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# GUILD

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Essay by Ricardo Pau-Llosa  
Designed by Jovan Villalba  
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Cover images from left to right: Yamel Molerio, *Moving On* (detail), José Luis Telot, *The Whiteness One* (detail), Lu Gold, *Close Encounters* (detail), T. Elliott Mansa, *Blood Sweat Milk Honey* (detail), Vincent Serritella, *Hook, Line & Sinker* (detail), Jovan Karlo Villalba, *A Dawn Perched on Downbursts* (detail), Abdiel Acosta, *Monster From Within* (detail), Frank Garaitonandia, *On The Field* (detail)

Just when it seemed that the practice of artists forming into groups was a thing of the past, and after art itself—and especially painting and sculpture in traditional media—had long been declared irrelevant, a group of eight emerging painters from Miami have assembled and declared, in a ten-point statement that follows, their belief in creativity, originality, ambiguity, and other hallmarks of Art. And they spell it with a capital A—in defiance of contemporary trends which place all culture at the service of political, social, and gender issues. Art, of course, never left its home plate, its role as a portal where passion and ideas converge in a Protean clarity, so the significance of GUILD lies in the originality

GUILD heralds a return to fundamental aesthetic concerns that shaped Modernism from its inception, trumping the dialectical progression of defiant –isms which conformed the official program of innovation from Cubism to Minimalism. While Post-Mo cant pretended to bury this dialectic with its insistence that media, as opposed to medium, is the message, it shifted the emphasis away from a complex hermeneutics of ambiguity to a cult of political and social declamation, often self-defeatingly shrouded in obscurity, if not inanity, posing as subjectivity and subtlety. The artists of GUILD are part of a large and growing sensibility among emerging artists who are revisiting the diverse aesthetic

## the EMERGENCE OF GUILD – Ricardo Pau-Llosa

of the work of its members and in the fact that they are willing to state and embrace the timeless obvious—Art is art; all other obligations attached to it are clumsy instrumentalizations, no different from using a spoon to pry open a jar or a butter knife as a screw driver.

The eight painters who make up GUILD are: Abdiel Acosta, Frank Garaitonandia, Lu Gold, Todd Elliott Mansa, Yamel Molerio, José Telot, Vincent Serritella, and Jovan Karlo Villalba. They are in their thirties, the oldest being Molerio who is 40. All but one—Serritella who currently resides in Oakland, CA—live in South Florida. Raised in Miami, educated at the New World School for the Arts, the artists of GUILD separate themselves from Miami's art-by-night cultural ethos while drawing deeply from the images, themes, and the distinct aesthetic traditions that have evolved in their surroundings but which are often trashed by globalization snobs. There is a poignant significance to GUILD's forming in Miami, a city whose once thriving and unique art scene, oriented toward cosmopolitan interaction with Latin America and Europe, has been replaced with Art Basel Miami Beach's annual extravaganza of undifferentiated trendiness.

ambitions which launched the Modernist golden age during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in visual terms which, though grounded in craftsmanship, are hardly retro. In the case of GUILD, one provocative area of interest in their work is the relationship between protagonistic forms and figures and the pictorial space that surrounds them. It is the complexities of this relationship which got oversimplified by critics extolling Modernist bidimensionality as an affirmation of painting's independence from subservience to representation. But, as it turns out, there was more to the early Modernist aesthetic revolutionary impulse toward the abstract properties of painting than an adoration of flatness. In the new bidimensionality there lurked a nascent and innovative sense of theater in painting, a sense that space as an imagistic protagonist of visual thinking could capture the essence of narrative in ways that had nothing to do with sequenced images (as in serial illustrations, comic strips, or film). How can foregrounded space reveal aspects of temporality without relinquishing its differentness from, and interaction with, forms and figures which appear within it? The artists of Renewal Modernism ask themselves this kind of question, as evidenced by the works in this inaugural series of exhibitions of GUILD.

