

Adrián Fernández Salvaged Stories

November 7–December 21, 2024
47 Orchard Street
New York City



From left to right: *Fragment No. 6*, 2024; *Fragment No. 10*, 2024. Images courtesy of the artist and Thomas Nickles Project

New York – Thomas Nickles Project is pleased to present an exhibition of new work by Cuban artist Adrián Fernández. On view from November 7 to December 21, this presentation, titled *Salvaged Stories* marks Fernández's second solo show at Thomas Nickles Project and his first exhibition dedicated solely to sculpture.

Over the course of his career, Fernández has explored the social impact of Cuba's political experiment through a dialogue of mediums. As one of the key exponents of young Cuban photography, he has often been associated with the documentation of Cuban life, yet he remains committed to exploring the possibilities of sculpture and installation. Through his photographic approach to Cuban reality, Fernández has deconstructed various systems of representation along with the historical contexts, ideologies, and cultural paradigms behind them to create a new image. In this creative exercise, sculpture has become the medium for shaping visions of possible futures for a country with a political system in decline. Fernández's artistic imagination draws from the current state of the Cuban context—the destruction of what was never completed—while envisioning possibilities for transformation. His sculptures—scaffoldings and casting molds of invisible structures that remain abstract, unfinished, and in progress—have found their ideal landscape in photography. In *Salvaged Stories*, photography becomes the absent frame from which Fernández's new sculptures emerge in fragments.

The body of work that Fernández will debut in his presentation at Thomas Nickles Project this November centers on a new series of steel and bronze pieces, continuing his conceptual exploration of Cuban futurability and expanding his experimentation with materials. These sculptures are all unique—impossible to reproduce—, each manufactured by the artist in the seclusion of his New Jersey studio. In the manual creation process, Fernández has embraced the potential for accidents. There are no preliminary sketches or mockups, only a basic outline that serves as a starting point. It can be argued that he sculpted them in real time, with their final shape emerging from the decisions he made through his interaction with the materials, as if the final form was discovered rather than planned.

In a very astute way, *Salvaged Stories* is a continuation of Fernández's first presentation at Thomas Nickles Project, *Sketch for a Monument*. The new body of work resembles archaeological objects, fragments of the invisible structures depicted by Fernández in his previous photographic series included in that 2022 show. The combination of materials in the new sculptures—the roughness of the steel exterior and the brightness of the textured bronze interior—seems to testify to the passage of time and carry remnants of the content once held by the former whole. They are, simultaneously, relics and futuristic artifacts.

Fernández's displacement from Havana to New York four years ago, as part of the largest wave of Cuban emigration to the United States since 1959, makes these pieces his first body of work with psychological implications. The artist's diasporic life is still to be framed, much like his new sculptures exist without the fictional landscape of his photographs. As the title of the presentation states, this is also a collection of *Salvaged Stories*, a way for him to reconstruct himself from the pieces of the project he was born into that are worth saving, and to belong to the new reality he is in the process of building.

Adrián Fernández (b. 1984, Havana, Cuba) perceives images, forms, and objects as archaeological remnants intimately tied to historical contexts and cultural paradigms. He studied visual arts at the San Alejandro Fine Arts Academy (2004) and the High Institute of Arts (2010) in Havana, Cuba. Fernández began experimenting with photographic media in the early stages of his career. Viewing architecture as a material expression of society, he photographed domestic exteriors between 2006 and 2008. From 2008 to 2010, he documented private spaces, capturing portraits of foyers, dining rooms, and terraces. This exploration of interiors was followed by a focus on home decor, featuring still lifes that showcased the contrasting styles found in Cuban homes.

In 2014, Fernández centered his photographic investigation on the representation of national identity. He enlarged segments of postage stamps issued in Cuba throughout the twentieth century, distorting them into abstract images of traditional Cuban symbols.

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This series led to his first three-dimensional clay models. Since then, Fernández has expanded his practice to include installations and sculptures. His photographic style has also evolved from a documentary black-and-white approach to studio photography, incorporating digital images and computer-generated elements to visualize imaginary topographies as landscapes for his three-dimensional structures.

Fernández has exhibited in group and solo shows in Cuba, United States, Mexico, Panama, France, Germany, Belgium and Switzerland. His work can be found in the collections of the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, the 21C Museum Hotels, the Perez Art Museum Miami, the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art and in the National Museum of Bellas Artes in Havana, Cuba. He works as an independent artist and as a professor of Documentary Photography for New York University, Tisch School of the Arts.

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