

MIAMI ART WEEK SHOWCASES POLITICAL WORKS BY MINORITY
ARTISTS; Alexi Torres Portraits of Afro Cubans: “Sun Light” Collection at Art
Fair Miami

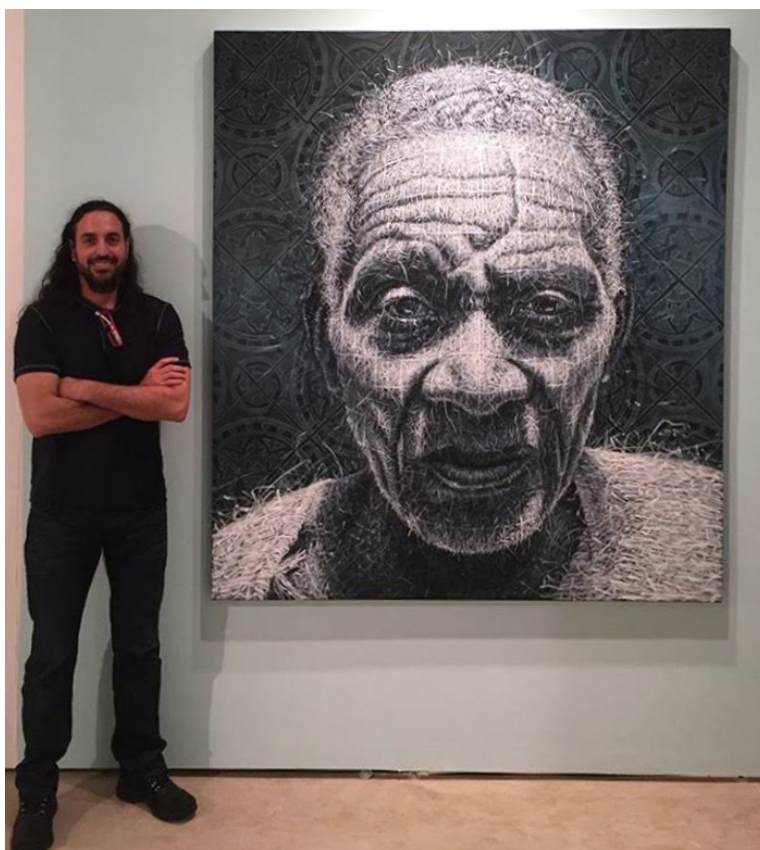
By Laurie Nadel

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Alexi Torres - *Sun Light - Domingo* (2016) Oil on canvas 72 x 64 in. | 183 x 163 cm.

The central jewel in the crown of Miami Arts Week, Art Basel attracts celebrities, high-end collectors and fashionistas from all over the globe. But it is not the only game in town. Across the bay in Wynwood, known as Miami’s Arts District, there were several art fairs showcasing new, provocative and courageous works by emerging artists.



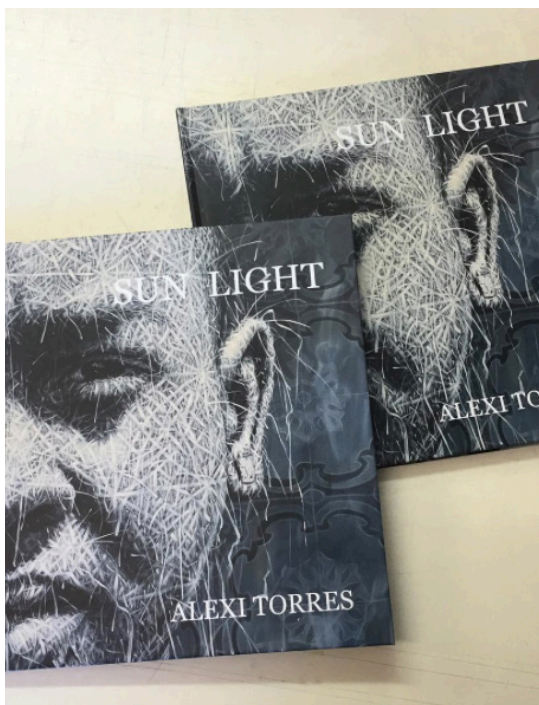
Alexi Torres in Art Miami

Wynwood is Williamsburg on steroids. With palm trees, no less. From the massive Art Miami Fair tent to the industrial blocks honeycombed with contemporary design stores, coffee shops, artists' workshops and galleries, you will see, hear and feel creativity in the air. (If you feel like taking a break, you can shoot real machine-gun rounds at Lock 'n' Load. This is, after all, a red state.)

Alexi Torres uses a basket weave technique to paint massive portraits of people from the small town of Bermeja, Cuba from which he emigrated 13 years

ago. In this elegant black-and-white two-minute video, he talks about the passion and pain of people's everyday lives. "The subsistence lifestyle and controlled information in my country under a Communist regime left little time or energy for spiritual or philosophical reflection," he says. "Over the last 13 years, I have enjoyed the benefits and freedom of living in a democracy which has allowed me to explore the theme of interconnectedness in all creation."

"When you are in Cuba you are into 'What am I going to eat today?' Your life is so



Left: Alexi Torres - *Sun Light* (2016)

Right: Alexi Torres - *Sun Light - Ronald* (2016) Oil on canvas 72 x 60 in. | 182 x 152 cm.

diminished by survival," he says. "Most of the population in my hometown is made up of farmers who plant and harvest their crops on the waning moon. To be in harmony with my people and our ancestors, I begin and complete each painting according to the same lunar pattern." *Sun Light* is the title of Torres' collection and his book of Bermeja portraits.

It was especially meaningful for him to see his work on exhibit so soon after Fidel Castro's death. "African-Americans have the wrong idea about Cuba, about Castro," he says. "They thought Castro

was pro-Black but it is still a racist society." Torres observes that because Fidel Castro stayed in Harlem when he visited the United Nations in 1960, it created a myth that the Cuban leader was pro-civil rights. But, he says, nothing could be farther from the truth. "Black people do not have the same freedom. There is economic discrimination. They have little access to the Internet because it is very expensive."