



Julio Valdez

Prints, Drawings and Mixed Media

On front: **Oceanic Eyes**, 2010-11, Detail, Solarplate Etching, Print on paper, AP, Printed by the artist & Anthony Kirk, 12.5" x 21.5"

NATURE

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Graciela Kartofel

Curator



Oceanic Eyes, 2010-11, (Detail), Solarplate Etching, Print on paper, AP, Printed by the artist & Anthony Kirk, 12.5" x 21.5"

Nature: Prints, Drawings and Mixed Media

Human nature and the nature of plants and animals are central themes in the work of Julio Valdez. The work focuses on the three interrelated themes, or on just two at a time. Starting when he was an advanced student, and more specifically when he started his professional work, Valdez began to present these themes from his own personal, creative perspective. The results can be seen in this exhibition, which encompasses two decades of his work: from 1993 to 2012.

Unquestionably, the source of these themes is autobiographical. He was born in the Dominican Republic, which he identifies as an island, where he was in contact with nature and a variety of fauna. When he emigrated to New York, the island experience was not left behind. Currently, with a substantial body of work as well as his contributions as a teacher, the artist is working actively in both New York and Washington. In addition, Julio Valdez is a prolific artist who paints and creates installations.

Printing is his most expressive medium. However, he surpassed the traditional canons in two ways: his use of non-toxic techniques¹ in executing his work, and his concern with broadening his expressive vocabulary. This explains the scope of the title as well as the content of the exhibition. "Print" is the generic term that covers various techniques, including lithography, silk screen, woodcut, solarplate, metal plate printing, etc. It is significant that all these prints are numbered originals or sometimes unique originals. This is not because they can be simply, indiscriminately copied, rather because most of these originals can only be reprinted through a laborious, painstaking process.

¹ The toxicity only occurs when the artists are processing their works, due to the chemicals used. There is no harmful residue or toxic element in the finished works.



Aquiles: The Heart Fell into the Sea, 2007, Archival Pigment Print on Paper, on Sintra Panel, 30" x 36"

As unfamiliar as we find the print until a definition is provided, drawing is a discipline known to everyone. Mixed media, on the other hand, is a technique that has arisen from modernity, the post-World War II period and the increased freedom assumed by artists in their work. Mixed media is comparable to borders liberated and forms of communication that go beyond the traditional orthodoxy. These three disciplines can be rendered on paper or canvas, and occasionally on wood, metal or acrylic. All these methods have been used by Valdez.

Certain early works by Julio Valdez have a rich primitive/contemporary expression. The series *Hombre Isla* [Island Man] sums up this phase. The figure tends to be frontal, somewhat totemic, surrounded by leaves and/or birds, fruit, hearts and more. These are works resolved in earth tones—browns and greens, which symbolize the artist's strong relationship with the earth. While that relationship is universal, the life experience of people born in a circumscribed territory, isolated from the continental mass, binds them to the earth in a way that cannot be ignored. In the course of using these motifs, Julio Valdez creates work that does not repeat the island motif often seen in Caribbean art; his focus is more his own.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, a bridge emerges from Valdez's work leading the artist in new directions. Certain motifs that have been kept more private begin to populate his exhibitions. The self-portraits and family portraits, such as *Self Portrait*, from 1997 and *Achilles: The Heart Fell into the Sea*, from 2007, represent this phase in the development of the artist's motifs. Now the anonymous figure becomes a person, freed of the subtle primitive totemism. Leaves give way to flowers, and water is the infinite environment of identifiable persons. From here on, the viewer contemplates creations that culminate in the artist's most recent drawings, prints and mixed media work, such as *Oceanic Eyes*, *Tail of Clouds* and *Dreaming Boy*.

