

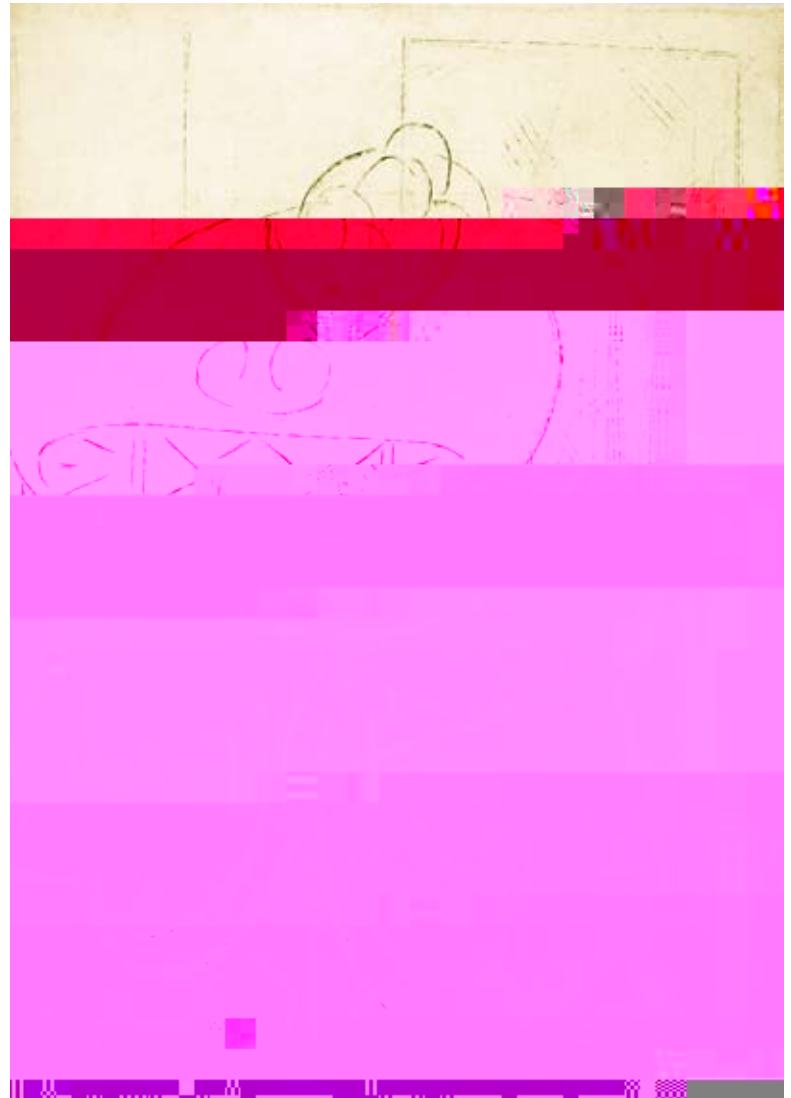
Untitled, 1959, oil on canvas, 17 ¾ x 23 ½ in. (45.1 x 60 cm)
Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University
The Mary B. Finnigan Art Endowment Fund, 2007.6

The interest in Cuban modern art among North American museums and collectors dates back to at least the 1930s. Wifredo Lam's art is of special interest today for its global elements linking the cultures of European modernism as found in the cubist works of Picasso and surrealist ideals of André Breton with his rich Afro-Cuban artistic and spiritual heritage. Apart from Lam's visual inventions as an innovative contributor to art history of the twentieth century, his painterly images reveal a deep concern with the suffering of mankind as it is manifest in social justice issues such as race, gender, and politics. The choice of Lam for this exhibition is based in part on these considerations. Lam's art also tests a theme that I have pursued in previous curatorial endeavors at the Haggerty Museum: artists as cultural outsiders, examined in exhibitions featuring Barbara Morgan the modernist photographer, Richard Lippold the sculptor, and painters Jean Fautrier and Roberto Matta. As artists outside the mainstream, they were granted the independence to shape their own beliefs and artistic practices irrespective of the fashions of their time.

Wifredo Lam's independent artistic vision, exceptional talent, and excellence in his artistic endeavors has brought us art of lasting value. Here is a brief recounting of the development of the exhibition *Wifredo Lam in North America*.

Early meetings with Lowery Stokes Sims, who has written widely on Lam, and collector Thomas Monahan were immensely helpful in the initial stages of planning for this exhibition. These early discussions pointed to the need for an exhibition focused on Lam's works in the collections of North America and his involvement with North American institutions and artists.

With this focus in mind, I began a search for information to gain a better understanding of the complexities of the artist's work and his involvement in North America. This search led first to



La mesa, (oil on canvas), 1933
Wifredo Lam, *La mesa*, 1933. (105 x 75, 11)
Wifredo Lam, *La mesa*, 1933.

the literature on Lam's works. Essential to the research was the two volume *Wifredo Lam: Catalogue Raisonné* assembled by Lou Laurin Lam and Eskil Lam.

the Cuban art historians particularly brought to light the connections of critics Alejo Carpentier and José Gómez Sicre to the understanding of Lam's place in twentieth century Cuban art and culture.

A conversation with Dr. Alfredo Guevara, head of the Latin American Cinema Festival held in Havana each year and