**Abdiel Acosta's** response to the question is to exploit the semantics of verticality our culture has inherited from Psychoanalysis and its dissident sequels. The series "Monsters from Within" works in counterpoint with the notion that the depths, the telos of gravity, correspond to the hidden, therefore genuine, domain of identity. What is buried away, eclipsed by fear and will, is also what is most true about us because, in its dank sequestering, it wombs conjectured evils, monsters, which is to say, the real heroes of fate. Acosta, working from a rigorous realism, distorts the gaping jaws, the tangling serpents, and the octopus' medusean grip, in the manner of ancient cartographers and navigators whose poetics of dread spun tales of oceanic monsters into proto-horror picture shows. In the truest depths await the deepest truths about the symbols which articulate our approaching, inevitable death. Acosta's heraldic constructs juxtapose these self-illuminating monsters with the empty chalice of a life-boat, hovering like a halo above the placid surface of the sea. It becomes uncomfortably clear that Acosta is also playing with an inversion of these metaphysical spatial semantics, with the role of monster played by the raft's hovering emptiness—bereft of oar, sail, and survivor—and the denizens of the cryptic deep emerging as icons of life, creativity, and even hope.

**Abdiel Acosta**  
*Monster From Within 5*  
2011  
ink wash on paper  
14 x 11 inches



The ocean and other sources of water imagery emerge often in the work of GUILD's painters, explicitly or indirectly. Beyond the fact that water is a natural regional cue, its libertinism with weight presents an irresistible lure to the questions about the theatrics of space which these artists seek answers to. In the series titled "Unbearable," **Lu Gold** renders a solitary young female submerged in a pool, her body and arms recollecting the gestures of land in a domain that drowns as it veils, lightens bodies as it darkens depth. The series title and the stilled kabuki of the submerged figure allude to the dynamic of buoyancy and to suicide—extremes, in other words, in every sense, from the physical to the psychic, from pre-natal floating to being overwhelmed by life. In one watercolor, jellyfish bloom at woman's feet, water's translation of the projected garden humming inside the close-eyed woman's mind, her fingers grazing the water's surface from within. In Gold's series "Trees," often inhabited by children at play or wandering in ways that innocence rarely thinks of as aimless, a similar theater of alien ethereality is played out against the delicate shades of a space reefed into layers of pressure around figures on the verge of a tempting dissolution.

**Lu Gold**  
*Close Encounters*  
2011  
watercolor on paper  
35 x 47 inches





Vincent Serritella  
*Hook, Line & Sinker*  
2011  
oil on wood panel  
24 x 30 inches

**Vincent Serritella** draws on Pop Art imagery and spatial syntax and puts them to new uses. He focuses on areas of the radiantly personal which Pop eschewed. Repeated images show the artist in a boxer pose, as both contenders in a prize-fight poster, turning the sardonic wit of media-appropriation into a statement about the unsparing nature of inner combat and how necessary it is for the creative process. In another series, upper torsos and legs of orgasmic female nudes employ fragmentation in the manner of a tease, hiding or blurring the main

event, their bluntness luring and repelling us at the same time. In more complex works, juxtaposition of split-screen style pictorial spaces open doors not to a public discourse on war or consumerism but a personal tropological play on the relationship between the inner life of erotic compulsion and its potentially invigorating aggressiveness. These divisions and repetitions are Serritella's way of foregrounding the imagistic properties of space, which are parallel to the nebulous parameters between dream, intrusion, aversion, and surrender.

**Yamel Molerio** approaches division and repetition in a more physical sense, collaging layers of canvas or paper, often employing the stitch-work that binds these fragments as part of the image strategy of a painting, and introducing a familiar architectural motif—house roofs, tents—as a point of referential tension. The way he breaks up the surface of the painting into overlapping components echoes the faceted images of the taut fabric and metal panels of the represented structures, and these facets, in turn, echo conceptually among the paged skies and sewn distances that dominate the painting's surface. Molerio's paintings recall photomontages and the myriad collages of oneiric and absurdist art. However, the results in his paintings are the opposite of evocations of the dream's symbol-strewn vortex. Likewise, Molerio is not interested in the mechanics of human optics by which we cluster innumerable shots to compose a scene. Such mechanics enable photographers to employ a montage to inebriate us with a single-image's panoramic buzz. Instead, Molerio captures a spare visual equation in which the parceled, cumulative nature of perception is revealed simultaneously in the pages of shelter's forms and those of sky's presumably seamless vault.



**Yamel Molerio**  
*Moving On*  
2011  
acrylic on canvas and fabric  
30 x 40 inches

Horizontality, like verticality, has its semantics. Indeed, horizontality is the axis of bidimensional space we associate with Miami's signature flatness. Using canvas, steel, or wood panel as a support, **Jovan Karlo Villalba** employs a brushwork which is the most expressionist of GUILD's artists. The horizon of his landscapes, at times mixed with urban images (e.g. expressway overpasses), are at once lyrically seductive, hence centripetal—and



volcanic, hence centrifugal. Earth, air, water, and fire partake in a common volatility in Villalba's paintings whose elongations impel the viewer adamant about detail to pace and divide the scene, only to pull back and take in the erotics of scrolled, fiery, impatient extension. In this dynamic of viewpoint, the spectator witnesses scenes where space flees from subjectivity, denying it any prominence in its magma of time and light. The tension between form and space is refracted back into the Modernist tension between the dual identities of brushstroke as image in its own right and as a vehicle of reference. Villalba's works pick up the abstract Surrealist challenge, where the theatricalization of the landscape of the unconscious coincides with a desire to house the infinite in a single image.

**Jovan Karlo Villalba**

*Lost City*

2010

oil on wood panel

24 x 80 inches

Another paradoxical approach to the relationship between space and subjectivity is engaged in the paintings of **T. Elliott Mansa**, an artist who boldly recovers the genre of portraiture within this adventure in the renewal and recovery of abandoned Modernist challenges. Mansa's subjects—real individuals, usually artists and writers who are friends of the painter—are usually set within flat but luminous spaces portioned in circles and other patterns, dissolving forms, folded transparencies petaling between absent blooms and the geometries nature inspires and with which we braid our most cherished symbols of transcendence and the infinite—mandalas, circles, hosts, among others. The titles often refer directly to episodes from the Bible, though no event is depicted. The golds and refractive shades of white, the whole sense of shift and veil, reconcile the silken oracles of hope and luxury, self-denial and physical pleasure. The doctrine of specific identity, whose icon is the portrait, is thus danced against the melodies of delectable rhythmized forms, the gears light would call its own, the gold that will leave no one behind. Background becomes as prominent, or even more so, than the figure, as their edges sometimes blur but never confound. The space is caught in the midst of its un patterning, but it is not a projection of the supposed inner life of the subject, whose unequivocal force will brook little interference with the viewer. Mansa's dynamic sense of space, light, and pattern is evident as well in other works where the subject may be a grimy urban wall, tattered with residual signs and graffiti and crowned with anachronistic public phones.

**T. Elliott Mansa**  
*Blood Sweat Milk Honey*  
2010  
oil on wood panel  
96 x 72 inches

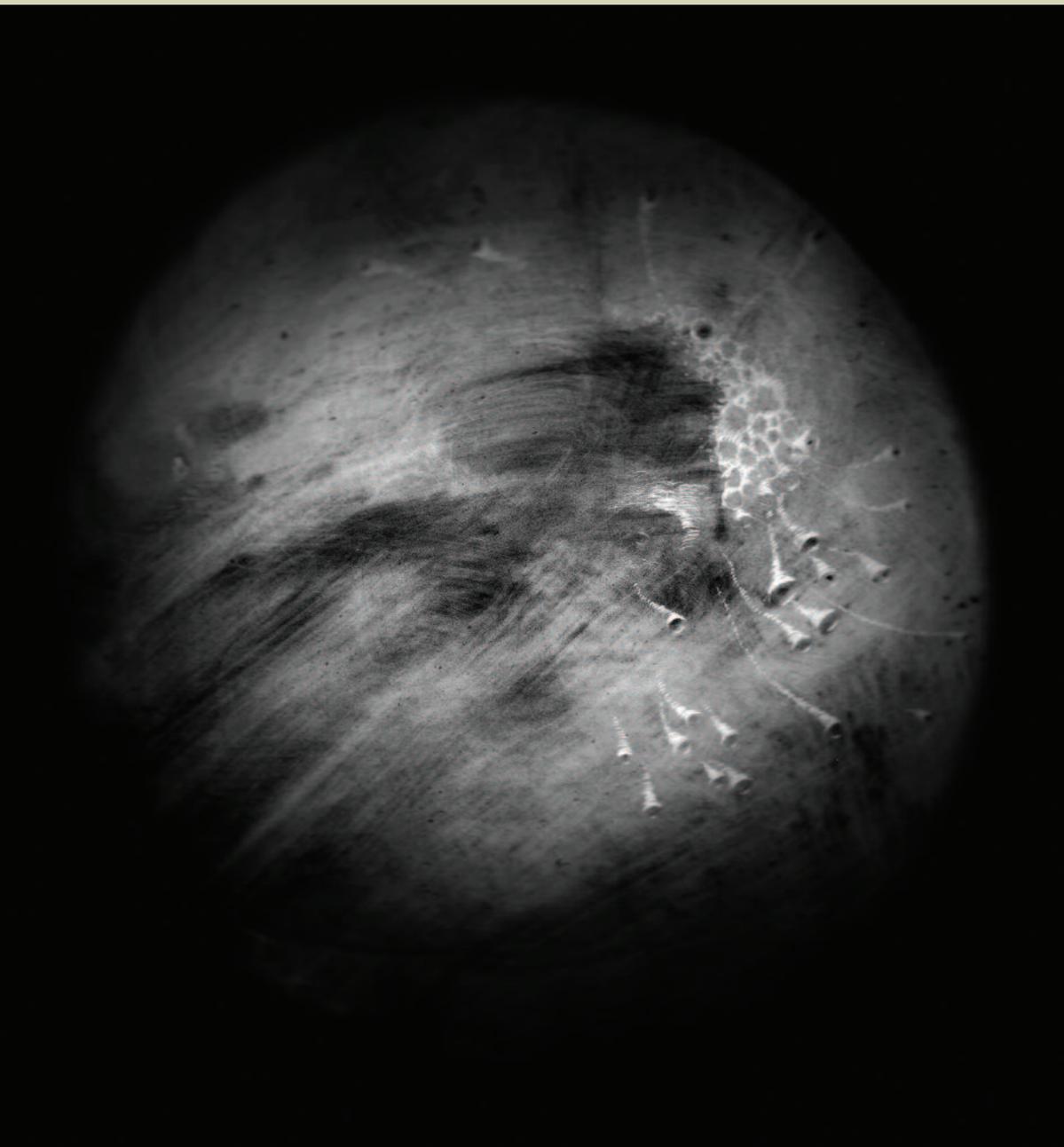




**Frank Garaitonandia**  
*Untitled*  
2010  
acrylic and gel on canvas  
11 x 16 inches

Light is the currency space and form trade with among themselves. In **Frank Garaitonandia's** paintings, form and space overlap, intersect, mate, disengage. Figures, vaguely allusive to WWI soldiers, haunt and are haunted by other images—lobsters, machines, geometric parachutes that evoke Renaissance hopes for future contraptions, horse fish, shells. A random-seeming tidal pool that meets in a banquet of translucency becomes a landscape smoked by war, bereft of past or future. The overture or finale of blurred reverie or the muted gavel of refused memory. And yet comforting. Garaitonandia understands that light is not an easy horse to ride, and often it is best to let it take you where it has not been. It is also a dangerous ride,

for enigma often leads to self-absorption, the game no one else will play. His landscapes, juxtapositions, and epicurean transparencies seem conceived for an enormous scale but are, in fact, executed in works whose personal scale poses a challenge to the viewer, unwilling to be engulfed in mystery but tempted and caught by dimensional intimacy. This is the imagery of an inner world stripped of ego, and as such it elucidates the initial stages in the formation of metaphor, metonymy and other tropes. Resemblance, transference of meanings and associations, the encapsulation of complex realities in solitary symbols, and other actions of the imagination take place in such luminous cradles.



There is a long tradition in Modernism that uses light as both an abstract property of painting and a symbol of the power of the imagination. To varying degrees, that tradition has, perhaps unwittingly, influenced the artists of GUILD, or at the very least coincided with their aesthetic preoccupations because the interest in reconceiving the tension between space and form invariably leads to a reassessment of the role of light in understanding art and the imagination. The works of **José Luis Telot** also reveal that preoccupation with light, and he works in grey monochromes whose graphite shadings on various kinds of surface produce startling effects. The circular form reinforces the link with both the moon and the eye itself. Like Petri dishes, fog-swirled crystal balls, or peep holes into the dream state, these often irregular circular shapes meld blurs, craters, scratches, and varying creaturely presences, some monstrous and others comical, and others still of a tonality that is difficult to pin down. Not all of Telot's works are tondos, but the circle does lend itself to his poetic investigations of how images—some, like birds and trumpets, charged with mythic and symbolic baggage, and others entirely of his invention—acquire and lose their sense of definition in the mind. Telot works with a sense of space and light as substances from which images are always in the midst of congealing or vanishing. The fusion of space with substance somehow bestows on time itself a distinctive tangibility.

**José Luis Telot**  
*The Whitened One*  
2009  
charcoal powder on sanded plaster  
on masonite and plywood  
8 x 7.5 inches



GUILD is an expression of a broader, if still underground, consciousness among emerging artists worldwide which I call Renewal Modernism. What began as an instinctive rejection of the facile journalistic parameters imposed upon Art by pretentious theorists has led many to retake Modernism, not as a dead compendium of styles but as a vast array of evolving and untapped avenues for innovation. What has perished is not Art but thinking about it

“GUILD has signaled its desire  
to recover and renew...”

in linear, dialectical terms invented for the sake of easy marketing and cataloging. For three decades or more, Art was placed within a framework of notions about all sorts of things, ignoring that, in fact, it is Art which contains ideas and is not contained within them. Ideas help us grapple with the enigma of creativity, but the practice of turning works of art into illustrations of factional postures has left us with a paltry legacy indeed. GUILD has signaled its desire to recover and renew basic concepts in pictorial thought, the interaction of form and space being just the first. It also promises to restore a sense that the specifics of place and the traditions which have emerged in it are in complete alignment with the rigors of genuine universality.

**Ricardo Pau-Llosa**  
[www.pau-llosa.com](http://www.pau-llosa.com)

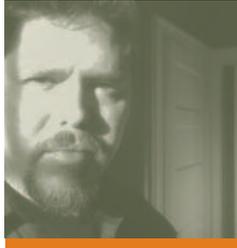
## GUILD ARTISTS



**Abdiel Acosta**

b. 1974, Colon, Matanzas, Cuba

Abdiel Acosta was raised in Miami, Florida. He received a BFA in painting from the Maryland Institute Collage of Art. At Maryland he was awarded the Presidential Scholarship, Maryland Institute Scholarship, National Art Honor Society Scholarship, Seymour Mandelbaum, and the William Ferguson Merit Scholarship. His work has been published in the Mystic River Press, Latin Network for the Visual Arts. He has participated in group exhibitions in the Arts Center of South Florida, O & Y Gallery, Alexey von Schlippe Gallery of Art at the University of Connecticut, Little Haiti Cultural Center, Miami International University of Art and Design, San Carlos Museum, Maryland Institute Collage of Art and New World School of the Arts. Acosta is a full-time art teacher in Miami-Dade County Public Schools since 2005.



**Frank Garaitonandia**

b. 1972, Palma Soriano, Santiago, Cuba

Raised between Cuba, Costa Rica and Miami Garaitonandia is an alumnus of the New World School of the Arts, recipient of the Frances Wolfson Endowed Visual Arts Scholarship for two consecutive years, 1993 and 1994. He received a full tuition scholarship to University of Florida and graduated with honors with a BFA, majoring in painting in 1996. In 1994 he received a Vermont Studio Center Scholarship Award, artist residency, in Johnson, VT. and in 1995 he received The Penland School Scholarship to explore printmaking techniques in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. Currently living in Miami, Garaitonandia spends his time teaching art and working out of his studios in Miami and Orlando.



