OSÉ BEDIA (b.1959) was born and grew up in Havana, Cuba. From an early age, Bedia excelled in drawing, comics, and illustration. He joined the famous San Alejandro Academy when he was a teenager. A well-known drawing from those early years at the academy came to define Bedia's sense of himself as an artist: A perfectionist academic portrait, with an elongated style, portraying an Amerindian of the primitive tribes of the United States of America. In the portrait, the protagonist, an Indian figure riding a horse while shooting a gun, is aiming backwards, as if turning his back towards the viewer. When the art teacher asked Bedia why he drew the Indian in such a manner, his response reflected his rebellious dissident ideology: “Because I'm on his side, the enemy is on the other side, so you can totally trust me.”

After San Alejandro, Bedia graduated with honors from the ISA Instituto Superior de Arte de la Habana, Cuba. He was a pioneer of the radical transformation of Cuban Art and played an integral part in the ground-breaking 1981 exhibition, “Volumen Uno.” His passion for the primal Amerindians complemented his anthropological studies of Afro-Transatlantic cultures, which included in-depth studies of the faith, beliefs, and religion of the “La Regla Kongo” (in which he was initiated in 1983), the “Regla de Ocha,” and the Leopard Society of Abakuas, among many others.

Bedia traveled to Angola as part of the International Cultural Brigades that supported the struggle of the Angolan-Cuban War against Namibia and South Africa, which increased his interest in the African roots of American culture. This interest also inspired to visit countries such as Peru, Mexico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Zambia, Botswana, Kenya, and Tanzania. After residing in Mexico, he moved to Miami, Florida, where he currently lives.

Bedia is a decisive and precise draftsman, with a striking pictorial capacity, known for his enigmatic and enveloping installations. In his work, he seeks to highlight how cultural heritage influences our daily lives, and he incorporates “storytelling,” what he calls informative lessons about the cosmogonic Universes of the ancestral cultures and their influence. His work has been exhibited in Havana, Sao Paulo, Venice, and Beijing Biennales, where he has received numerous awards and acclamations. His work can be found in both private and public collections, including the Museo Nacional Palacio de Bellas Artes (Havana), the Museum of Modern Art (NYC), the Metropolitan Museum (NYC), the Whitney Museum of American Art (NYC), the Guggenheim (NYC), Tate Modern (London), the Smithsonian American Art Museum (Washington), the Colección Daros (Zurich), and the Pérez Art Museum Miami, among many others.

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Adapted from https://josebedia.com/
You make small pieces and gigantic pieces. How does scale impact your vision?

Who were your mentors or influencers?

In 1995, I took my family to Australia because we were thinking about moving there, and we saw amazing Australian Aboriginal artwork.

Tell us about your large installation at Art Basel Miami Beach 2022.

For a long time I lived in the Provincetown art colony, where visual artists and writers constantly interacted. What are your thoughts about the Miami art community?

Why don't visual artists in Miami spend more time with each other?

What is your favorite movie?