Graciela Kartofel

Curator



Dreaming Boy III, 2012, Archival Pigment Print on Paper, on Sintra Panel, 26" x 56.5"

Naturaleza: Grabados, Dibujos y Técnicas Mixtas

La naturaleza humana, vegetal y animal son temas centrales en la obra de Julio Valdez. Enfoca las tres temáticas interrelacionadas o de a pares. Desde que cursaba sus estudios avanzados y más específicamente cuando iniciara su etapa profesional, Julio Valdez comenzó a tratar estos temas a través de ángulos creativos personales, como se observa en la presente exposición que abarca dos décadas de trabajo: de 1993 a 2012.

Indudablemente, la fuente de estos motivos es autobiográfica. Nace en República Dominicana, un entorno que marca como isla, como contacto con lo natural y con los diversos seres de la fauna. Cuando emigra a Nueva York, dada esa geografía que lo ha formado, la experiencia isla no se pierde. Actualmente, con una producción amplia y también aportando desde la docencia, el artista trabaja activamente en Nueva York y en Washington. Asimismo, Julio Valdez es un artista prolífico que pinta y hace instalaciones.

La estampa es su medio expresivo por excelencia, aunque sobrepasando los cánones tradicionales para aplicar técnicas no tóxicas¹ en la realización de la obra y con la inquietud de ampliar su vocabulario expresivo. Esto explica los alcances del título y los contenidos de la exposición. La estampa es el nombre genérico que abarca las diversas técnicas de impresión, entre ellas, litografía, serigrafía, xilografía, placa solar, la gama de grabados en placa de metal y demás. Asimismo, conviene recordar que todas las estampas son originales numerados, o bien, a veces, son originales únicos. No porque se copian indiscriminadamente y con simplicidad, sino todo lo contrario, porque son originales que en la mayoría de los casos, sólo se pueden reimprimir a través de un laborioso y cuidado proceso.

¹ La toxicidad es sólo en el momento en que los artistas procesan la obra debido a los químicos que se usan. En las obras terminadas no hay residuos dañinos ni hay factor tóxico alguno.



Profile with Thorns, 2000, Silk Aquatint & Chine Collé on Paper, (Ed. 10), 31" x 25" (image size)

Así como la estampa requiere difusión acerca de su identidad, el dibujo es una disciplina por todos conocida. En cuanto a las técnicas mixtas, son producto de la modernidad, de la posguerra y de la incrementada libertad de trabajo artístico. Las técnicas mixtas se comparan a fronteras que se liberan y a formas de comunicación que superan la ortodoxia tradicional. Las tres disciplinas se trabajan sobre papel o sobre tela y eventualmente sobre madera, metal o acrílico. Modos todos ejercidos por Valdez.

Ciertas obras tempranas de Julio Valdez tienen una rica expresión primitivo-contemporánea. La serie *Hombre Isla* resume esta etapa. La figura suele ser frontal, suavemente totémica, estar rodeada de hojas y/o aves, frutos, corazones y demás. Son obras resueltas en colores telúricos -café y verdes-, los que son símbolo de la fuerte relación del artista con la tierra. Si bien dicha relación con la tierra es una experiencia universal, la vivencia de quienes nacen en un territorio limitado y aislado de la masa continental, establece una señal que no se puede ignorar. En esta temática, Julio Valdez concibe trabajos que no repiten el tema isla habitual en el arte caribeño, su enfoque es más propio.

Hacia finales del siglo XX y principios del siglo XXI, se desarrolla un puente hacia nuevas direcciones en la obra de Julio Valdez. Ciertos temas que se mantenían más privados comienzan a habitar sus exposiciones. Los Autorretratos y retratos de familia, como *Self Portrait*, de 1997 y *Aquiles: The Heart Fell into the Sea*, de 2007, habitan esta etapa temática en la cual la figura anónima se personifica, liberándose del sutil totemismo primitivo, las hojas dejan paso a las flores y el agua es el entorno infinito de los personajes identificables. De aquí en más, el espectador recorre creaciones que culminan con lo más recientes en dibujos, estampas y técnicas mixtas, como son *Oceanic Eyes*, *Tail of Clouds* y *Dreaming Boy*.

