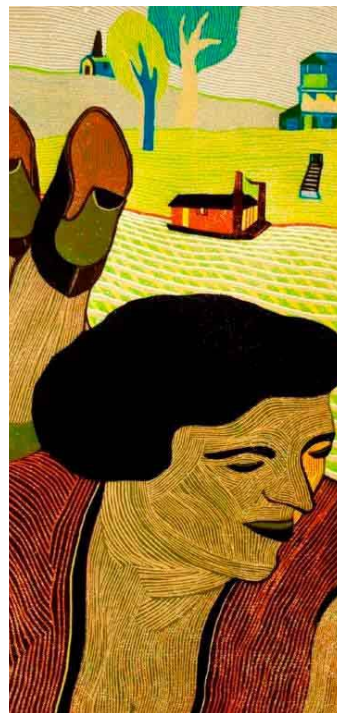


Dairan Fernández de la Fuente |
Taller de Gráfica Experimental | Cuba
| Printmaking

Gorgeous wood-block prints tell stories both old and new



Using the continent- and centuries-spanning process of woodblock printing, Cuban artist Dairan Fernández de la Fuente creates work steeped in the ever-evolving cultural heritage of his hometown of Havana. Dairan works from his studio, Taller de Gráfica Experimental, in downtown Havana. He uses traditional woodworking tools in a printing process, which is done entirely by hand. In Cuba, the technique was initially used to create cigar labels in the 19th Century. Later, of course, Cuba became well-known for its graphic expertise in the areas of film, travel and political posters.

This is a history Dairan expands upon with his skillful and bold arrangements of color and form. Reminiscent of vintage travel posters and conveying an appealing Art Déco design sensibility, de la Fuente utilizes a palette of elegant colors. His meticulous printing technique yields surfaces that are mesmerizingly rich in texture, with many-stroked and hashed areas adding depth and dimension to each image. "Much of

my work deals with the theme of immigration, departures and displacement," explains Dairan, whose own family immigrated from Spain to Cuba.

Taller de Gráfica Experimental was founded to rescue the traditional techniques of printmaking, while simultaneously respecting each artist's individual creativity. Despite their immediately appealing visual beauty, de la Fuente's prints hold significant meanings. "Some of my most recurrent imagery refers to separation, distance, nostalgia, anguish and loss," says Dairan. These themes are apparent in imagery that touches on separated families, or describes memories of old friends and relatives. A microphone, for instance, makes its way into multiple prints; it is a bitter-sweet reference to his relative, who left Cuba to become a successful radio announcer. Though he was always drawn to artistic expression, Dairan says "with woodblocks, I have found my medium."

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST