



symposium

# Agustín Fernández

**From Cuba  
to Paris  
to New York:**

**New Perspectives  
on an  
Artistic Voyage**

Panelists:

**Susan Aberth**

Associate Professor of Art History, Bard College

**Mitchell Algus**

Director, Mitchell Algus Gallery

**Rocio Aranda**

Associate Curator, Special Projects,  
El Museo Del Barrio

**Curtis Carter**

Professor of Aesthetics, Marquette University  
and Les Aspin Center for Government,  
International Curator, Beijing Museum of  
Contemporary Art

Chair:

**Ricardo Pau-Llosa**

Poet, Critic, Curator

This panel, organized by **The Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame**, and **The Agustín Fernández Foundation**, will examine the work of Agustín Fernández, one of the most prolific and internationally recognized artists of Cuba's historic *vanguardia* generations.

Date and Time:

**Sunday, May 16th from 9 a.m. to noon**

Location:

**Club Quarters Hotel, Chicago, Illinois**

For information about the artist and this panel please go to:  
[www.agustinfernandez.net](http://www.agustinfernandez.net)



the agustin fernandez foundation



Développement d'un Delire, 1961,  
Collection of The Frost Art Museum

# Agustín Fernández

## from Cuba to Paris to New York: New Perspectives on an Artistic Voyage

The purpose of the panel will be to provide analytical perspectives on the work of Fernández and its significance from four scholars who have not previously written about the artist. The event will begin with a slide presentation of the work. Next, the panelists will present their analyses and interpretations of the “unique and discerning artistic vision that Fernandez cultivated by bridging his Cuban inheritance and the cosmopolitan influences gleaned from many decades spent abroad.” They will also provide varying vantage points for appreciating the historical and contemporary significance of Fernandez’ *oeuvre*. Finally, the panel chair will comment and extend on the analyses and views presented.

### About the Artist (written by Abby McEwen):

Born in Havana in 1928, Fernández enrolled at the city’s venerable San Alejandro Academy of Fine Arts in 1946. After four years of training, which included a brief period of study at the Art Students League of New York under the direction of George Grosz and Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Fernández graduated and within a year held his first solo exhibition at Havana’s Lyceum. A prodigious talent, he exhibited widely during the 1950s, with one-man shows in Europe, the United States and South America, and was awarded an Honorable Mention at the Fourth Biennial of São Paulo in 1956. In 1959, Fernández accepted a scholarship to study painting in Europe from the Castro government, precipitating his move to Paris and his decision to remain in exile for the remainder of his life.

While Fernández’s early style is exuberantly lyrical – a “*fiesta de color*,” as an early reviewer noted – and evolved from Cubist and Abstract Expressionist forms, his work took a more introspective turn following his departure from Cuba. As his palette contracted, moving successively through beige and black-and-white periods, his subjects became increasingly visceral and obsessively erotic. Ambiguous forms, from minimalist eggs to coolly sadistic armor plates, impart a harder edge to his mature work, which also began to venture into three dimensions, in the form of mixed-media assemblage, collage and sculpture. Fernández experimented with serigraphy during his years in Puerto Rico (1968-72), producing an edition of twenty collages on silkscreen for which he received a Mention at the *Tercera Bienal de San Juan del Grabado Latinoamericano y del Caribe* in 1973.

Fernández moved to New York in 1972, living and working in Manhattan until his death in 2006. Dark brown tonalities dominate the work from the 1970s, characteristically in paintings that juxtapose the vulnerability of human flesh with the somber impregnability of metal armature. Snake-like forms first appeared around 1980, and by the middle of the decade Fernández had begun to subtly reintroduce color into his work, a nod to his Cuban inheritance. The intense psychology of his late painting continued to evoke a “*mundo de sensaciones, de magia, de maravilla*” – words used to describe his work in 1952 – but rendered finally through an exquisite sexual tension, conceptually and technically advanced.

Fernández was awarded a Cintas Foundation Fellowship in 1978 and continued to show internationally, exhibiting in Mexico City, New York and for many years at the Salon de Mai in Paris. His career was celebrated at a retrospective exhibition held in 1992 at Florida International University, and his work is held in major collections, including the Museum of Modern Art (New York), the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (Havana), the Museum of the Organization of American States (Washington, D.C.), and the Lowe Art Museum (Miami, Fla.)

For more information please go to [www.agustinfernandez.net](http://www.agustinfernandez.net)

The language in italics was borrowed from material written for the Agustín Fernández Foundation by Abby McEwen.

Ángel Lázaro, “Agustín, camino de sí mismo,” *Carteles* (20 April 1952): 40.  
Ibid.