Graciela Kartofel

Curadora



Tail of Clouds, 2010-11, Solar Plate Color Etching, (Ed. 25) 13" x 19"





Pareja / Pair, 2000, Silk Aquatint & Chine Collé on Paper, (Ed. Variable), 40" x 59"

Julio Valdez's printed oeuvre attests to the significant role that printmaking can play in an artist's career. Although two dimensional, Valdez's prints are anything but flat. The ink, paper, and complex matrices compressed under the weight of the press create intricate lines and textured surfaces that are tactile. Throughout his career, Valdez has consistently engaged print processes that appeal to the touch as much as to sight.

Excerpt from the essay *Surface and Symbol: Julio Valdez and the Printed Image*, by

Judith B. Hecker, Assistant Curator
Dept. of Prints & Illustrated Books
Museum of Modern Art (**MOMA**), New York







Profile with Gardener, 2002, Monotype, colored pencil, wax crayon, ink on paper, 41" x 29.5"





Self-Portrait, 1997, Acrylic, Graphite, Charcoal and Crayon on Paper, 50" x 40"

Catalog

1. **Oceanic Eyes**, 2010-11
Solarplate Color Etching, (Ed. 25)
12.5" x 21.5"
2. **Tail of Clouds**, 2010-11
Solar Plate Color Etching, (Ed. 25)
13" x 19"
3. **Dreaming Boy III**, 2012
Archival Pigment Print on Paper, on Sintra Panel
26" x 56.5"
4. **Aquiles: The Heart Fell into the Sea**, 2007
Archival Pigment Print on Paper, on Sintra Panel
30" x 36"
5. **Profile with Gardener**, 2002
Monotype, colored pencil, wax crayon, ink on paper
41" x 29.5"
6. **Flowering II**, 2003-04
Monotype, Colored pencil, Wax crayon, Ink on Paper
42" x 46"
7. **Island Man III**, 1997
Silk Aquatint on Paper, (Ed. 6)
28" x 40"
8. **Pareja / Pair**, 2000
Silk Aquatint & Chine Collé on Paper, (Ed. Variable)
40" x 59"
9. **Self-Portrait**, 1997
Acrylic, Graphite, Charcoal and Crayon on Paper
50" x 40"
10. **A Pulse in Memory III**, 2002
Silk Aquatint on Paper, (Ed. Variable)
40" x 59"
11. **The Grey Echo IV**, 2002
Acrylic, Graphite, Crayon, Oil Wash
on Styrene on Wood Panel
40" x 44"
12. **The Grey Echo VI**, 2003
Oil, Pencil & Crayon on Styrene on Paper
12" x 10"
13. **Mar Abierto**, 2006
Archival Pigment Print on Paper, on Sintra Panel
18" x 40"
14. **Fragmented Figure**, 1993-94
Silkscreen & Collagraph on Pellon
44" x 35"
15. **Profile with Thorns**, 2000
Silk Aquatint & Chine Collé on Paper, (Ed. 10)
31" x 25" (image size)
16. **Hombre Isla IV**, 1997
Silk Aquatint & Chine Collé on Paper, (Ed. 25)
6" x 6" (image size)
17. **Hombre Isla V**, 1997
Silk Aquatint & Chine Collé on Paper, (Ed. 25)
6" x 6" (image size)
18. **Hand & Tree**, 1997
Silk Aquatint & Chine Collé on Paper, (Ed. 10)
15" x 19"
19. **Island Man II**, 1997
Silk Aquatint on Paper, (Ed. 6)
30" x 39" Aprox.
20. **Untitled**, 1996
Acrylic Wash, Charcoal and Oil Stick on paper
50" x 40" Aprox.
21. **Brother & Plátanos**, 2005
Archival Pigment Print on Canvas, Ed. 10,
22" x 30"

1 y 2: Printed by the artist & Anthony Kirk
3, 4, 13 y 21: Printed by Thomas Fuhs
7, 10, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19: Printed by the artist
8, 15: Printed by the artist & Kathy Caraccio



Fragmented Figure, 1993- 94, Silkscreen & Collagraph on Pellon, 44" x 35"

Julio Valdez

Born Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic, 1969. Lives and works in New York City and Washington, DC

Painter, printmaker, teacher and mixed installation artist whose work has been exhibited internationally. From 1984-86 he studied at the National School of Fine Arts in Santo Domingo and in 1988 graduated in Fine Arts/Illustration from The Altos de Chavón School of Design, the Parsons School of Design affiliate in the Dominican Republic. In 1994 he received fellowships from The Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop and the Artists in the Marketplace program, The Bronx Museum of the Arts, both in New York.

He received his first museum exhibition at the Omar Rayo Museum in Colombia in 1988. His work received prizes at the 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996 and 1998 national biennials at the Museo de Arte Moderno in Santo Domingo, as well as numerous prestigious international awards, including an Artist-in-Residence Fellowship at The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York City in 1997-98, the Silver Palette for Painting at the XXX International Painting Festival, Cagnes-sur-Mer, France in 1998, the Grand Prize at the XVII E. León Jimenes Biennial in the Dominican Republic in 2000, among others.

In 2003, he received a New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA) Fellowship and held a solo exhibition at the Organization of American States in Washington, DC. In 2007, he received a fellowship from the National Academy and Museum, New York, for Advanced Studies in Public Art.

He has presented 28 institutional and gallery solo exhibitions nationally and internationally, and has participated in more than 100 group exhibitions, biennials and related educational programs in the visual arts. He also has curated international traveling group exhibitions involving more than 60 artists.

His work is part of many public, private and museum collections worldwide, including:

El Museo del Barrio, New York

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA

Museum of Modern Art, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic



Photo by Shawn Kalkstein

Colección Aduanas, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
House of Representatives Collection, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
Musée Grimaldi, Cagnes-Sur-Mer, France
Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA), Long Beach, CA
Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Omar Rayo Museum, Roldanillo, Colombia
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, CA
Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ
Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame, Indiana
Centro Leon, Santiago, Dominican Republic
Instituto de Artes Gráficas de Oaxaca (IAGO), Oaxaca, México
Ministry of Culture, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
Altos de Chavón Cultural Center Foundation, La Romana, Dominican Republic
The Library of Congress, Washington, DC
Inter-American Development Bank Art Collection, Washington, DC
The World Bank Art Collection, Washington, DC
The Brandywine Workshop, Philadelphia, PA
Center for Contemporary Printmaking, Norwalk, CT
The Robert Blackburn Print Collection, New York
Kathy Caraccio Print Collection, New York
Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), New York
Banco del Café, Guatemala City, Guatemala

Represented by **June Kelly Gallery**, NYC; **Latin American Masters**, Santa Monica, CA; and **Legacy Fine Art**, Panama.

Julio Valdez, by **Federica Palomero**, hard-cover book published in 2009. Bilingual, Spanish and English

A sample of exhibition history available at:

<http://www.junekellygallery.com/valdez/valdez.htm>

<http://www.juliovaldez.com>



Julio Valdez

Nature: Prints, Drawings and Mixed Media
Curated by: **Graciela Kartofel**

September 13 – October 25, 2012
The Arsenal Gallery
The Arsenal in Central Park
5th Avenue at 64th Street, Third floor

Jennifer Lantzas, exhibition coordinator

Related Programs:

September 25th, 6:00 p.m.
Monotype Workshop with artist
Julio Valdez and Book Signing

October 10th, 6:00 p.m.
Exhibition Walkthrough with
Curator Graciela Kartofel

December 2, 2012 - January 27, 2013
The Center for Contemporary Printmaking
Mathews Park, 299 West Avenue
Norwalk, CT 06850
Phone: 203.899.7999
Fax: 203.899.7997
Email: info@contemprints.org

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September 13 – October 25, 2012

The Arsenal Gallery
The Arsenal in Central Park, NYC



NYC Parks

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