

1987

- Park Gallery, San Juan, P.R.
- Caribe Gallery, San Juan, P.R.
- VIII Bienal de Valparaiso, Chile
- XXIX Sao Paolo Biennial, Brazil
- Botello Gallery, San Juan
- Young Puerto Rican Artists, San Juan
- Park Gallery (Domingo López/Luis Hernández Cruz/Julio Rosado del Valle) San Juan, P.R.
- 1986** Botello Gallery (Tamayo/Tapie/Miró/Botello/Cuevas) San Juan, P.R.
- V Bienal Iberoamericana de Arte, Mexico City
- 1985** Botello Gallery, San Juan, P.R.
André Gallery, San Juan, P.R.
Charles Whitchurch Gallery, California
Buschlen Mowatt Gallery, Vancouver, Canada
Los Angeles Art Expo, L.A., California
- 1983** Botello Gallery, Plaza Las Américas, P.R.
Botello Gallery, San Gerónimo Hotel, P.R.
Young Latin American Artists (Naul Ojeda/ Letelier/ Ghiglino), Washington, D.C.
- 1982** La Raza: Contemporary Art, City Hall, Washington D.C.
Arthur Charles Gallery (Peter Max, Max Pappart) Washington, D.C.
- 1980** André Gallery, Hato Rey, P.R.
- 1979** U.N.E.S.C.O. Salon, San Juan, P.R.

PRIZES AND AWARDS

- 1995** AT&T Grant - San Juan, P.R.
- 1991** AT&T Grant - San Juan, P.R.
- 1989** AT&T Grant - San Juan, P.R.
- 1987** XEROX Grant - XEROX Caribbean
- 1986** Special Honor Prize - V Bienal Iberoamericana, Mexico
- 1972** First Prize Arts Festival - Puerto Rican Culture Institute, San Juan
- 1972** Honor Mention Young Art Salon - Royal Bank of Canada, San Juan

Also recipient of awards and scholarships of numerous prestigious music institutions, including the New York Philharmonic Society, the American Federation of Musicians, and the American Violin Society.

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