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# AGUSTÍN CÁRDENAS

THE MEMORY OF THE FUTURE

02.04 - 29.05.2025

From Tuesday to Saturday, from 11am to 7 pm

Opening Tuesday, April 1<sup>st</sup> 2025, from 6pm to 8:30pm

95, rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, Paris VIII<sup>e</sup>

## PRESS RELEASE

Mitterrand is pleased to present a new exhibition by Cuban artist Agustín Cárdenas from 2 April to 29 May 2025, in both its Paris galleries.

Featured in the *Paris Noir* exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, Cárdenas is one of the three great sculptors of Surrealism, alongside Arp and Giacometti<sup>1</sup>. While his work embodies his Latin-American and African origins, its strong symbolism and extreme liberty frees it from their respective references. Working with wood, marble, and bronze, Cárdenas developed poetic, curved, and sensual works in which organic generosity, elongated silhouettes, and abstract forms all mix together. The abstract nature of his volumes is almost always counterbalanced by a figurative

representation, which is suggested by his chosen titles. Totems, shells, women, couples, horses, doors, stele: Cárdenas worked with an array of highly symbolic subjects providing him with the pretext to explore many facets of creation across various forms.

The works presented at the gallery bear witness to Cárdenas's stylistic and material research from 1955, the year of his arrival in France. Establishing connections between African, Caribbean and European aesthetic influences, the work of Agustín Cárdenas is a wonderful example of the concept of *créolité*, a thought developed by poet and philosopher Edouard Glissant, who shared a close friendship with the artist from the 1950s and would go on to write extensively

on his work. He mentions the *Couple antillais* (1957), the wooden original of which is on display at the Centre Pompidou, in one of his most important essays on the artist:

“Our history made visible, that, therefore, is the meaning of the passionate project of Cárdenas’s sculpture. His interior landscape is just like ours. From Trinidad and Antigua, man and woman (the *Caribbean couple*) are scattered on windswept paths, in a profusion of transplantation, in the uncertainty of speech; they wait to focus their eyes. With Cárdenas we indeed turn our faces to this wind. I mean it revitalizes us. Yes. It reveals in us hidden energy. Cárdenas gives us life. The foaming form of his marble is rooted in the sky. His bronze, projected upwards, oozes new blood.” [Édouard Glissant, *Seven landscapes for the sculptures of Cárdenas*, 1979].

Bringing together works from the 1950s, 1970s and 1980s, the exhibition aims to highlight Agustín Cárdenas’ distinctive role in the history of modern sculpture. African art, a key inspiration for the artist, was also a major source of influence for

the Surrealists, notably André Breton, who owned a collection of masks and totems. He admired the work of Cárdenas, about whom he wrote in the preface to the catalog of the first Cárdenas’s solo exhibition, in 1959:

“However skillful it may be - like a dragonfly - the hand of Cárdenas for our happiness remains, at this stage, highly privileged. Here springs from his fingers the great flowering totem that, better than a saxophone, bends the waist of beauty.” (1959)

Born in 1927 in Matanzas, Cuba and deceased in 2001 in Havana, Cuba, the works of Agustín Cárdenas are included in numerous museum collections including those of the Musée d’Art Moderne in Paris, the Museo d’Arte moderna in Rome, the Museo d’Arte Moderno in Caracas, the Pompidou Centre in Paris, the Museo Nacional in Cuba, the Modern Art Museum in Tel Aviv, and the Hakone open-air Museum in Japan.

## RÉFÉRENCES

1. André Pieyre de Mandiargues, « Let us thank Cárdenas » 1975, in *Carrara, Cardenas e la Negritudine*

IC INSIGHT COMMUNICATIONS  
JASMINE SPEZIE / ADÈLE GODET  
ADELE@INSIGHTCOMMUNICATIONS.CC  
T +33 1 42 84 19 09

MITTERRAND  
CONSTANÇA COSTA SANTOS  
CONSTANCA@MITTERRAND.COM  
T +33 1 43 26 12 05

MITTERRAND  
ART MODERNE ET CONTEMPORAIN  
TEMPLE / ST-HONORÉ