

Detroit Art Review

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Art is the outward expression of an inner life of an artist that is vast and varied

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The N'Namdi Center for Contemporary Art has a history of bringing art from various parts of the world to expand the exposure of cultural arts to the audiences of Detroit. This extensive exhibition is no exception. Present is an under riding theme that rings true for many people, which is that in times of extreme tribulation, visual artist, musicians, actors, writers, and dancers endure hardships to tell stories. There exhibit *Open Scene*, the figurative expressionism by Manuel Lopez Oliva, one of the most recognized Cuban artists whose theatrical masquerades form the heart of his expression.



The Center is presenting the solo exhibition of Manuel Lopez Oliva, a Cuban artist: *Open Scene*, whose acrylic work on canvas mesmerizes his viewer with an allegorical collection of figurative portraits that imbue the surface with small designs of shape, line and color. The deep and usually dark earthy background color field most often sets the stage for a variety of female motifs.

The artist was present for this exhibition and described the influence of growing up in Manzanillo, Cuba, where his father conducted workshops for people who participated in the decorations of making carnival masks. He relates to me the influence of the theater on him as a young boy, caught up in the “art of acting and stage design” where symbolism would abound and dominate the magical transformation of regular people into characters of color

and light. I asked the artist about the snake-like motif that dominates much of the work, and he describes the shapes coming from the head as thoughts, and from the mouth, representing language, both in the abstract.



Estudio para hallar de misterios / (2005) / Acrylic on canvas / 200 x 150 cm / Study for a dinner of masks / Acrylic on canvas



Estudio para hallar de misterios / (2005) / Acrylic on canvas / Study for a dinner of masks / Acrylic on canvas

These masks, with a refined technique, reveal a sensual utopian aesthetic and provide a formal, chromatic, ideographic and textural intensity. Working out of his house-studio, he lives in Leonor Perez district among the streets of Havana, Cuba.