

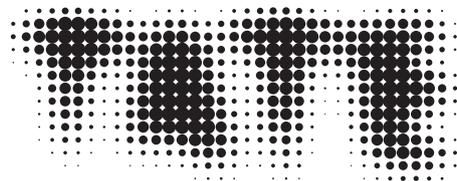
WIFREDO LAM

14 September 2016 – 8 January 2017

Large Print Guide



Please return to exhibition entrance



Contents

Introduction	Page 1
Room 1 Early Years	Page 3
Room 2 Madrid and Barcelona	Page 10
Room 3 Paris and Marseille	Page 23
Room 4 Fort-de-France and Havana	Page 34
Room 5 Havana 1944	Page 41
Room 6 International Contacts	Page 47
Room 7 Port-au-Prince and New York	Page 57
Room 8 Havana and Paris	Page 70
Room 9 Albissola Marina	Page 82
Room 10 Zurich and Albissola	Page 87
Room 11 Apostroph'Apocalypse	Page 94
Room 12 Later Years	Page 98
Find out more	Page 110

Introduction

'My painting is an act of decolonisation,' the Cuban artist Wifredo Lam stated in 1980, 'not in a physical sense, but in a mental one'. Lam belonged to an extraordinary generation of artists who examined the place of the individual within twentieth-century society, marked by political conflict and the legacy of colonialism. His work was revolutionary in overturning cultural hierarchies through its emphasis on Afro-Caribbean culture. He developed a unique style that represents a highly distinctive point of convergence between modernist movements on both sides of the Atlantic.

The EY Exhibition: Wifredo Lam presents a chronological survey of the artist's rich and complex career. Born in Cuba in 1902, he studied in Havana and Madrid. He enlisted with the Republican forces in the Spanish Civil War, and was in Paris at the outbreak of the Second World War. Returning to Cuba in 1941 as part of the exodus of refugees fleeing the German occupation, Lam was confronted with the poverty and corruption of his homeland, but also began to explore its African heritage. Over the following decade he developed the characteristic imagery of his paintings, drawing upon the rituals and symbolism of the Afro-Cuban Santería religion. Returning to Europe in 1952, he lived variously in France, Switzerland and Italy, before his death in Paris in 1982.

Room 1

Early Years

Wifredo Lam was born in the town of Sagua la Grande, Cuba, in 1902. The country had only just become independent, in the aftermath of the 1898 Spanish-American War, and its complex cultural history was reflected in Lam's own heritage. His father Enrique Lam-Yam (c.1820–1926) had emigrated from China, while his mother Ana Serafina Castilla (1862–1944) was descended from Spanish conquistadors as well as African slaves. Lam's godmother, Ma'Antoñica Wilson, was a Santería priestess.

From an early age Lam's family supported his desire to be an artist. He studied at the Escuela Profesional de Pintura y Escultura de San Alejandro in Havana from 1918 to 1923. After a solo exhibition in Sagua, he received a modest scholarship that allowed him to continue his studies in Madrid, at the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando. His early works in Spain reflect his training under the academic portraitist Fernando Álvarez de Sotomayor as well as his visits to the Prado Museum, where he encountered the works of Diego Velázquez and Francisco de Goya.

Work labels

Clockwise from right of 'Introduction' wall text

Castilian Peasant

Campesina castellana

1927

Graphite on paper

Private collection, Paris

X55817

Peasant

Campesino

1926

Graphite on paper

Private collection, Paris

X55816

Self-Portrait

Autoportrait

1926

Graphite on paper

Private collection, Paris

X55815

Portrait of Lam-Yam

Portrait de Lam-Yam

1922

Graphite on paper

Private collection, Paris

X55802

Vitrine labels

(Left–right)

Wifredo Lam, Cuba

1914

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59770

Wifredo Lam was baptised Wilfredo Oscar de la Concepción Lam y Castilla. In the mid-1920s, the 'l' in his first name was lost due to an administrative error. He embraced the new name, signing his works with the new spelling from then on.

Lam-Yam, father of the artist

c.1920

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59762

Ana Serafina Castilla, mother of the artist, Cuba

1943

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59763

Ma'Antoñica Wilson, godmother of the artist

c.1900

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59764

Work labels

Still Life, II

Bodegón, II

1927

Oil paint on canvas

The Rudman Trust

X59134

Hanging Houses, III also known as Paisaje de Cuenca

Casas colgadas, III

1927

Oil paint on canvas

The Rudman Trust

X55818

Self-Portrait, II

Autoportrait, II

c.1938

Gouache on paper mounted on canvas

The Rudman Trust

X56101

Self-Portrait, III

Autoportrait, III

1938

Oil paint on cardboard

Private collection, Paris

X56113

Lam made only a small number of self-portraits. Those from 1938 show contrasting approaches. **Self-Portrait II** announces Lam's Bohemian status as an artist. He presents himself resolutely to the viewer in the colourful interior of his studio but avoids the usual direct eye-contact by gazing to one side. In the more abstract **Self-Portrait III** Lam transforms his face into an African mask. Scholars have interpreted this as Lam positioning himself outside the European tradition.

Room 2

Madrid and Barcelona

After his financial support from Cuba came to an end, Lam sustained himself by undertaking commissions for realistic portraits. In 1929 he married Eva Píriz. However, she and their young son Wilfredo both died of tuberculosis in 1931, and Lam was overwhelmed by this personal disaster. As he recovered over the following years, he experimented with styles influenced by modernist artists such as Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse.

Lam was part of a vibrant cultural circle in Madrid. In 1936, when General Franco led the right-wing uprising that triggered the Spanish Civil War, Lam volunteered for the Republican militia. He worked in a munitions factory but, after six months handling toxic substances, his health deteriorated and he withdrew to Catalonia to recuperate.

The tragedy of the Civil War became a frequent theme in his paintings, which concentrated on simplified and schematised figures. Placing his art at the service of the Republic he also made images reminiscent of Goya, condemning the horrors of war. Among Lam's contacts in war-torn Barcelona was the sculptor Manolo Hugué who urged him to leave for Paris and provided him with an introduction to Picasso.

Work labels

Clockwise from right of wall text

The Window, I

La ventana, I

1935

Oil paint on canvas

Collection of Pérez Art Museum Miami, gift of Jorge M. Pérez
X55822

As many artists do, Lam painted his favourite aspect of his workspace on a number of occasions. Works such as this allowed him to strengthen his colour and linear structure, and flatten the design, showing his growing response to the work of Henri Matisse. The view onto the rooftops of Madrid would take on new meaning the following year, as the city came under aerial bombardment in the Civil War. When he depicts the same arched window with patterned glass in **Self-Portrait II** of 1938 (displayed in Room 1) it represents a nostalgic memory.

Untitled (Scene from the Spanish Civil War)

Sin título

(Escena de la Guerra Civil española)

1937

Gouache on paper mounted on canvas

Es Baluard, Museu d'Art Modern i Contemporani de Palma,
Serra Collection deposit, Mallorca

X59700

The loose handling of paint in this work suggests that it was made in a burst of speed. Armed soldiers crowd behind a captive while women struggle to release him. In conceiving such images in support of the Republic Lam, like many others, turned to Francisco de Goya's **The Third of May 1808** in the Prado Museum as the great depiction of a tyrannical execution of partisans. The size of Lam's composition suggests that it may have served as a backdrop to a performance or rally.

The Table

La Table

1939

Charcoal on paper mounted on wood

Cernuda Arte, Coral Gables, Florida

X56134

The Offering

L'Offrande

1939

Charcoal on paper mounted on wood

Private collection, Key Biscayne, Florida

X56133

The Family, I

La Famille, I

1938

Oil paint on paper mounted on canvas

Private collection, Paris

X56114

Reclining Nude

Nu couché

1939

Tempera on paper mounted on canvas

Musée de Grenoble, purchased from the artist
with the assistance of the FRAM in 1981

X56136

Untitled

Sans titre

1939

Oil paint on canvas

The Rudman Trust

X59135

Many of the paintings Lam made in his last months in Barcelona and his first months in Paris feature upright single figures. He established this approach in its most pared back form with the simplified body of **Young Woman on Light Green Background**. Such powerfully iconic female figures may have been influenced by the atmosphere of gender equality in revolutionary Barcelona. More traditionally, **Mother and Child II** echoes the suffering mother of the Christian Pietà (the Virgin Mother cradling the dead Christ) and, most likely, the artist's memories of his wife and son who died in 1931.

Mother and Child, II

Mère et enfant, II

1939

Gouache on paper

The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Purchase. Accession number: 652.1939

X56138

Figure

1939

Oil paint on panel

Private collection

X56135

Young Woman on a Light Green Background

Jeune femme sur fond vert clair

1938

Oil paint on canvas

Private collection, Paris

X56109

The Awakening, I

Le Réveil, I

1938

Gouache on paper mounted on canvas

Private collection

X56130

Untitled

Sans titre

c.1937

Watercolour and gouache on paper

Private collection

X62208

Composition, II

Composición, II

1931

Oil paint on canvas

The Rudman Trust

X55821

Composition, I

Composición, I

1930

Oil paint on canvas

Private collection, Paris

X55820

Lam brings a dreamlike quality to both these paintings through jumps in scale and form. This is intensified by the nocturnal settings. The recognisable elements suggest a narrative, but one that remains difficult to grasp. The woman and sailors in **Composition I** have a sexual charge, while the women in **Composition II** witness nightmarish destruction perpetrated by a giant foot. These experiments chime with Lam's awareness of surrealist works by contemporaries in Spain such as Benjamín Palencia and Salvador Dalí.

Vitrine labels

(Left–right)

Wifredo Lam in front of La Puerta de Alcalá, Madrid

c.1925

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59771

Carlos Enríquez, Alejo Carpentier and Wifredo Lam in Madrid

1933

Photograph, digital print on paper (facsimile)

Private collection, Paris

X59776

Sebastiana Píriz and Wifredo Lam in front of the Museo del Prado, Madrid

1927

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59773

Lam and Sebastiana Píriz, whom he called Eva, met in 1929 and were married soon after. Poverty dogged them. In later life Lam would associate the death of Eva and their infant son Wilfredo from tuberculosis with the social inequality that meant they could not afford appropriate treatment.

Wifredo Lam

1934

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59840

Balbina Barrera and Wifredo Lam, Madrid

1936

Photograph, digital print on paper (facsimile)

Private collection, Paris

X59841

Lam and Balbina Barrera met by chance in the Prado Museum around 1933 and they soon became inseparable. Barrera was fiercely Republican and, with Lam, took up arms in defence of Madrid when the siege placed the capital on the front line for much of the Civil War.

Wifredo Lam with Republican Army comrades, Madrid

1936

Photograph, digital print on paper (facsimile)

Private collection, Paris

X59842

Marc Vaux

Wifredo Lam in his studio on rue Armand Moisant, Paris

1940

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59844

This is one of a number of photographs in which Lam locates himself in a cascade of his works (including **Untitled** 1939, shown nearby). It confirms his productivity around the time of his first exhibition at the Galerie Pierre, Paris, in the summer of 1939. Subsequently Lam used such photographs as records of the works he put into storage at the outbreak of the Second World War.

Helena Holzer and Wifredo Lam in the
Jardin du Luxembourg, Paris

May 1940

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59843

Room 3

Paris and Marseille

Lam arrived in Paris in May 1938 and remained for two very productive years. Picasso admired Lam's work, and provided him with vital contacts. He introduced Lam to the writer Michel Leiris, with whom he visited newly re-opened galleries of African sculpture at the Musée de l'Homme. Another friend of Picasso, the dealer Pierre Loeb, began to exhibit Lam's work in the summer of 1939. Lam also established contacts within the surrealist circle, including the Spanish artists Joan Miró and Óscar Domínguez, and writers such as Benjamin Péret and Pierre Mabille.

Lam was joined in Paris by Helena Holzer, a medical researcher whom he had first met in Barcelona. When the German invasion forced the couple to flee from Paris in June 1940 they managed to reach Marseille. Here they became part of a community of refugees, waiting to leave France. They gravitated to the circle around the surrealist leader André Breton. For eight months the group passed time with activities such as making collective drawings. Lam was also repeatedly depicting Holzer in drawings that evolved into a new personal style.

Work labels

Clockwise from right of wall text

Untitled

Sans titre

c.1940

Gouache on paper

Private collection

X56139

Untitled

Sans titre

1940

Ink and watercolour on paper

Private collection

X58687

Lautréamont, Genie of Dreams - Star

Lautréamont, Génie de rêves - étoile

1941

Graphite and ink on paper

Musée Cantini, Marseille

X58689

The surrealist circle at the Villa Air-Bel in Marseille redesigned playing cards, one of the distractions they developed to fend off uncertainty as they waited to leave France. They devised new suits featuring figures who had inspired surrealism. For the 'dreams' suit, identified by a black star, Lam transformed Helena Holzer into Alice in Wonderland. He represented the poet Isidore Ducasse, the Comte de Lautréamont, with creatures that capture the aggression of his prose poem **The Songs of Maldoror** 1868–9.

Alice, Mermaid of Dreams - Star

Alice, Sirène de rêves - étoile

1941

Graphite and ink on paper

Musée Cantini, Marseille

X58688

Wifredo Lam, Victor Brauner, André Breton, Óscar Domínguez,
Max Ernst, Jacques Hérold, Jacqueline Lamba, André Masson

Collective Drawing

Dessin collectif

1940

Ink and colour pencil on paper

Musée Cantini, Marseille

X58683

Wifredo Lam, André Breton, Óscar Domínguez and others

Collective Drawing

Dessin collectif

1940

Ink, colour pencil and printed paper on paper

Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne /

Centre de création industrielle, Paris. Purchased 1980

X58686

Wifredo Lam, André Breton, Victor Brauner, Óscar Domínguez,
Max Ernst, Jacques Hérold, Jacqueline Lamba, André Masson

Collective Drawing

Dessin collectif

1940

Ink, colour pencil and photographic prints on paper

Musée Cantini, Marseille

X58684

Wifredo Lam, André Breton, Jacques Hérold and others

Collective Drawing

Dessin collectif

1940

Ink, colour pencil and printed paper on paper

Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne /

Centre de création industrielle, Paris. Purchased 1980

X58685

Untitled also known as Portrait of H.H.

Sans titre (Portrait de H.H.)

1943

Oil paint on paper

Private collection, courtesy of Mary-Anne Martin Fine Art,

New York

X58901

Marseille Notebooks

Carnets de Marseille

1941

Ink and graphite on paper

Private collection, Paris

X58690–1, X58694, X58696, X58698–X58701,

X61579, X61581–2, X61587–8

The **Marseille Notebooks** constitute a body of work that proved pivotal in Lam's career. Under extraordinary wartime circumstances – anxiety, boredom and threat – he poured images of women, hybrid figures and animals onto paper, sometimes completing many in one day. Inspired by surrealist colleagues and their collective creative projects, Lam developed a new pictorial zodiac of creatures. Some of the drawings were selected to illustrate André Breton's poem **Fata Morgana** 1941.

Untitled

Sans titre

c.1944

Oil paint on paper

Private collection

X59136

Many of Lam's works made in Marseille and subsequently in Havana celebrated and transformed his companion Helena Holzer. In the Marseille Notebooks she appears with horns of inspiration protruding horizontally from her high forehead. These become curved in the untitled nude of 1943, while her appearance a year later is an exercise in cubist simplification. Lam seems to have imagined Helena as able to shift form at will. In later paintings she would transform into the 'horse-headed woman'.

Vitrine labels

(Left–right)

Wifredo Lam and Helena Holzer in Marseille

August 1940; December 1940;

January 1941; March 1941

Photographs, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59846–9

Wifredo Lam identity photograph

January 1941

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Verso: Digital print on paper (facsimile)

Private collection, Paris

X59851–2

'On the reverse of this identity photograph, Lam wrote:
'Marseille 5 January 1941. Another day of anguish and disgust.
Wifredo'

André Gomes

Helena Holzer, Jacqueline Lamba, André Breton, Varian Fry,
Jacques Hérold, Wifredo Lam, Óscar Domínguez, and other
unidentified individuals, at Villa Air-Bel, near Marseille

December 1940

Photograph, digital print on paper (facsimile)

Private collection, Paris

X59850

Group portrait of European refugees saved by the
Emergency Rescue Committee on board the Paul Lemerle, a
converted cargo ship sailing from Marseilles to Martinique
1941

Photograph, digital print on paper (facsimile)

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy
of Dyno Lowenstein

X60072

Wifredo Lam, André Breton

Fata Morgana

1942

Book

Private collection

X64847

Wifredo Lam, André Breton, Jacques Hérold

Collective drawing

1940–1

Ink and colour pencil on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59845

Surrealist playing cards

Le Jeu de cartes surréaliste

1967, 1983

Print on card (facsimile edition)

Private collection

X64849

The surrealist circle at the Villa Air-Bel in Marseille redesigned playing cards, one of the distractions they developed to fend off uncertainty as they waited to leave France. They devised new suits featuring figures who had inspired surrealism. For the 'dreams' suit, identified by a black star, Lam transformed Helena Holzer into Alice in Wonderland. He represented the poet Isidore Ducasse, the Comte de Lautréamont, with creatures that capture the aggression of his prose poem *The Songs of Maldoror* 1868–9.

Room 4

Fort-de-France and Havana

In March 1941 Lam and Holzer embarked on a cargo ship crammed with around 300 intellectuals fleeing occupied Europe. On arriving in Martinique, which was controlled by the Vichy regime established after the Nazi invasion of France, they were consigned to an internment camp for a month. In Fort-de-France Lam and Breton met the poet Aimé Césaire and his wife Suzanne. Their journal **Tropiques** and Césaire's epic poem **Notebook of a Return to the Native Land** affirmed the importance of Black culture in the Caribbean and the fight against colonialism.

In August 1941, Lam returned to Cuba. After eighteen years away, he saw the country with new eyes. He became acutely aware of its decadence, racism and poverty, but also rediscovered the natural landscape and became fascinated with the Santería religion, in which rituals and beliefs from West Africa were overlaid with aspects of Catholicism.

Over the next decade, Lam developed a personal style that allowed him to combine his artistic and political experience in Europe with his rediscovery of Afro-Cuban culture. He infused his paintings with the imagery and energy of Santería, showing hybrid figures which sometimes included details relating to specific Yoruba deities or Orisha, such as those seen in **The Sombre Malembo, God of the Crossroads** 1943. Areas of precision contrast with more open handling of paint, as if the subjects were blending back into their surroundings.

Work labels

Clockwise from right of wall text

The Sombre Malembo, God of the Crossroads

Le Sombre Malembo, Dieu du carrefour

1943

Oil paint on canvas

The Rudman Trust

X58544

Like **Anamu** nearby, the imagery here announces Lam's interest in the Afro-Cuban Santería religion, in which Yoruba and Catholic belief systems are overlaid. In this case, the circular horned heads relate to Elegua, the spirit, or Orisha, associated with the crossroads and decision-making. The title's reference to **malembo**, the evil at the crossroads in Santería beliefs, was suggested by Lydia Cabrera. The forms that he assembled evoke the atmosphere of belief into which Cabrera was researching, but Lam resisted identifying details: 'I have never created my pictures in terms of a symbolic tradition, but always on the basis of a poetic excitation.'

Composition, also known as Ñáñigo

1943

Oil paint on canvas

Private collection, Paris

X58545

Around 1942 Lam witnessed ñáñigo initiation ceremonies of the Abakuá confraternity with Alejo Carpentier, the scholar of Afro-Cuban music. Of West African origin, the rites date back to the nineteenth century. The tall conical headdress, striped costume and drum of a 'diablito' ('little devil'), representing the spirit of the dead, are clearly discernible in Lam's painting. Perhaps mindful of this literal representation and its folkloric aspect, Lam chose not to exhibit this painting in his lifetime.

Anamu

1942

Oil paint on canvas

Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago,
gift of Joseph and Jory Shapiro, 1991.26

X56160

Lam was fascinated by Lydia Cabrera's studies of Santería practices, which revealed the richness of Yoruba beliefs. Cabrera probably suggested the title of this work, perhaps prompted by the plant held up by the figure. It refers to the medicinal anamu plant, the leaves of which ward off evil if arranged in the form of a cross within a devotee's shoe. The anatomical details in **Anamu**, including the angled limbs and giant feet, are shared with those in **The Sombre Malembo, God of the Crossroads** seen nearby. Lam sent both paintings, along with **The Jungle**, to New York for his second solo exhibition at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in June 1944.

Vitrine labels

(Left–right)

Aimé Césaire

'Notebook of a Return to the Native Land', offprint from
the journal *Volontés*. Dedicated to Wifredo Lam

Cahier d'un retour au pays natal

1939

Print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59854

Aimé Césaire, Wifredo Lam

Return to the Native Land, translated by Lydia Cabrera;
preface by Benjamin Péret; illustrations by Wifredo Lam

Retorno al país natal

1942

Book

Private collection, Paris

X59855

Invitation / catalogue for the exhibition Lam,
Galerie Pierre Matisse
1942
Print on paper
Private collection, Paris
X59861

Aimé Césaire
Tropiques nos. 1 - 13/14, 1941-1945
1978, 1994
Book
Private collection
X64848

VVV (review): poetry, plastic arts, anthropology, sociology,
psychology. Editor David Hare; editorial advisors André
Breton and Max Ernst. No. 2/3
1943
Periodical
Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Paris
X60068

Room 5

Havana 1944

At the beginning of 1943, Lam completed his breakthrough work, a monumental painting called **The Jungle**. It was painted onto large pieces of kraft paper and is now, unfortunately, too fragile to travel. In the associated paintings – Lam usually worked on several compositions at once – he consolidated his new imagery and style. Hybrid human / animal figures flit through the Cuban undergrowth. The fertility of his wild garden of sugar cane, papaya and banana plants generates breast-like and phallic forms.

The Eternal Present 1944 was the next in a sequence of grand compositions that mark out the Cuban decade. Huge hybrid figures perform in a shallow space created by combining precise drawing with flickering brushwork. The details indicate a parallel, visionary world evoked through Lam's allusion to Santería Orisha in the horned head of Elegua, the Messenger-God, and the double spear of Changó, the God of Thunder. Here, and in related works such as **Altar for Elegua** 1944 and **Altar for Yemaya** 1944, Lam suggests an atmosphere of energy and mystery rather than illustrating a particular ritual.

Work labels

Clockwise from right of wall text

The Light of the Jungle

La Lumière de la jungle

1944

Oil paint on canvas

Private collection

X56173

Nude in Nature

Nu dans la nature

1944

Oil paint on paper mounted on canvas

Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne /

Centre de création industrielle, Paris.

Accepted in lieu of tax 1985

X56170

The Eternal Present (An Homage to Alejandro García Caturla)

Le Présent éternel (Hommage à Alejandro García Caturla)

1944

Mixed media on canvas

Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.

Nancy Sayles Day Collection of Modern Latin American Art,

66.154

X56171

Lam saw this as an explicit comment on his country, later identifying the woman on the left as representing 'the paradise that foreigners seek in Cuba, a land of pleasures and sickly-sweet music'. However, this same figure has also been identified as Oshun, the Orisha of love, present here alongside other warrior deities – Elegua, changing form at the top, and Ogun, the Orisha of war, carrying the knife at the right. Together they symbolise resistance to this corruption of Cuba.

Lam holds the wild profusion of nature in check with the precision of the carefully-drawn forms here. This was a significant development and Lam recognised the importance of this work, including it in his exhibitions in Port-au-Prince and Havana in 1946.

Alejandro García Caturla was a Cuban composer and judge, murdered in 1940.

Papaya Fruit

La fruta bomba

1944

Oil paint on canvas

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

X58711

Altar for Yemaya

Autel pour Yemaya

1944

Oil paint on paper mounted on canvas

Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne / Centre de création industrielle, Paris. Accepted in lieu of tax, 1985

X56177

'Our light is so transparent,' Lam remarked in Cuba, 'that the leaves of some trees give the impression of being illuminated from inside'. He developed the flickering, multi-coloured brushwork used in these two paintings in order to capture that luminosity. It has the additional effect of pressing the assembled objects forwards in the shallow space of the composition. The unusual subject of a still-life outside captures how items identified with Orisha are set out in nature to protect devotees. Gourds are associated with the round-headed Elegua, while Yemaya is the goddess of water associated with the Catholic Virgin of Regla.

Altar for Elegua

Autel pour Elegua

1944

Oil paint on paper mounted on canvas

Private collection, Paris

X56176

Room 6

International Contacts

Despite wartime restrictions, Lam remained in touch with a network of contacts in the early 1940s. The Cuban anthropologists Fernando Ortiz and Lydia Cabrera both published early accounts of his work. He maintained contact with Césaire. Friends from Europe found their way to Havana. Pierre Mabile visited. Cuban writer and music scholar Alejo Carpentier returned to write about Caribbean magic realism. Pierre Loeb saw out much of the war in Cuba, and exhibited Lam's work again in Paris in 1945.

Lam was also in continual contact with Breton, now based in New York. For Breton the painter represented a further renewal of surrealism, shared with contemporaries such as Roberto Matta and Arshile Gorky. As a result, Breton promoted several of Lam's exhibitions at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York.

Work labels

Clockwise from right of wall text

Untitled

Sans titre

1945

Gouache and ink on paper

Private collection, Chicago

X56182

Vitrine labels

(Left–right)

Helena Holzer and Wifredo Lam in Havana

1942

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59857

Helena Holzer in the studio of Wifredo Lam, Havana

c.1942

Photograph, digital print on paper (facsimile)

Private collection, Paris

X59856

**Loeb family visit to Wifredo Lam and Helena Holzer,
with Greta and Carlos Rigaudias, Havana**

1942

Photograph, digital print on paper (facsimile)

Private collection

X60064

Pierre Loeb became Lam's Paris dealer in 1939 and they formed a firm friendship. Escaping the war in Europe, Loeb and his wife Silvia Luzzatto arrived in Cuba in early 1942. He wrote of Lam as 'able to make a synthesis of the blinding light of a country, of its ethnical secrets and of the luxuriance of its vegetation'. In 1945 Lam illustrated the cover of Loeb's memoirs and the dealer celebrated his return to Paris with an exhibition of the artist's wartime work.

Wifredo Lam in his garden in Havana

1942

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection

X60066

Wifredo Lam in his garden in Havana

1943

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59867

Lydia Cabrera, Carlos Rigaudias, Fabián Benítez, Helena Holzer, Wifredo Lam and Titina Rojas, Havana

c.1942

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59866

Cuban scholar Lydia Cabrera was one of the foremost writers on Afro-Cuban culture of the twentieth century. She published **Les Contes nègres de Cuba** (Afro-Cuban Tales) in Paris in 1936. By the time she met Lam and Holzer towards the end of 1941, her research into Afro-Cuban folklore and religious practices was well advanced. She was one of the first in Havana to write about Lam's painting, observing in 1944: 'With all the resources of a painter who knows his craft, he paints the fantastic and prodigious qualities of Cuban nature in his canvases.'

Wifredo Lam with The Jungle in his studio in Havana

1943

Photograph, digital print on paper (facsimile)

Private collection, Paris

X59853

Fabián Benitez, Paul Bowles, Helena and Wifredo Lam, Cuba

1945

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59868

Press cutting on The Jungle from The New York Times

24 June 1945

Newspaper print on paper mounted on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59862

As illustrated in **The New York Times**, **The Jungle** was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1945 and immediately placed on display. Lam had refused to be included in the museum's exhibition of **Modern Cuban Painters**, partly as a stand against its limitation to a national outlook and partly because of a dispute with the selector José Gómez Sicre. **The Jungle's** aggressive imagery added to this controversy.

Work labels

Journeys through Painting

Voyages à travers la peinture

1945

Gouache on paper

Private collection

X58714

Untitled

Sans titre

1944

Ink on paper

Private collection

X58820

Untitled

Sans titre

1944

Ink on paper

Private collection

X58821

Untitled (Dog)

Sin título (Perro)

c.1943

Ink and pastel on tracing paper

Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami,
Florida, bequest of Lydia Cabrera, 91.0295.13
X58706

Untitled (Nativity)

Sin título (Natividad)

c.1943

Ink and pastel on tracing paper

Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami,
Florida, bequest of Lydia Cabrera, 91.0295.02
X58705

Homage to a Mud Turtle

Homenaje a jicotea

c.1943

Ink and pastel on tracing paper

Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami,
Florida, bequest of Lydia Cabrera, 91.0295.12
X58709

Untitled

Sin título

1943

Ink and pastel on tracing paper

Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami,
Florida, bequest of Lydia Cabrera, 91.0295.15
X58704

Untitled (Annunciation)

Sin título (Anunciación)

c.1943

Ink, graphite and pastel on tracing paper

Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami,
Florida, bequest of Lydia Cabrera, 91.0295.01
X58708

Untitled (Caiman Eating an Elephant)

Sin título (Caimán comiéndose un elefante)

c.1943

Ink and watercolour on paper

Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami,
Florida, bequest of Lydia Cabrera, 91.0295.11
X58707

Untitled

Sans titre

1945

Oil paint on paper mounted on canvas

Private collection

X58546

Room 7

Port-au-Prince and New York

In late 1945, Mabile invited Lam to Haiti for a solo show in Port-au-Prince. There Lam and Holzer were reunited with Breton, who wrote a poetic text, 'At night in Haiti', which evoked Lam's art. During their stay, they witnessed political unrest, and attended a number of Vodou ceremonies. These experiences inspired the new works made for an increasing number of exhibitions, including the **International Exhibition of Surrealism** at Galerie Maeght, Paris, and **Bloodflames** at the Hugo Gallery, New York, both in 1947.

In the spring of 1948, the Pierre Matisse gallery in New York presented an exhibition of Lam's most recent works, including the three large, symbolic paintings shown in this room: **The Wedding** 1947, **Nativity** 1947 and **Bélicial, Emperor of the Flies** 1948. A series of Canaima paintings were also included, the title referring to isolated areas of the Venezuelan jungle populated by indigenous people who had little contact with European colonists.

Lam and Holzer spent the summer in New York and met avant-garde artists including Jackson Pollock, Lee Krasner, Isamu Noguchi, John Cage, Roberto Matta and Arshile Gorky. Lam applied for permanent residency in the United States, only to be rejected owing to his father's Chinese nationality. The quota set by immigration officials had apparently already been reached. Holzer decided to remain in New York to resume her medical research.

Work labels

Clockwise from right of wall text

Canaima, I

1945

Oil paint on paper mounted on canvas

Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne /

Centre de création industrielle, Paris.

Accepted in lieu of tax 1985

X56191

Head

Tête

1947

Oil paint on paper mounted on canvas

Private collection, Paris

X56194

Head

Tête

1947

Oil paint on cardboard

Private collection, Paris

X56193

The Wedding

Les Noces

1947

Oil paint on canvas

Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

X56196

This altarpiece-like composition shows an upended figure with outstretched arms, brandishing knives. It was inspired by a passage from the prose poem **The Songs of Maldoror** by Isidore Ducasse, the Comte de Lautréamont, a writer beloved by the surrealists. In the poem a man is hung up by his hair for three days until he begs to be cut down. This motif features in several works of this period, reflecting Lam's interest in the transcultural fascination with the relationship between good and evil. The title here suggests reconciliation between these two forces.

Bélicial, Emperor of the Flies

Bélicial, Empereur des Mouches

1948

Oil paint on canvas

Private collection

X56197

The word **Bélicial** appears in both Judaic and Christian texts as a name for the devil or demonic figures. Lam related this work to the practice of black magic in medieval Europe, but he drew upon a number of different belief systems to create this composition. The feminine form on the left is Venus, Roman goddess of love and fertility, whereas the aggressor on the right is both Mars, Roman god of war, and Changó, the Yoruba deity and god of thunder. The egg, which appears in different origin myths from around the world, is repeated in the adjacent painting **Nativity**.

Nativity

Nativité

1947

Oil paint on canvas

Museo Nacional Centre de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

X56195

The Meeting

La Réunion

1945

Oil paint and chalk on paper mounted on canvas

Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne /

Centre de création industrielle, Paris. Purchased with

the assistance of Mme Pauline Parry-Karpidas and the

Georges Pompidou Art and Culture Foundation, 1983

X56187

Yoruba Ritual

1946

Ink on paper

Ann and Douglas Logan Collection,

courtesy of Forma Fine Arts

X58715

These two drawings refer to the Yoruba religion, which along with Catholicism informed the Afro-Cuban religion of Santería. Many Yoruba people forcibly moved to the Americas from West Africa by the transatlantic slave trade sought to keep their traditions alive. These were transmitted through oral histories and a secret language of symbols developed in periods when the practice of African religions was suppressed by the colonial authorities. Lam depicts the principal Yoruba gods alongside corresponding signs. However, like the religion they represent, they are deliberately indecipherable to those uninitiated in the faith.

Untitled

Sans titre

1946

Ink on paper

Private collection

X58716

Untitled

Sans titre

1947

Ink and watercolour on paper

Collection MJS, Paris

X58720

Untitled

Sans titre

1947

Watercolour and ink on paper

Collection Galerie Lelong

X58725

Untitled

Sans titre

1947

Ink on paper

Collection Galerie Lelong

X58721

Untitled

Sans titre

1947

Ink on paper

Collection Galerie Lelong

X58722

Untitled

Sans titre

1947

Watercolour on paper

Collection Galerie Lelong

X58724

Fishing Horn

Côr de Pêche

1946

Ink on paper mounted on wood

Cernuda Arte, Coral Gables, Florida

X58717

Untitled

Sans titre

1947

Ink on paper

Collection Galerie Lelong

X58719

Untitled also known as Moths and Candles

Sans titre

1946

Graphite and ink on paper

The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

David Rockefeller Latin American Fund.

Accession number: 100.1971

X58548

Vitrine labels

(Left–right)

André Breton and Wifredo Lam, Haiti

1945

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59859

Invitation card for the exhibition Wifredo Lam.

Twenty Paintings at The London Gallery Bookshop

1946

Print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59863

Lam's first solo exhibition in London was held in 1946, as the cultural life of the city was reviving after the Second World War. Run by the artist Roland Penrose and the Belgian composer-turned-dealer E.L.T. Mesens, The London Gallery Bookshop sought to revive surrealism in Europe after the dispersal of artists during the war. By this time, Lam was being championed as a prominent member of the surrealist group.

André Breton, Wifredo Lam and Pierre Mabile during Lam's monographic exhibition at the Centre d'Art, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

1946

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59858

Invitation/catalogue for solo exhibition at the Lyceum, Havana

1946

Print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59864

Gjon Mili

Wifredo Lam, portrait for LIFE magazine

1946

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59869

Invitation/catalogue for Wifredo Lam exhibition at the
Centre d'Art, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

1946

Print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59865

Peter Watson, Lydia Cabrera and Wifredo Lam in Trinidad,
Cuba

c.1948

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59860

Helena Lam in her living room in Havana, surrounded by
African and Oceanic tribal sculptures

1946

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59873

Wifredo Lam in his studio, Havana

1947

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59871

Wifredo Lam in his studio, Havana

1947

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59872

Wifredo Lam in his garden in Havana

1947

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59870

Room 8

Havana and Paris

By August 1948, Lam was living alone in Havana. Visiting journalists found him restless and perturbed by his separation from Holzer, yet fully immersed in his painting, which he would often conduct in his abundant tropical garden, or on the tiled floor of his studio.

Several paintings around this time incorporate the figure of the **femme-cheval** or 'horse-headed woman'. During Vodou and Santería rituals, known only to initiates, the worshipper is allegedly taken possession of, or 'ridden', by a spirit. Over time, the horse-headed women of Lam's paintings gradually acquired more identifiably human and eroticised attributes. This was an oblique reference to the exploitation of women of mixed-heritage in Cuban society, some of whom were forced, through poverty, into prostitution.

An affirmation of Black Cuban identity was explored by Lam in large-scale works featuring spectral forms and arrows. They allude to the Afro-Cuban religious traditions forced underground by colonial authorities. These works are marked by a graphic sensibility with clear lines, symmetry and concentrated applications of bright colour on sombre backgrounds.

After the 1952 military coup that installed Fulgencio Batista's dictatorship in Cuba, Lam decided to settle more permanently in Paris, where he was regarded as a senior contributor

to surrealism. He continued to travel extensively, including extended trips to Venezuela, where he held a major exhibition in 1955.

Work labels

Clockwise from right of wall text

The Betrothed of Kiriwina

La Fiancée de Kiriwina

1949

Oil paint on canvas

Fondation Marguerite et Aimé Maeght, Saint-Paul, France

X56199

The Fiancée, I

La Fiancée, I

1950

Oil paint on canvas

Private collection, Paris

X56231

Crossed Hands

Les Mains croisées

1951

Oil paint on canvas

The Rudman Trust

X58550

Horse-Headed Woman

Femme-Cheval

1950

Oil paint on canvas

The Rudman Trust

X62246

In 1950, Lam was visited by writer Geri Trotta and photographer Mark Shaw of **Art News** who documented the creation of this painting, giving readers a unique insight into Lam's practice and lifestyle. Trotta recorded that Lam created an initial design on a scrap of paper, before applying numerous washes of paint thinned down with turpentine to a canvas in his studio. For Lam, it was an apparently torturous process – at one point during the visit he declared, 'all art is tragedy...for me, painting is a torment.'

Totem for the Moon

Totem pour la lune

1957

Oil paint on canvas

Totem to the Moon

Totem à la lune

1955

Oil paint on canvas

The Rudman Trust

X58559, X58553

The long, narrow format of these works is unusual for Lam, but is suited to his interpretation of the Native American and Oceanic carved wooden totem poles he collected as a source of inspiration. They exemplify Lam's appreciation of diverse cultures, particularly those with ancient histories that drew on nature for their imagery.

Rumblings of the Earth

La Rumeur de la terre

1950

Oil paint on canvas

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,
gift of Mr and Mrs Joseph Cantor, 1958

X56235

Cardinal Harps also known as The Visitors (Nénomita)

Arpas cardinales;

Les visiteurs (Nénomita)

1948–57

Oil paint and charcoal on canvas

The Menil Collection, Houston

X56198

The Threshold

Umbral

1950

Oil paint on canvas

Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne /

Centre de création industrielle, Paris.

State purchase, 1969, allocation 1976

X56233

Fresco

Fresque

1951

Gouache on cement mounted on wood

Private collection

X58552

Mimetic Steps, I

Pasos miméticos, I

1950

Oil paint on canvas

Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne /

Centre de création industrielle, Paris.

Bequest of Madame Helena Benitez, 2010

X58549

Clairvoyance

Clarvidencia

1950

Oil paint on canvas

Collection Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam

X56236

This composition of a reclining woman attended by other-worldly figures reflects Lam's engagement with European art history. Clairvoyance has been compared to **The Nightmare** 1781, a painting by the Swiss-born British artist Henry Fuseli which depicts a sleeping maiden watched over by a demon and a spectral horse. But here Lam subverts the horror of Fuseli's image; despite the dark palette and presence of strange creatures, there is no indication of threat or violence.

Vitrine labels

(Left–right)

Denise Colomb

Wifredo Lam, Paris

c.1950

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59874

Jacques Cordonnier

Surrealist meeting at the Café de la Place Blanche

1953

Photograph, digital print on paper (facsimile)

Centre Pompidou. Musée national d'art moderne /

Centre de création industrielle, Paris.

Accepted in lieu of tax 1994

X59875

By 1953, after the displacement of artists and writers brought about by the Second World War, André Breton sought to reunite those who supported the surrealist cause. Those attending the meeting are documented in this photograph:

First row:

Man Ray, Maryse Sandoz, Max Ernst, Alberto Giacometti, André Breton, Benjamin Péret, Toyen

Second row:

Michel Zimbacca, Clovis Trouille, Juan Andralis, Jean-Louis Bédouin, Jean-Pierre Duprey, Jacqueline Duprey, Nora Mitrani, Simon Hantai

Third row:

Suzanne Cordonnier, Julien Gracq, Elisa Breton, José Pierre, Sarah Kyrou, Ado Kyrou, Gérard Legrand, Wolfgang Paalen, Wifredo Lam, Bernard Roger

Wifredo Lam in his studio, Villa Alésia, Paris

1954

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59878

Wifredo Lam with Enrico Baj and friends in his studio,
Villa Alésia, Paris

1954

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59880

Man Ray

Wifredo Lam

1954

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59879

Roberto Crippa, Arnaldo Pomodoro, Lou Laurin,
Wifredo Lam and Enrico Baj, Milan

1957

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59881

Untitled

Sans titre

1952

Watercolour and ink on paper

Private collection, Paris

X58733

Médium, issue N°4. Cover illustration by Wifredo Lam

January 1955

Periodical

Private collection, Paris

X59876

Invitation card for the exhibition, Wifredo Lam,

University of Havana

1955

Print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59877

Room 9

Albissola Marina

In 1954, Lam was invited by Asger Jorn to participate in the International Meeting of Sculpture and Painting in Albissola Marina, an Italian seaside town renowned as a historic centre of ceramic production. After the Second World War, a number of international and politically idealistic artists had settled there or were regular visitors. Jorn himself was a founding member of CoBrA, an avant-garde group which rejected European high cultural tradition, and of the experimental Situationist International. Lam found Albissola and this liberal community of artists an appealing prospect and returned regularly, setting up a permanent studio there in 1962.

Surrounded by artists exploring new forms of abstraction, Lam was moved to experiment with large-scale expressionist painting. The abstract **Brush** series was an important but temporary deviation from his distinctive style. The title refers to the Cuban undergrowth, the domain of the Orisha. Its explosion of energy coincided with news of the Cuban Revolution that would end the Batista dictatorship in January 1959.

Vitrine label

Preparatory drawing for the mural of the Botanical Garden
in Caracas

1956

Charcoal and gouache on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59702

Work labels

Clockwise from right of wall text

Scrap Metal Bird

Oiseau ferraille

1965

Etching and sugar lift aquatint on paper

Private collection, Paris

X58751

Wifredo Lam, Asger Jorn

Untitled

Sans titre

1959

Paint on terracotta

Private collection, Switzerland

courtesy of Galerie Gmurzynska

X58797

Images – Plates I, III, X

1961

Etching and sugar lift aquatint on paper

Private collection, Paris

X58741, X58742, X58744

Images was the first series of prints Lam created at Giorgio Upiglio's Grafico Uno studio in Milan. His use of aquatint allowed him to create different tonal effects by using acid to eat into the printing plate making sunken areas to hold the ink. The technique had been employed by artists since the eighteenth century, most notably by the Spanish painter Francisco de Goya – whose work Lam admired throughout his life – in his series **Los Caprichos** (The Caprices) 1797–8 and **Los Desastres de la Guerra** (The Disasters of War) 1810–20.

Untitled also known as The Brush

Sans titre (La Brousse)

1958

Mixed media on paper mounted on canvas

Private collection, Paris

X60339

Untitled also known as **The Brush**

Sans titre (La Brousse)

1958

Mixed media on paper mounted on canvas

Private collection, courtesy of Galerie Gmurzynska

X56241

Room 10

Zurich and Albissola

In 1960, Lam and the Swedish artist Lou Laurin were married in New York. They settled with their young family in Zurich in the following year, while Lam set up his studio in Albissola. There he began a series of large-scale canvases showing stylised and interlocking figures, key early examples of which are displayed in this room.

During the 1960s, Lam's achievements were celebrated with numerous prizes and culminated in a major exhibition travelling through Europe in 1967. Increasingly, he concentrated on experimenting with different print techniques in collaboration with the Italian master printmaker Giorgio Upiglio in Milan. In 1969, Lam created the **Annunciation** series in Upiglio's workshop, although it was not until 1982 that, in declining health, he called upon his old friend Aimé Césaire to dedicate a poem to each **Annunciation** print. Both Lam's imagery and Césaire's poetry are redolent with themes of spirituality and rebirth.

Work labels

Clockwise from right of wall text

The Soulless Children

Les Enfants sans âme

1964

Oil paint on canvas

Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels. Inv. 7722.

X56249

The Undesirable

L'Indésirable

1962

Oil paint on canvas

Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris

X56247

Genesis for Wifredo

Genèse pour Wifredo

1969

Etching and aquatint on paper

Private collection, Paris

X58764

Wifredo Lam...

1969

Etching and aquatint on paper

Private collection, Paris

X58763

Annunciation

Annonciation

First row:

To Know, He Says

Connaître, dit-il

Tongue Fashion

Façon langagière

Passages

Second Adventivity

Rabordaille

Second row:

Let Us Offer Its Heart to the Sun

Que l'on présente son coeur au soleil

Incongruous Builders

Insolites bâtisseurs

New Kindness

Nouvelle bonté

1969/82

Etching and aquatint on paper

Private collection, Paris

X58765–X58771

Vitrine labels

(Left–right)

Artist gathering in Albissola

1958

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59882

Jesse A. Fernández

Marriage of Wifredo Lam and Lou Laurin, New York

1960

Photograph, digital print on paper (facsimile)

Private collection

X60071

Wifredo Lam, Lou Laurin-Lam and Eskil Lam, Stockholm

January 1963

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59883

Lucio and Teresita Fontana, Asger Jorn and his son Olle,
Agenore and Catherine Fabbri, Wifredo Lam, Aligi Sassu,
Maria Papa and Gualtieri di San Lazzaro, Albissola

1963

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59884

Wifredo Lam and Ghérasim Luca in the Grafica Uno
workshop, Milan

1965

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X60058

Wifredo Lam and Pablo Picasso in the home of Picasso,
Mougins

1966

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59885

Wifredo Lam, Antonin Artaud

The Theatre and the Gods

Le Théâtre et les Dieux

1966

Paper-bound book with five etchings with
aquatint by Wifredo Lam, green handmade

Auvergne paper cover, watermarked

Private collection, Paris

X58753

11

Apostroph'Apocalypse

Printmaking gave Lam an outlet to explore themes of angst and violence that also appear in his paintings, but on a more intimate scale. The prints also had the democratic and politically subversive potential to be circulated to a wide audience. Italian art critic Marco Valsecchi, writing about his printmaking, observed, 'Lam alerts us to the existence of a disquieting state of being'.

Between 1964 and 1966, Lam worked with the Romanian poet Ghérasim Luca on a series of prints for the book **Apostroph'Apocalypse**, shown here in display cases. A stateless multi-lingual exile associated with surrealism in Paris, Luca was renowned for his highly experimental poetry and adept punning.

Work labels

Clockwise from right of wall text

I Think, I See, I Feel

Je pense, je vois, je sens

1964

Etching and aquatint on paper

Private collection, Paris

X58748

Beyond Memory

Hors mémoire

1964

Etching and aquatint on paper

Private collection, Paris

X58747

Mista

1964

Etching and sugar lift aquatint on paper

Private collection, Paris

X58746

The Jaw

La mandíbula

1964

Etching and aquatint on paper

Private collection, Paris

X58749

Flag of Asters

Fanion des asters

1964

Etching and sugar lift aquatint on paper

Private collection, Paris

X58750

Wifredo Lam, Ghérasim Luca

Apostroph'Apocalypse

1966

Illustrated book

Private collection, Paris

X58754, X58755

Room 12

Later Years

In his later years Lam extended his series of paintings on a grand scale, the imagery of which was increasingly individual. Employing his tight graphic outline, he arranged angular hybrid figures in layers, the bright foreground bodies shadowed by dark forms in the shallow space.

Responding to the tradition of ceramic production in Albissola, Lam also made terracotta dishes and vases that extended his personal imagery into three dimensions. Most significant was his prolific printmaking, often in collaboration with poets who were longstanding friends.

Impressed by the social ideals of the revolution, Lam returned to Cuba periodically. In 1967 he was instrumental in bringing many participants of the **Salon de Mai** – an annual avant-garde exhibition held in Paris – to exhibit in Havana, and he contributed to the international cultural congress held there in the following year. His final visits to Havana were for medical treatment following a stroke in 1978.

Looking back on his career between modernisms on both sides of the Atlantic, Lam identified the critical force of his cross-cultural work: 'I could act as a Trojan horse that would spew forth hallucinating figures with the power to surprise, to disturb the dreams of the exploiters.' He concluded: 'A true picture has the power to set the imagination to work, even if it takes time.'

Work labels

Clockwise from right of wall text

Untitled

Sans titre

1981

Ink on paper

Private collection, Paris

X58811

Untitled

Sans titre

1981

Ink on paper

Private collection, Paris

X58808

Untitled

Sans titre

1981

Ink on paper

Private collection, Paris

X58807

Untitled

Sans titre

1981

Ink on paper

Private collection, Paris

X58809

Untitled

Sans titre

1981

Ink on paper

Private collection, Paris

X58810

René Char, Wifredo Lam

Against a Dry House - Plates I-IX

Contre une maison sèche - Planche I-IX

1974

Etching and aquatint on paper

Private collection, Paris

X58787–X58795

René Char was a French poet associated with the surrealists, and a prominent member of the French Resistance. The poem **Against a Dry House**, published alongside Lam's prints in 1976, expresses hope in the face of the barbarism of war and speaks of the consolations of art: 'Whoever painted Lascaux, Giotto, Van Eyck, Uccello, Fouquet, Mantegna, Cranach, Carpaccio, Giorgione, Tintoretto, Georges de la Tour, Poussin, Rembrandt, these are the woollens lining my rocky nest.'

Visible Invisible - Plates I, VI, IX

1971

Etching and aquatint on paper

Private collection, Paris

X58779 , X58781–2

Vitrine labels

(Left–right)

Guests arrive for the Salón de Mayo, Cuba: Paul Rebeyrolle,
Denis Chevalier, Erró, Alain Jouffroy, Wifredo Lam and
Lucien Coutaud

1967

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59891

Michel Leiris and Wifredo Lam during the Salón de Mayo,
Havana

1967

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59890

Catalogue of the Salón de Mayo, Musée d'art moderne de la
ville de Paris, with Cuba Colectiva on the cover

1968

Exhibition catalogue

Private collection, Paris

X59894

**Michel Leiris, Aimé Césaire and Pierre Nabilie during the
1968 Cultural Congress, Havana**

1968

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59892

Asger Jorn and Wifredo Lam, Cuba

1968

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59893

**Papou Rebeyrolle, Wifredo Lam, Louisa and Alexander
Calder, and Alejo Carpentier in the studio of Paul Rebeyrolle**

1968

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59886

Mimmo Dabbrescia

René Char, Wifredo Lam and Jean Hugues at the presentation
of *Against a Dry House*, Galerie Point Cardinal, Paris

1976

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59887

Aimé Césaire and Wifredo Lam in the home of
Auguste Thésée

1977

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59889

Wifredo Lam and Michel Leiris in Lam's home, Paris

1975

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Private collection, Paris

X59888

Work labels

The Witnesses

Les Témoins

1968

Oil paint on canvas

Private collection

X58565

Body and Soul

Le Corps et l'âme

1966

Oil paint on canvas

Private collection, Cologny, Switzerland

X58758

At the End of the Night

À la fin de la nuit

1969

Oil paint on canvas

Private collection, Paris

X58566

The Abalochas Dance for Dhambala, the God of Unity

Les Abalochas dansent pour Dhambala, dieu de l'unité

1970

Oil paint on canvas

Private collection, courtesy of McClain Gallery

X58567

One of Lam's last large-scale paintings, this work exemplifies his turn towards an even greater simplification of line, used here to depict what was by now a well-established stable of impish and horse-headed characters. The word 'Abalochas' is thought to be a variation on the word 'babalochas', male priests of the saint Ochá who occupy a central position in Santería (which itself is also known as the Rule of Ochá). 'Dhambala' is a Haitian Vodou spirit who takes the form of a serpent. As with other works, this painting is not intended to illustrate a specific ritual or myth.

Vitrine labels

(Left-right)

Fruits of the Rebellion

Fruits de la rebellion

1975

Paint on terracotta

Private collection, Paris

X58801

The Two Knives

Les deux couteaux

1975

Paint on terracotta

Private collection, Paris

X58803

Vase, II

1975

Paint on terracotta

Private collection, Paris

X58799

Untitled

Sans titre

1958

Terracotta on board

Private collection, Paris

X58796

Vase, I

1975

Paint on terracotta

Private collection, Paris

X58798

Prehistory, II

Préhistoire, II

1975

Paint on terracotta

Private collection, Paris

X61506

Prehistory, I

Préhistoire, I

1975

Paint on terracotta

Private collection, Paris

X58800

Find out more

EVENTS

Visit tate.org.uk or call 020 7887 8888
for more information and to book

Curator's Talk with Matthew Gale

Mon 19 Sep, 18.30

Starr Cinema

£20, concessions available, includes exhibition entry

BSL Tour with Dafydd Jones

Fri 7 Oct, 19.00

In the exhibition

Free

Illustrating the Surreal: Workshop with Lizzy Stewart

Sat 22 & Sun 23 Oct, 11.00–17.00

Clore Studio

£80, concessions available

Led by illustrator and author Lizzy Stewart, this two-day practical workshop is an opportunity to explore illustration techniques and the process of making images to accompany text

Curator's Tour with Katy Wan

Mon 14 Nov, 18.30

In the exhibition

£20, concessions available, includes exhibition entry

Tour with Duro Olowu

Mon 28 Nov, 18.30

In the exhibition

£20, concessions available, includes exhibition entry

Fashion designer and curator Duro Olowu leads a tour focusing on the works that have inspired him

These events are provided by Tate Gallery on behalf of Tate Enterprises LTD

CATALOGUE

A fully illustrated exhibition catalogue is available from Tate shops or at tate.org.uk/shop

TATE MEMBERS

Enjoy free entry to all Tate exhibitions, plus get exclusive access to the Members Rooms at Tate Britain and Tate Modern. Membership starts from £70. Join today at the Members desk Call 020 7887 8888 or visit tate.org.uk/members

Exhibition organised by the Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris, in collaboration with Tate Modern and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

Exhibition curated by Dr Matthew Gale, Head of Displays, Curator (Modern Art), Tate Modern and Catherine David, Deputy Director, Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris with Katy Wan, Assistant Curator, Tate Modern

This exhibition has been made possible by the provision of insurance through the Government Indemnity Scheme. Tate would like to thank HM Government for providing Government Indemnity and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England for arranging the indemnity.

Let us know what you think #WifredoLam

EY has proudly supported the visual arts for over 20 years and in working with Tate on our six-year arts partnership, we continue our legacy of helping to make art available to people from all backgrounds.

We are delighted to support The EY Exhibition: Wifredo Lam. Lam defined new ways of painting, combining traditional practices and surrealist ideas with complete originality. Born in Cuba, widely travelled and of mixed-heritage, Lam's keen

international awareness and understanding of different cultures permeates his work, confirming his place at the centre of global modernism. As a global firm, we also recognise the importance of drawing on different perspectives, in order to find the best talent and best solutions for our clients. We are dedicated to empowering talented individuals to succeed personally and professionally with a commitment to diverse and inclusive leadership being central to our efforts. This forms part of our purpose to build a better working world.

Michel Driessen, Arts Sponsorship Partner
& TAS Markets Leader, UK & Ireland

The EY Tate
Arts Partnership



ey.com/uk/arts

