



Introduction to José Bedia. 2:06 min. Interview: Raymond Elman. Videography: Lee Skye. Recorded: 1/4/2023, Miami.

José Bedia

Cuban-American Artist

By Elman + Skye

JOSÉ 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.

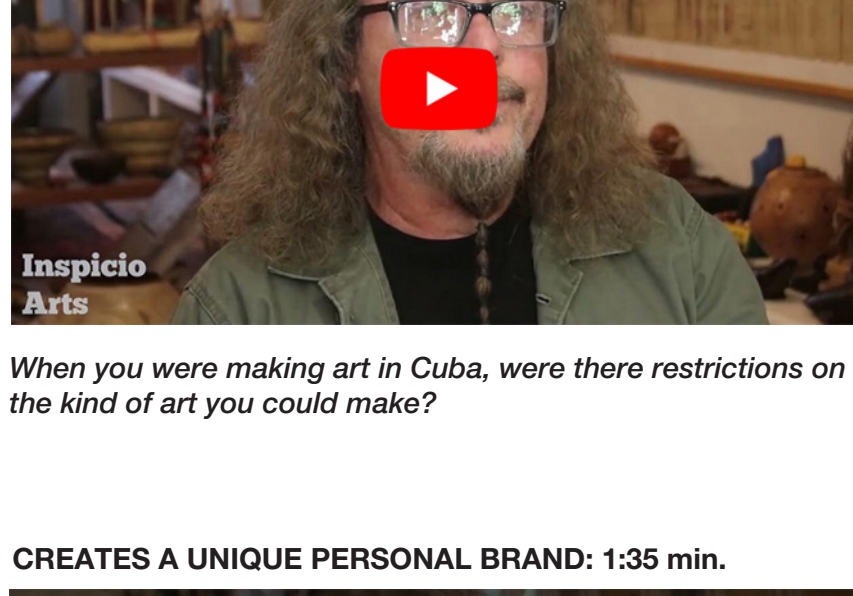
Bedia traveled to Angola as part of the International Cultural Brigades that supported the struggle of the Angolan-Cuban War against Namibia and South Africa, which increased his interest in the African roots of American culture. This interest also inspired to visit countries such as Peru, Mexico, Haiti, 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.

— Adapted from <https://josebedia.com/>

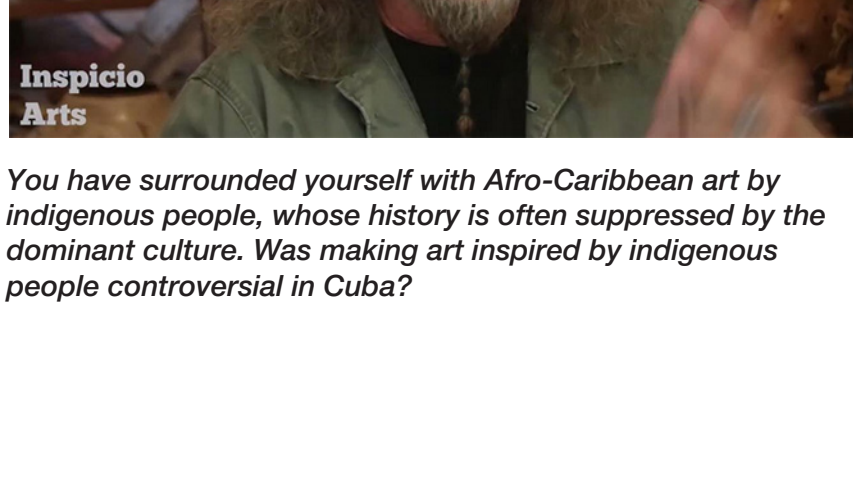
The videos below are organized by Success Factor, and run between 30 seconds and 5 minutes. Click on any video. You must be connected to the Internet to view the videos.

CRITICAL THINKING: 1:57 min.



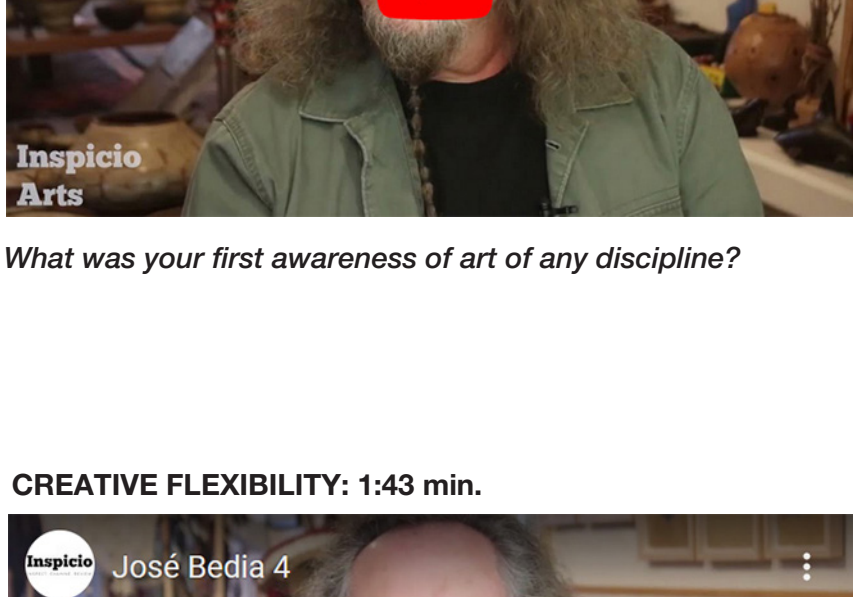
When you were making art in Cuba, were there restrictions on the kind of art you could make?

CREATES A UNIQUE PERSONAL BRAND: 1:35 min.



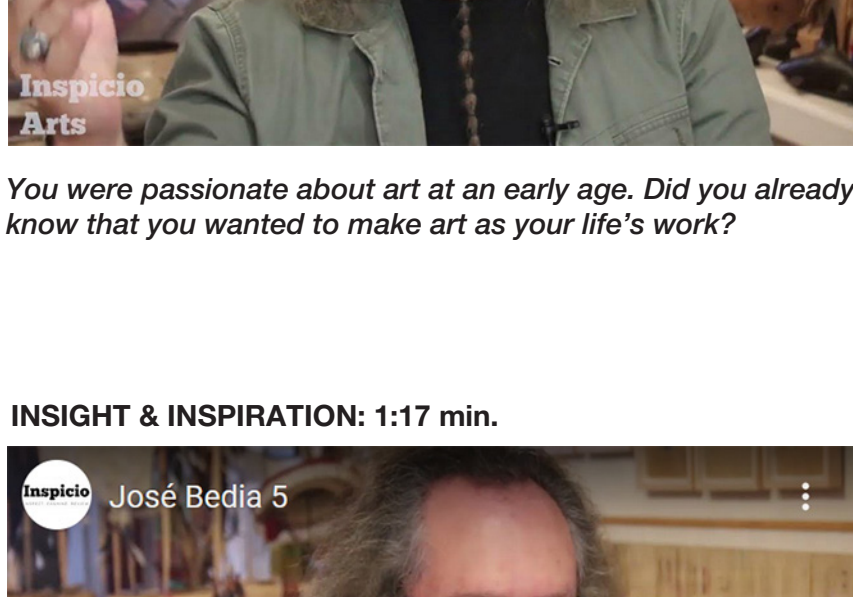
You have surrounded yourself with Afro-Caribbean art by indigenous people, whose history is often suppressed by the dominant culture. Was making art inspired by indigenous people controversial in Cuba?

INSIGHT & INSPIRATION: 0:39 sec.



What was your first awareness of art of any discipline?

CREATIVE FLEXIBILITY: 1:43 min.



You were passionate about art at an early age. Did you already know that you wanted to make art as your life's work?

INSIGHT & INSPIRATION: 1:17 min.



Were there particular cartoonists that you noticed and liked when you were young?

OVERCOMES CHALLENGES TO SUCCEED: 0:54 sec.



How did moving to Miami from Cuba impact your art?

DEVELOP A VOICE: 1:08 min.



How did your unique imagery or style evolve?

DEVELOP A VOICE: 0:46 sec.



How did people respond to your new vision?

SERENDIPITY: 0:39 sec.



For a long time, one of your images was on a 3-story wall at the southeast entrance to the Design District. Why did they remove it?

CREATES A UNIQUE PERSONAL BRAND: 1:08 min



You make small pieces and gigantic pieces. How does scale impact your vision?

SELF-CONFIDENCE: 0:33 sec.



When did you start making sculptures?

OVERCOMES CHALLENGES TO SUCCEED: 0:57 sec.



What kind of prints do you make?

VALUES FIRST-RATE EDUCATION: 0:35 sec.



Who were your mentors or influencers?

CREATES A UNIQUE PERSONAL BRAND: 1:44 min



Were there any contemporary artists who influenced you?

INSIGHT & INSPIRATION: 1:21 min.



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

COMPULSION: 0:27 sec.



Your images are so fluid. What is the role of serendipity in your work?

OVERCOMES CHALLENGES TO SUCCEED: 1:24 min



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

CREATIVE FLEXIBILITY: 0:56 sec.



When did you create your first installation?

COMMUNITY VALUES: 0:51 sec.



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

UNDERSTANDS ARTISTS' NEEDS: 0:58 sec.



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

INSIGHT & INSPIRATION: 2:35 min.



What is your favorite movie?