**Lu Gold**

b. 1977, Miami, Florida

Lu Gold studied fine art at New World School of the Arts and received a BFA in Painting from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2000. In 1993 she spent a semester at Parsons College in Paris studying European painting and art history. She has participated in various group exhibitions at the Bernice Steinbaum Gallery in Miami, the Leonard Tachnes Gallery in North Miami, the Kaptz Artmosphere Gallery in Coral Gables, and the Mary Loly Gallery in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.



**T. Elliott Mansa**

b. 1977, Miami, Florida

T. Elliott Mansa came of age in the era of Reaganomics, crack cocaine, and the sounds of Black nationalist hip-hop. He is an alumni of the New World School of the Arts High School and was a recipient of the Thalheimer Scholarship from the Maryland Institute College of Art, receiving his BFA from the University of Florida in 2000. His paintings have been exhibited at the African American Museum of the Arts, Deland FL, the David Castillo Gallery in Miami, and the Miami International Airport.



**Yamel Molerio**

b. 1971, Havana, Cuba

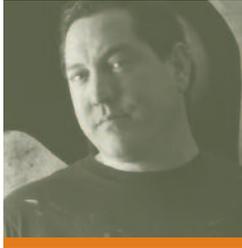
Yamel Molerio was raised in Miami, Florida. He holds a BFA in painting from the University of Florida-New World School of the Arts (1995) and a MS in art education from Florida International University (1999). Molerio is a full time art teacher in Miami-Dade County Public Schools since 1996. He has participated in group exhibitions in the Art Center of South Florida, Maxoly Art, Fredric Snitzer Gallery and Alonso Art gallery, among other venues. Molerio has also curated exhibitions at the Buena Vista Building in Miami's Design District, in a space donated by Craig Robins and Dacra Development. He is the founding president of the artists group GUILD.



**Vincent Serritella**

b. 1975, Miami, Florida

Vincent studied at both the Maryland Institute, College of Art in Baltimore, Maryland and at the Cooper Union School of Art in NYC where he received his B.F.A. He began his artistic development at the acclaimed high school New World School of the Arts. There, he was surrounded by all disciplines of the arts, developing his sensibility of space and aesthetics. At The Cooper Union, Vincent was taken under the wing of professor and painter Don Kunz, who in return for assisting him in his studio, gave Vincent one on one guidance. Vincent's paintings are collected nationally and internationally and exhibited in museums and galleries including Nassau County Museum of Art in NYC; The New Puppy Gallery in LA; Demossa Gallery in Laguna Beach, CA; ArtSeen and CGAF Gallery in Miami, FL.



**José Luis Telot**

b. 1975, Miami Beach, Florida

Jose Luis Telot was born and raised in Miami, Florida and is an alumni of the prestigious New World School of the Arts, an art magnet program, where he studied the visual arts. He is a recipient of numerous awards; Honorable Mention, National Endowment of the Arts; Honorable Mention, National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts (NFAA); and Honorable Mention, Scholastic Awards. In 1993, he received a Full Tuition Scholarship award to continue his fine art studies at the Cleveland Institute of Art in Cleveland, Ohio and continued his studies at New World School of the Arts College in Miami, Florida. From there, Telot has participated in various group exhibitions exhibiting his work in galleries spanning the United States. Currently, Telot has embarked in the profession of a mural painter and is conducting business in Miami where he presently resides.



**Jovan Karlo Villalba**

b. 1977, Quito, Ecuador

Jovan Karlo Villalba was raised in Miami, Florida. There, he studied art at the acclaimed New World School of the Arts Magnet Program. Upon graduation he was awarded a full-tuition scholarship to continue his fine art studies at The Cooper Union School of Art in New York City. At The Cooper Union Villalba was presented with merit-based grants and was invited to exhibit his art at The New York Design Center. In 1999, Villalba graduated from The Cooper Union (BFA) and acquired an art studio in the famed Chelsea Art District in New York. Since then, Villalba has exhibited his work at dozens of art centers, fairs and galleries across the United States. Recently, his work was featured in biennial exhibitions at Exit Art and the Queens Museum of Art in New York City. In 2008, after living in New York for 13 years, Villalba returned to his hometown, Miami, where he presently lives and works.

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