

**BRAUN LECTURE: Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons**  
Tuesday, Nov. 12

Welcome to the Braun Memorial Lecture, which is supported through the Fred M. Braun Lecture Fund and the Department of Art and Art History.

The lecture was established in 1986 by Jean Braun, professor emeritus of psychology at OU, to commemorate her husband's love of the visual arts. The fund provides for an annual lecture in studio art, art history, or architecture. And this year, we are extremely proud to have Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons deliver the lecture.

An artist's relationship to his or her cultural identity is fundamental to their creative process and unique expressions that define their work.

In the age of globalism, where cultural tides often wash away strong cultural rituals and traditions, Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons is at the forefront of integrating history, memory, gender, performance art and religion with a range of mediums to form an evocative portrait of the many cultural currents that run through her life.

Her Nigerian ancestors were brought to Cuba as slaves in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. And, in Cuba, she grew up on a sugar farm.

Magdalena's family heritage is Nigerian, Hispanic and Chinese, and she draws on these cultural currents in her evocative work, a work that reflects her individual perspective that defies the collectivist propaganda of the Cuban communist regime.

For Magdalena, art doesn't serve ideology, rather art reflects an artist's uncompromising view of the truth – unvarnished, undiminished and unassailable.

Her outspoken and resonating observations about the integral relationship among art, democracy and justice is a timely reminder, as she says, that “art does not happen in a vacuum. Art mirrors society, and is a testimony to our time.”

Because of the range, depth and emotional power of her work, Magdalena is recognized as a leading force in the New Cuban Art movement. She currently teaches drawing, performance and installation at Vanderbilt University, and served as artist-curator for the Havana Art Biennial this past May.

For all of her academic and critical accomplishments, there is little doubt that Magdalena's relevance as an artist is her uncanny ability to engage all of us in the increasingly common drama of cross-cultural identity, a dramatic challenge to hold on to our cultural past while becoming assimilated into the present, a dramatic challenge that defines the human struggle amid the inevitable march of globalism.

At the 2013 Venice Biennale opening, Magdalena appeared dressed in a neo-Byzantine costume that integrated Chinese, Spanish and Afro-Caribbean attire.

New York Times Art Critic Holland Cotter wrote: “Like a kind of global goddess, she led an angel-band of Cuban musicians....whose call-and-response music....reverberated off the walls of St. Mark’s Basilica, where Monteverdi (in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century) had pioneered Western polyphony.”

Her presence at the Venice Biennale like her work can be defined as engaging, timely, evocative and memorable.

We are so proud to have Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons with us at Oakland University to share with us her insights into the changing nature of identity, and the crucial role of the artist in a democracy and a digital age without boundaries.

Please give a warm Oakland University welcome to Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons.