

The Works of Rigoberto Torres



Lehman College Art Gallery

**The Works of
Rigoberto Torres**

Organized by Susan Hoeltzel



**February 7 - May 3, 1995
Lehman College Art Gallery**



Cover: *Mermaid*, 1993, acrylic on plaster, 35 x 45 x 9"
Photographer: D. James Dee

Above: Installation view of the exhibition at Lehman College Art Gallery, February 1995. *Orlando the Donut Man*, 1987, oil on fiberglass, 70 x 96 x 60"
Photographer: Ivan Dalla Tana

THE WORKS OF RIGOBERTO TORRES

Introduction

Susan Hoeltzel, Director
Lehman College Art Gallery

The Works of Rigoberto Torres provides the first mid-career view of an artist whose work has drawn its inspiration from the Bronx community. Seen and collected throughout the world, Torres' life-size figurative sculptures are rooted in a celebration of daily life in the South Bronx neighborhood where he grew up. His plaster and fiberglass life-casts, which have been described as humanistic naturalism, provide empathetic studies of real people—family, friends, and the strangers he has met at public castings. His street-side events lend the work an element of performance art and create a bond between artist, subject, and audience. Four large scale public murals, produced in collaboration with John Ahearn, have been part of the Bronx landscape for over ten years.

Torres is known to the public in several roles that have been played simultaneously in relation to the artist John Ahearn—that of collaborator, that of assistant, and that of an independent artist who has been influenced by Ahearn's casting technique and subject matter. For both artists the work is strongly identified with their South Bronx neighborhood which provided much of the subject matter and in which both lived until 1994. That neighborhood brings to mind many associations. It is known for its extreme poverty. It carries memories of burning buildings which appeared nightly on the evening news throughout the 1970's and early 1980's. Also known for its dynamic street culture—since the 1970's the South Bronx has been the epicenter of hip-hop, break dancing, graffiti and rap—it is



Rigoberto Torres (left) in the Walton Avenue studio, 1992.
The artist is applying burlap to the mold of the fireman from *The Rescue*,
Kevin Crocker (standing at right) assistant,
fragment of *Margaret and Edwin* at bottom right.
Photographer: Martha Cooper



Rigoberto Torres (left) and John Ahearn (right) casting at a Walton Avenue block party, September 1985.
Photographer: Ivan Dalla Tana

still influencing style into the 1990's. This was the time and the place where Torres' work began—in 1979, shortly after the eighteen year old was encouraged by his cousin Wally to drop by Fashion Moda, a newly founded alternative space in the South Bronx where Ahearn was making plaster body casts of people from the neighborhood. Torres became one of Ahearn's subjects. Torres' first works created at this time were exhibited at Fashion Moda along with Ahearn's work in 1979 under the exhibition title, *South Bronx Hall of Fame*. The Lehman exhibition includes *Shirley* (1979), one of the busts Torres produced for that exhibition.

Fashion Moda provided an infusion of energy to the art of that period by creating a place where an exchange of ideas—from downtown artists working in the Bronx and street artists in the Bronx—could take place. The gallery, which began in founder Stefan Eins' studio at 3 Mercer Street in Soho, moved to a storefront at Third Avenue near 147th Street in the South Bronx in 1978. There it provided a laboratory where untrained artists and those with art

school backgrounds exchanged ideas, made art, and exhibited. Many graffiti artists made their transition from subways to canvas at Fashion Moda. It was here that Jenny Holzer and Lady Pink collaborated. Fashion Moda was an early venue for many artists whose reputations were established in the 1980's including Tim Rollins + KOS, Crash Matos, Joseph Nechvatal, Kiki Smith, Christy Rupp, John Fekner, Justen Ladda, Tom Otterness, Daze, Joe Lewis, Jane Dickson, Lee Quinones, Futura 2000, and Rick Prol. The following year, 1980, both Ahearn and Torres were involved in the historic *Times Square Show*, which took place on several floors of an abandoned massage parlor arranged by Colab, an artists' collective.

During the Fashion Moda exhibition, Torres began casting works on the street outside his Walton Avenue apartment where he lived with his parents. In 1980 Ahearn moved to Walton Avenue at Torres' suggestion. Here much of the work of the two artists took place on the street, drawing the attention of the surrounding neighborhood and volunteers who submitted to the process of casting. Earlier castings

were sometimes displayed on the wall of a building to announce the event which drew crowds of people to watch the artists at work. In the early 1980's the artists moved their studio to Dawson Street (later moving back to Walton Avenue in 1983) and again the street-side castings drew an audience and new subjects. It was in the Dawson Street studio that the public murals had their beginnings. Three of the murals, created with funding from HUD, through the Department of Cultural Affairs Community Development Program and the Bronx Council on the Arts, are on exterior walls of apartment buildings and are tied to the revitalization of the neighborhood. (Torres' works are also found in many homes throughout the Bronx—it is his custom to give the subject a second version of the casting.)

In the early years Torres brought to the relationship with John Ahearn an introduction to people in his Walton

Avenue neighborhood that was to become a major source for both artists' work. Torres also brought experience with plaster casting—gained in his uncle Raul's shop, Paul's Statuary Co., which casts works ranging from saints for botanicas to famous reproductions from the history of art. It was Torres' uncle's technical advice on creating rubber molds and casting in fiberglass that made the exterior wall murals possible. Multiple castings were also facilitated with this technique. The artists' work expanded from busts to include full length figures and later figures in the round. From Ahearn's perspective Torres also brought to the relationship his detachment from the art world and a core personality that made the collaboration possible. It is impossible to discuss either artist's body of work without a consideration of the other. Ahearn and Torres continue to work together, assisting each other with casting.



Paul's Statuary Co. (formerly C & R Statuary Corporation), 1991
Photographer: D. James Dee

Born in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, in 1960, Torres moved to New York when he was four years old—first to upper Manhattan and then to the Bronx after being burned out of the Manhattan apartment building. Torres returned to Puerto Rico in 1990 where he produced twenty-two works over the course of a year. *Ruth Fernandez* (1991), a cast of the popular singer who has entertained generations of audiences, was among the works created during that year. It is a monumental work which combines the realism of traditional portraiture with the iconic presence of a devotional statue.

Torres explores subjects which are similar to Ahearn but he strays from the socially conscious underpinnings of the former. Torres is not an outside observer—many of the larger tableaux include family members—frequently his children. In some works the casting technique is used as a starting point to develop the imagined rather than to represent people as they actually are. *Mermaid* (1993) was cast from his two year old daughter and based on a small figurine in his uncle's statuary shop, and *Fortune Teller*

(1995) was based on a casting of his sister-in-law. Both works are in sharp contrast to the more serious subject Torres tackles in *The Rescue* (1993) which demonstrates a strong interest in narrative content—the child in this scene is his daughter.

We are fortunate to include three works completed in 1995 following a yearlong interruption due to a severe asthma attack which prevented Torres from working. The exhibition also includes several early works which are rarely seen, *Mice in the Pool* (1984) and *Jack and Jill* (1985) as well as *Fashion Logs* (1985), sculpted from wood. Works cast during a return to 42nd Street as part of a project sponsored by Creative Time and the 42nd Street Development Project in the summer and fall of 1993, are also included—among them *Alex with Parrot* (1993), which provides a lively character study of a figure from Times Square.

Torres' detailed works are vivid and bursting with life down to the texture of wrinkles and pores and yet they veer from



Gibbie Gonzalez with mother and brother, standing beside his sculpture (an additional cast is included in the *Back to School* mural.)
A cast of Gibbie's sister, Mari, is on the wall above him.
Photographer: Ivan Dalla Tana

the tromp l'oeil realism of Duane Hanson or the monochromatic tableaux of George Segal. Torres' richly colored figures seem as much about painting as about sculpture. In some work the serene countenance is almost reminiscent of the polychromed statues of the ancient world. The works of Rigoberto Torres with their sources so close to home provide a unique look at a contemporary art grounded in the Bronx community.

The combined efforts of many people made this exhibition possible. We are grateful to Rigoberto Torres for his generous contribution to the planning of all aspects of this project and for the helpful conversations with regard to the work. We would also like to thank John Ahearn for his advice and assistance with the installation and catalogue and for his enthusiasm for this project from its inception. The assistance of Brooke and Carolyn Alexander of Brooke Alexander, Inc., Ted Bonin, gallery director, as well as Rhea Anastas and Anne Duroe, provided very important support for the exhibition. We are also very pleased to include Dan Cameron's essay on the work of Rigoberto Torres as part of the catalogue. Once again we are fortunate to work with Leandros Patathanasiou of Athens Printing and as always, his helpful guidance proved invaluable. We would also like to acknowledge and thank Ivan Dalla Tana, D. James Dee, and Martha Cooper for their photographs for the catalogue. We are very grateful to the lenders—the Lannan Foundation, Margaret Hutto and Jill Newmark, William and Norma Roth, John Ahearn, and the Gonzalez Family—for their help in making the exhibition possible.

I am greatly indebted to the staff of Lehman College Art Gallery for their support in all phases of the project—to Skowmon Hastanan for her exceptional work in two roles—that of registrar and that of graphic designer, to Christopher Anselmo Priore for his education programming for all age groups during the exhibition and to Mary Ann Siano for her development work which has allowed this project to happen. I would also like to thank Joel Holub and Dan Shure for their help with the photography for the catalogue.

Finally, I am extremely grateful to have the support of a board of trustees and a college administration committed to the arts. Both share the belief that arts programming is a significant part of education.

Gibbie, 1985
from *Back to School* mural,
acrylic on plaster, 51 x 27 x 13"
Collection of the Gonzalez Family
Photographer: Joel Holub



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Girl with Red Halter Top, 1982-83
oil on plaster, 22 1/2 x 17 x 9"
Photographer: D. James Dee



Jose and Laura, 1993
acrylic on plaster, 22 x 27 x 11"
Photographer: Joel Holub



Above: *Maria*, 1993
oil on reinforced plaster, 70 x 33 x 10 1/2"
Photographer: D. James Dee

Mural, *Life on Dawson Street*, 1982-83
(left to right) *Thomas, Barbara, Pedro with Tire*
and *Pat and Selena* at play, oil on fiberglass.
Dawson Street and Longwood Avenue, Bronx
Photographer: Martha Cooper



GRACE UNDER PRESSURE

Dan Cameron
New York
January 1995

Every artist's work is about time, place and circumstance, but in Rigoberto Torres' case, the fervor with which he embraces all three factors lends the work a directness and intensity that is extremely rare in the contemporary art world. In particular, the artist's close interrelationship with his subjects makes his output appear especially personal. By his drawing from the presence of neighbors, friends and family for his subjects, the world described in Torres' art functions as a close parallel to the world in which he lives and works on a day-to-day basis. For viewers who may not be personally familiar with that world, Torres' sculpture provides a means of coming into intimate contact with a social milieu that is both vivid and moving, and which literally overflows with the richness of gesture and character that belongs to his subjects.

The circumstances surrounding Torres' fifteen-year evolution as a fine artist provide some degree of insight into the meanings found in his work. Born in a small town in Puerto Rico, his family moved to New York when he was four, and he grew up in the same South Bronx neighborhood where

most of his work has been created. Although outgoing and energetic, Torres has had an asthmatic condition since childhood that resulted in him spending a great deal of his free time as a youth tinkering with cars, "inventing things," and helping his uncle Raul Arce at the family's religious art factory. In 1979, shortly after artists Stefan Eins and Joe Lewis established Fashion Moda as the downtown avant-garde's outpost in the South Bronx, a cousin of Torres was driving by the storefront, looked in and saw the plaster heads that artist John Ahearn was making of friends and acquaintances, and mentioned it to Rigoberto. Within a very short time, the 18 year-old had introduced himself to Ahearn and was coming by Fashion Moda on a daily basis. His first heads were cast there, using Ahearn's technique of pouring plastic gel over the subject's face (straws were inserted in their noses so that they could breathe), then lifting the dried impression off to use as a mold. In fact, both artists cast each other's faces that first year, a symbolic beginning to the long-term collaboration which is still evident in each of their respective approaches to making art.



Fireman Chris, 1993
from *The Rescue*,
acrylic on reinforced plaster, 25 x 25 x 11 3/4"
Photographer: D. James Dee



The Rescue, 1993
acrylic on fiberglass, 96 x 48 x 26"
Photographer: Joel Holub



China, 1993
acrylic on plaster, 18 1/2 x 16 1/4 x 7 1/4"
from the *42nd Street Art Project*
Catherine and Paul Bittenwieser Fund
Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

However, since the story behind this work is generally told with Ahearn as the principal figure, it is important to emphasize in the present version that while the older artist spent much of the '80s making art that concerned itself to a measurable degree with his own assimilation into a cultural situation that was new, even exotic, for him, Torres took the techniques and opportunities being offered by his partnership, and used them to define his ongoing life and situation. There was no need to go looking for subject matter, because it literally waited in his own backyard. Two factors in the development of both artists'

work at this period make the complexities of their resultant interrelationship clear. One is the early and critical role played by Rigoberto's uncle Raul Arce's statuary factory in developing the more sophisticated molding process required to make multiple casts of his and Ahearn's subjects. The other was the decision, made largely by Torres, to move the operation out of the Fashion Moda storefront, where people typically dropped in on their way to and from work or chores like shopping, and set up their studio on Walton Avenue, in the heart of his own South Bronx neighborhood, where everybody knows everybody else and their business. To a significant degree, his being able to work amidst family, friends and neighbors meant that Torres also functioned for many years as Ahearn's double in the close-knit neighborhood, enabling the latter to bypass many of the cultural and linguistic barriers that invariably came up in his interactions with people. Certainly, the major outdoor groupings produced during this period—'Banana' Kelly *Double Dutch* (1981-82), *We are Family* (1981-82), *Life on Dawson Street* (1982-83), and *Back to School* (1985) — are collaborations in every sense of the word. But to an

extent that has only become a bit clearer over time, the fact that neither Ahearn's nor Torres' work would have been possible without each one's chance discovery of and

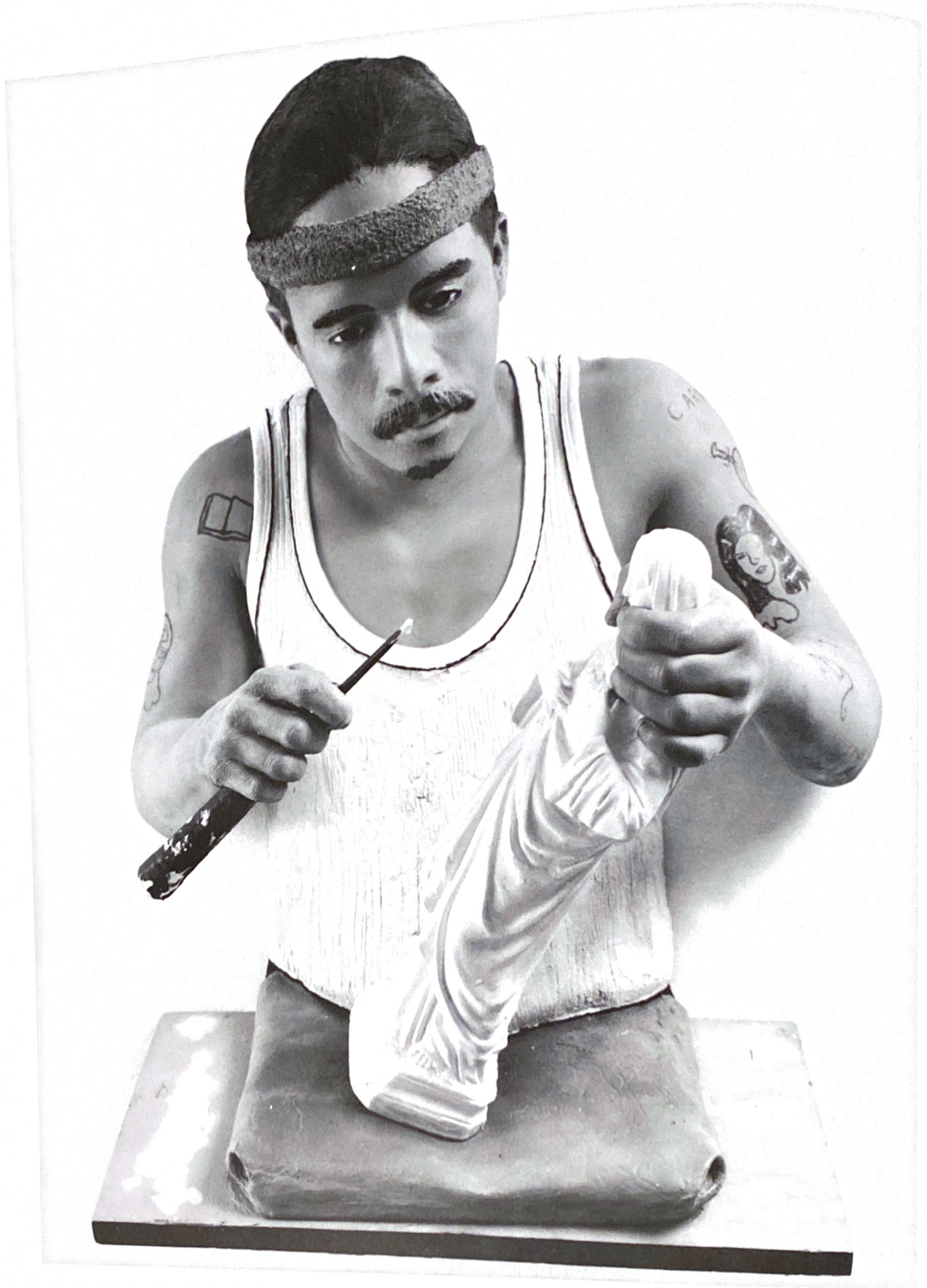
eventual reliance on the other takes on quite different connotations depending on which of the two artists' work one is considering.

The sense of intimacy with his sitters that marks Torres' work as a whole is evident even in *Shirley* (1979), the earliest piece in the present exhibition. Unlike the more dramatic expressions favored by Ahearn at this time, the personality that emerges in this work may be subdued,



Shirley, 1979
acrylic on plaster, 13 x 13 x 5"
Photographer: Joel Holub

even reticent, but there is an almost sly self-assertiveness in its subject's direct gaze and quiet smile. Despite its slightly blocky symmetry and frontality, the piece works because of the easy identification which its maker has with the young woman posing for him. The same observation holds true for *Girl with Red Halter* (1982-83), in which the downward cast of the chin and the subject's folded arms accentuate, rather than detract from, the glow of budding sexuality radiating from her skin, hair and clothing. This seemingly effortless gift for reflecting the sitter's persona can be seen to more powerful effect in important works from twelve years later, like Torres' reverential treatment of the singer Ruth Fernandez in performance, or in the tower of jostling young boys that makes up *Julio, Jose, Junito* (both works 1991). Because he so clearly identifies with his subjects, Torres never imposes on them to represent anything other than themselves, and this license results in the marked ease with which they slip into their 'real' selves as they are being cast. In fact, even the principal room of the Lehman College Art Gallery, which is devoted to Torres' treatments of children, serves as testimony to the artist's



Shorty Working in the C & R Statuary Corp., 1985
acrylic on plaster, 27 x 22 x 18"
Photographer: Ivan Dalla Tana

remarkable ability to work with subjects as young as two years old—not an age typified by the ability to stand absolutely still while plastic gel is poured over one's face, hair, and throat!

Another characteristic of Rigoberto Torres' work from the early '80s is his instinctive drive to create tableaux from single figures. Even in a formative piece like his bust of the magician *Manny* (1982-83), the artist uses the prop of the sword being swallowed to extend the figure out from the limits of the body and into open space. The upward tilt of the conjurer's arm and upper body, contrasted with the downward arc of the sword as it enters his mouth, achieves both a narrative tension as well as a compositional complexity that comes from the space around the relief being activated by the unexpectedly dynamic twist of the body's contours. The bodybuilder's arms held proudly aloft in *Dixie* (1982-83) achieve the same effect, albeit more simply; there may not be a prop in sight, but the naturalness of the gesture and facial expression suggest the countless hours the subject has spent working with those arms and shoulders to achieve the mass of muscle of which he is so proud. But as in *Manny* the primary compositional effect created by this gesture is to activate the space around the figure, so that it reads less as a static form and more as a living character pulling himself out of his environment and into the viewer's close proximity.

In a more literal way, the creation of a tableau-like setting becomes key to the success of the two most ambitious works from this period: *Tito Gonzalez* (1983) and *Shorty Working at the C&R Statuary Corp.* (1985). Both works use either family models or settings (or both), and each represents an almost devotional attitude towards the subject of work. It is not so much that Torres' subjects are defined by what they do, but rather they are so engaged by their activity that they seem to physically bond with their setting to form a single, complex unit. The way Tito, the liquor store proprietor, places his hands palms down with fingers open on the counter's surface gives the viewer an impression of solidness, dependability, which is in turn echoed by the neatly arranged wall of liquor bottles behind him. At the same time, the roundness of his frame and his almost deferential gaze suggests an inner equilibrium that is in marked contrast to more typical depictions of the occupation he is meant to be representing. *Shorty Working at the C&R Statuary Corp.* is an even more painstaking rendering of the work being done in his uncle Raul Arce's statue factory. While Torres' interest is in showing the loving attention that goes into the detailing of the religious figures that his uncle's factory produces, it is also a metaphorical self-portrait, in which the labors of the artist/artisan are used to suggest a kind of exemplary life that is

Julio, Jose, and Junito, 1991/95
oil on fiberglass, 105 x 26 x 9 1/2"
Photographer: Joel Holub



a carefully achieved balance of action and contemplation. However, we do not need such a complex interpretation to appreciate the strong visual contrast between Shorty's somewhat imposing masculinity, complete with tattooed arms, and the almost serene care with which he treats the archetypal Virgin in his hands.

At first glance, it would seem that the more outgoing, genre-like aspects of *Orlando the Donut Man* (1987) form a stark contrast with these earlier, more introspective works. Indeed, it is probably to pieces like these that other writers are referring when they bring up the 'carnival' aspects of Torres' style. However, such descriptions are guilty of oversimplifying what is in reality a subtle form of symbiosis taking place between the artist and his models. Even though it is clear that in more recent years Torres has been drawn to situations in which a sensation of well-being, even wonderment, is generated by the comportment of his figures, it would be a mistake to think of any of his more recent output in terms of an approach that is somehow frivolous or less meaningful to him. On the contrary, circumstances over the past year or so have conspired to make Torres' personal philosophy towards life and art much clearer, and the optimism of a work like *Orlando the Donut Man* seems almost poignant when one considers the circumstance that its quasi-heroic subject, who was once memorialized in a photo posing self-consciously alongside his sculptural likeness, is no longer the donut vendor at the legendary Munch Time Restaurant. Suddenly, the passing of time and the changeability of things provides that ingredient of melancholy which Torres' work is sometimes perceived as lacking. The sculpture *Orlando the Donut Man* thus becomes in part a legitimization of memory for those persons whose lives he may have touched, for whom the character of the donut man will always be irreplaceable.

It is also possible that the issue of mortality seems to hover covertly around these pieces due to the artist's own recent brush with death. During the summer and fall of 1993, he and Ahearn worked together on an extended casting project at a storefront on 42nd Street, within striking distance of the spot where, fourteen years before, the world south of the Bronx first became exposed to their work, as part of the historic *Times Square Show* (which Ahearn co-organized). While initially reluctant to go back over what each perceived as well-explored territory, both artists were notably revitalized by the process of interacting with groups of people in a largely public setting. However, as the project was drawing to a close, Torres, who has had a respiratory condition his entire life, was unexpectedly struck, in close succession, by two asthmatic seizures whose intensity eclipsed anything that he had ever experienced before. The second seizure, which was treated at a hospital where the staff was unfamiliar with his medical history, caused cortex damage that resulted in (temporary) loss of sight, as well as severe memory loss and vision problems from which he is still recovering more than a year later. Although a full recovery is expected, and some works have actually been completed by him for the present exhibition, as of this writing Torres is able to work on his art only for brief stretches at a time.

Needless to say, if it is an appreciation for the precariousness of life that one is seeking, Torres' work can be surprisingly eloquent. This is not only true in a somewhat melodramatic work like *The Rescue* (1993), in which a fireman, framed by the pillars of an 'old-law' tenement, risks his life to save the child who is cradled in his arms. It is also present in an unexpectedly moving work like *Margaret and Edwin* (1992), which frames its female protagonist's pregnancy with both the tender embrace of her husband's arms



Puerto Rican Day Parade, New York City, June 1993. Statue of Ruth Fernandez placed on a float carrying a salsa band. Photographer: John Ahearn



Ruth Fernandez, 1991
oil on fiberglass, 74 x 41 x 26"
Photographer: Ivan Dalla Tana

and a corny maternity T-shirt emblazoned with the word "Baby" and an arrow pointing to her womb. In *Margaret and Jill* (also 1992), the embrace between two adult women, one white and one black, seems to affirm the fragility which accompanies all gestures of love in a frequently hostile and intolerant society. Even in Torres' single-sitter portraits, of which there are nearly ten included here, one gets the sensation that the artist has zeroed in on the essential qualities that most define the person he is casting. This is as true in the warlike grimace of *Mabrick* (1984) or the cockiness of *The Man in Mexico* (1986) as it is in the proud upward thrust of *Julissa's* chin (1990) or *Margaret's* quizzical tilt of the head (1992). The spark that sustains each personality is conveyed by the intimacy which Torres creates between himself and the people who quite literally mean the most to him.

In his full-standing figures like *Ruth Fernandez* (1991) and *Maria* (1993), the close-up point of view that Torres favors takes on a different level of intensity. The performing self is what seems to interest him the most, as in the climactic moment when the singer, eyes closed, gestures outward to the crowd. It could be the split second just after Fernandez has finished her last note, and before she is enveloped in applause. The latter work, by contrast, shows the moment of concentration just before a gymnast or dancer leaps into her routine. These works are closely related to the two most recent ensemble works in Torres' oeuvre, and which could easily be considered the highlight of the exhibition: *Magic Kids* (1992) and *The Boxing Match* (1993). Each of these

pieces takes up the theme of children assuming adult roles, in a way that is both endearing and also a bit unsettling. In the earlier piece, the diminutive magician, saw in hand, has just finished cutting his assistant in half. Her hair cascades to the floor as he looks out at us hesitantly, as if unsure whether to expect applause or a scolding. In the more recent ensemble, two young pugilists are seated on stools at opposite ends of the ring, as the bikini-clad announcer holds up a card to announce the next round. Although Torres' precise intentions in these works are hard to decipher, it seems that he is trying to combine an oblique commentary on gender-based roles with a wry awareness that nowadays kids are being forced to assume the responsibilities of adulthood at a much younger age than ever before.

Although one would be hard pressed to try and paraphrase these ensembles through purely linguistic means, one point seems clear: Torres himself means to hold on to the principles of childhood as long as he can, even if it means creating a form of parody of the adult world for his characters (and audience) to inhabit. In fact, one of the common threads that runs through all of his output is the idea that Torres wants to sustain his own sense of amazement concerning the world and the people around him. Most of the time, this engagement can be felt in the way that Torres creates an uncanny sense of his sitter's identity through the most direct means possible. But even when some of his larger works reveal an emergent theatricality, the dignity of each participant is beyond questioning. Torres may be recreating his world as a way of coming to terms with forces that rage all around him but in so doing he also builds a convincing case for identity being based on the place we occupy in the world-view of those around us. Sooner or later in one form or another, everyone learns to struggle for his or her survival; but it is usually during those moments in between—moments of contemplation, celebration or love—when the people who we really are finally catch up with us.



Margaret and Edwin, 1992
acrylic on plaster, 40 x 57 x 12"
Photographer: D. James Dee



Magic Kids, (Joanna and Néné), 1992
acrylic on plaster and wood, 54 x 58 x 18"
Photographer: Ivan Dalla Tana



Dixie, 1982-83
acrylic on plaster, 21 x 21 x 9"
Photographer: Ivan Della Tana



Uncle Tito at the Liquor Store, 1983/1995
acrylic on plaster, 48 x 48 x 14"
Photographer: Ivan Dalla Tana



Fortune Teller, 1995
acrylic on plaster and wood, 47 x 32 x 21"
Photographer: Ivan Dalla Tana



Jullissa, 1993
acrylic on plaster
Photographer: Joel Holub



Margie Villa, 1993
acrylic on plaster, 22 x 28 x 10"
from the 42nd Street Art Project, 1993
Photographer: Joel Holub

Manny the Magician, 1982-83
acrylic on plaster, 25 x 25 x 14"
Collection of Lannan Foundation, Los Angeles
Photographer: Ivan Dalla Tana



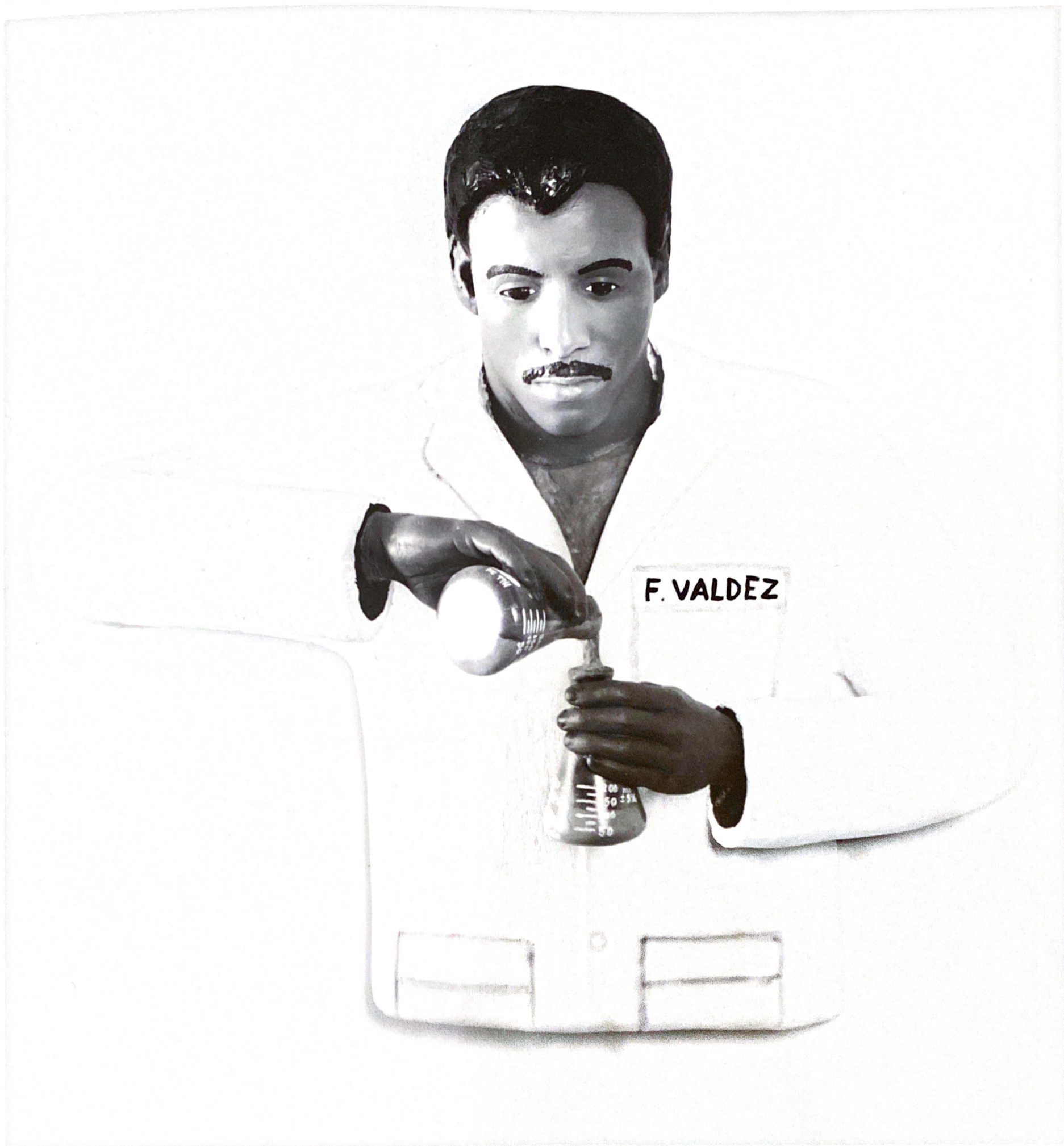
Jose, 1983
acrylic on plaster
Photographer: Ivan Dalla Tana



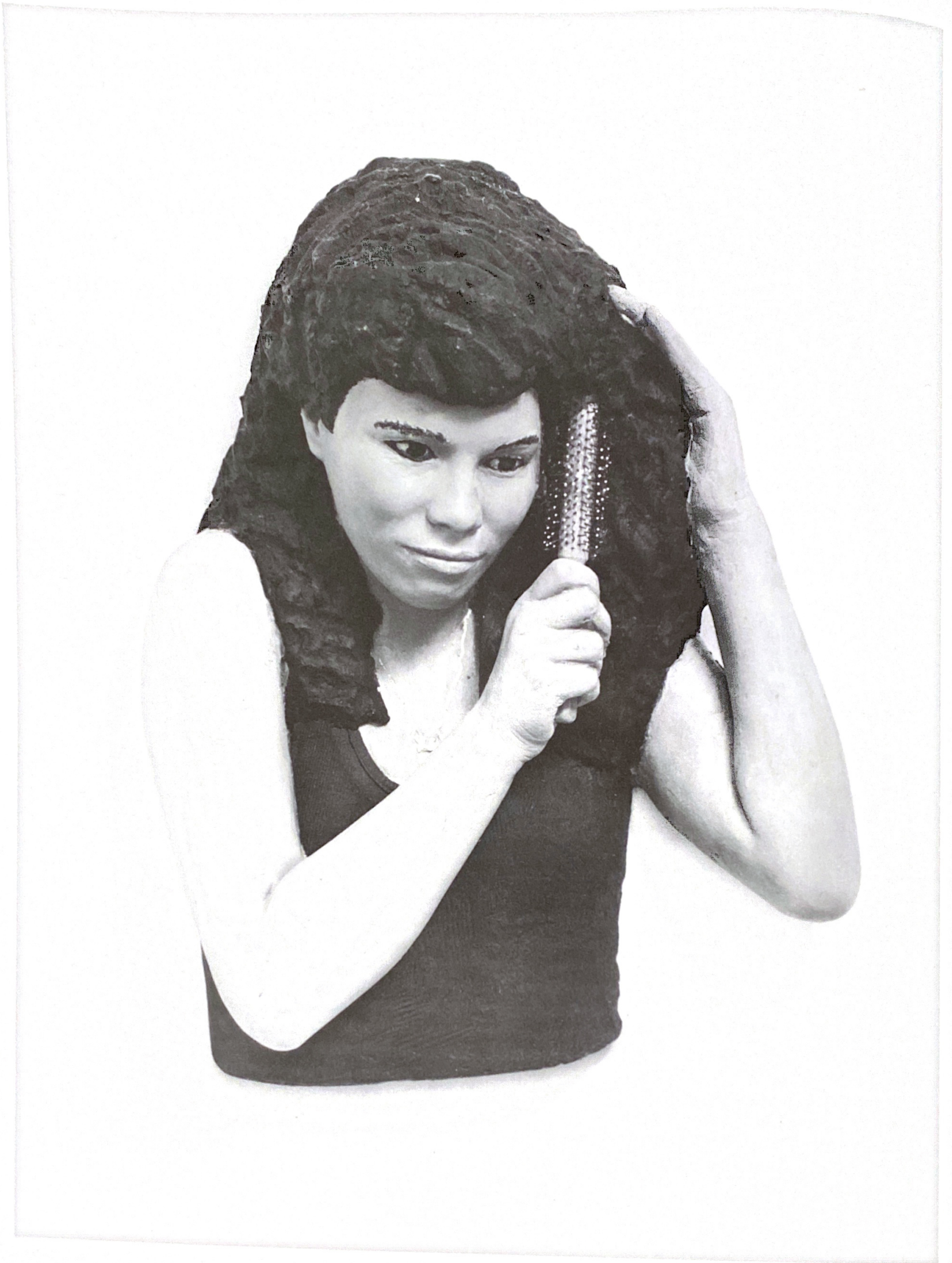
Alex with Parrot, 1993
acrylic on plaster, 17 x 22 1/2 x 9"
from the *42nd Street Art Project*
Photographer: Joel Holub



Mabrick, 1984
oil on plaster, 32 x 30 x 9"
Collection of William and Norma Roth
Photographer: Ivan Dalla Tana



F. Valdez, 1984
oil on plaster, 30 x 31 x 14"
Collection of American Express
Photographer: Ivan Dalla Tana



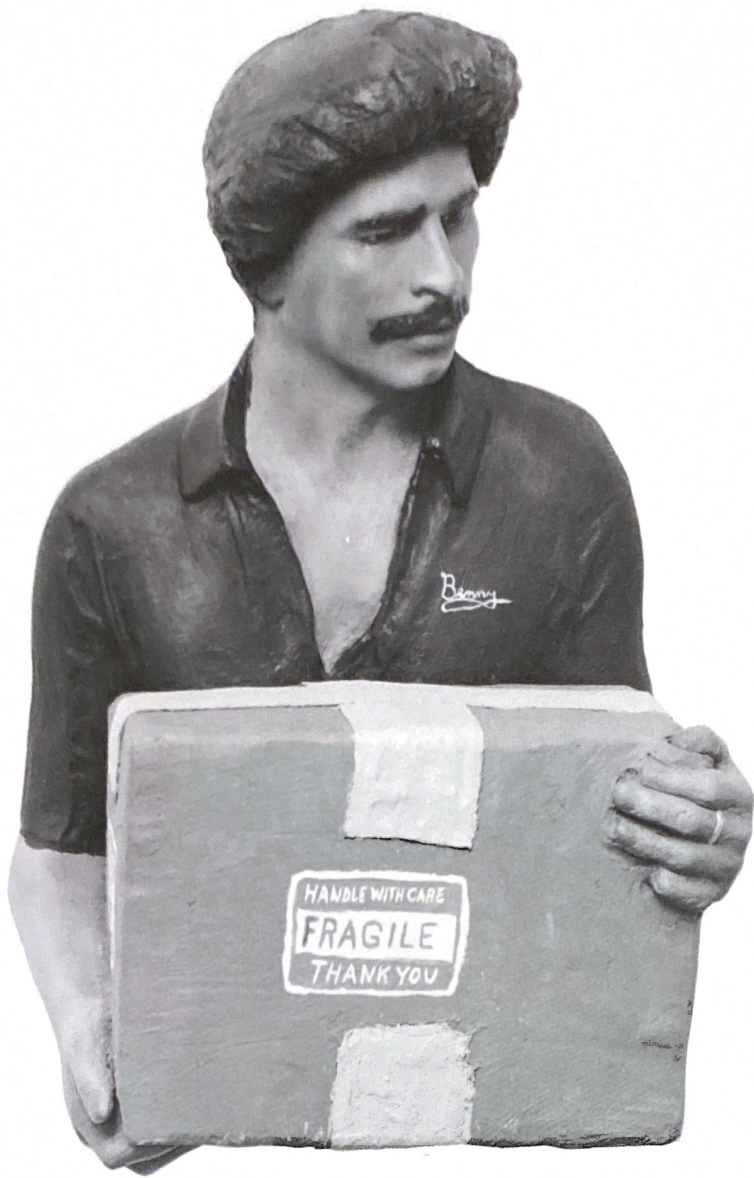
Gabriella Pérez, 1992
acrylic on plaster, 26 x 21 x 8"
Photographer: D. James Dee



Sahara, 1993
acrylic on plaster, 16 x 13 x 8"
from the 42nd Street Art Project
Photographer: Joel Holub



Migna's Girls, 1980
acrylic on plaster, 16 x 19 x 6"
Photographer: Joel Holub



Benny, 1987
acrylic on plaster, 32 x 21 x 17"
Photographer: D. James Dee



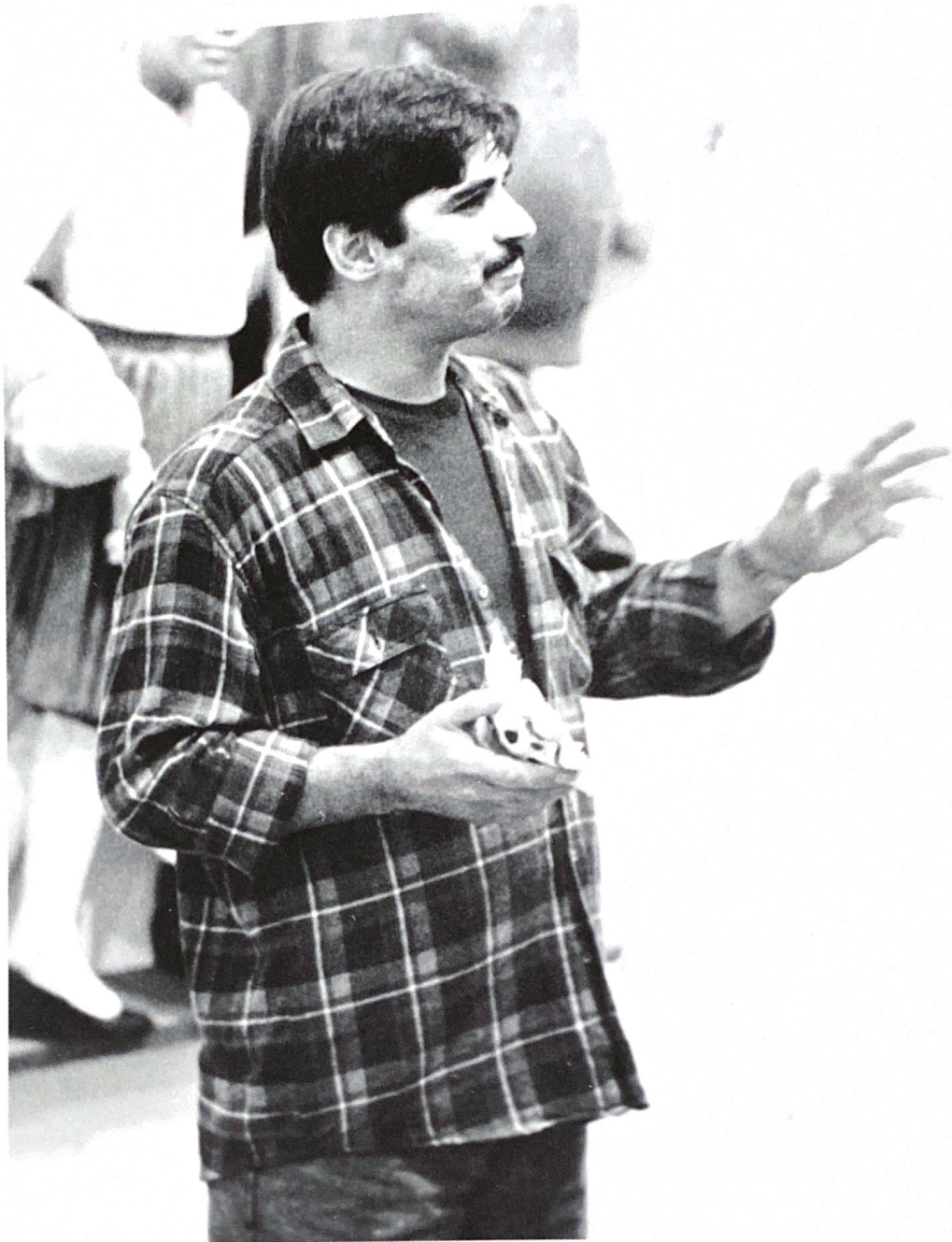
Margaret, 1992
acrylic on plaster, 18 x 20 x 9"
Photographer: D. James Dee



Carmen, 1992
acrylic on plaster, 19 1/2 x 20 x 8"
Photographer: D. James Dee



David, 1992
acrylic on plaster, 21 1/2 x 19 x 7 1/2"
Photographer: D. James Dee

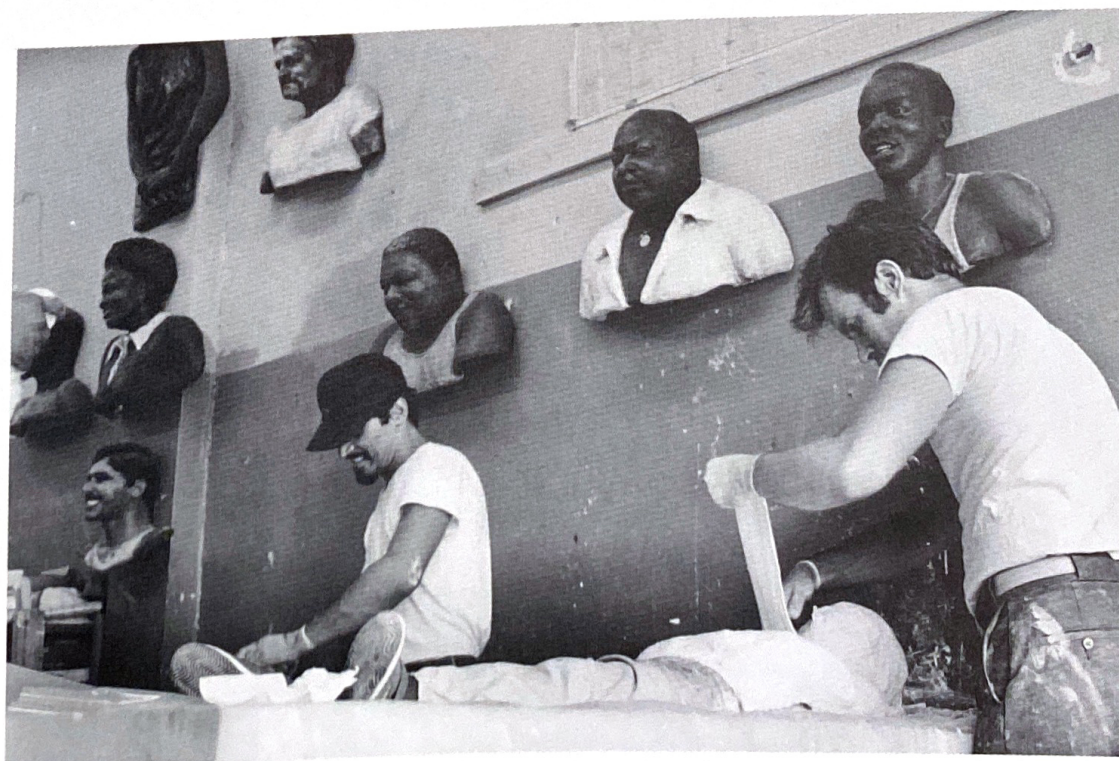


Rigoberto Torres, gallery talk at Lehman College Art Gallery, 1992
Photographer: Daniel Shure

1960 Born in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico

ONE PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 1993 **Sculpture by John Ahearn and Rigoberto Torres: THE SOUTH BRONX HALL OF FAME AND OTHER REALITIES**, Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery of Reed College, Portland, OR and travelling to the Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe (catalogue with essay by Susan Fillin-Yeh)
Mermaid, Brooke Alexander, New York
Friends & Neighbors: The Art of John Ahearn & Rigoberto Torres, The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD and travelling to the Lehman College Art Gallery, Lehman College/City University of New York, Bronx, NY (brochure)
- 1992 **John Ahearn & Rigoberto Torres: Face to Face**, Washington Project for the Arts, Washington, DC
New Sculpture by John Ahearn and Rigoberto Torres, The Contemporary Museum, Honolulu
- 1991-92 **South Bronx Hall of Fame, Sculpture by John Ahearn & Rigoberto Torres**, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; Witte de With, Rotterdam; The Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati; The Contemporary Museum, Honolulu (catalogue with essays by Richard Goldstein, Michael Ventura, and Marilyn Zeitlin)
- 1991 **Rigoberto Torres, Sculpture 1990-1991**, Brooke Alexander, New York
Rigoberto Torres, Galeria La Maquina Espanola, Seville
- 1990 **Art Show of Life**, Biblioteca de la Universidad Intramericana, Aguadilla, Puerto Rico
- 1989 **Art Show of Life**, Carcel de Aguadilla, Puerto Rico
- 1986 **John Ahearn with Rigoberto Torres**, Brooke Alexander, New York
- 1985 **John Ahearn and Rigoberto Torres: Portraits from the Bronx: Life Casts from 1979 to Present**, Bronx Museum, Bronx, NY
Investigations 12: John Ahearn with Rigoberto Torres: Sculpture, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (brochure)
- 1984 **John Ahearn and Rigoberto Torres**, Brooke Alexander, New York
- 1983 **John Ahearn with Rigoberto Torres: Recent Sculpture from Dawson Street**, Brooke Alexander, New York
- 1979 **South Bronx Hall of Fame**, Fashion Moda, New York; travelled to the Con Edison Building, Bronx, NY



Rigoberto Torres (left)
 and John Ahearn (right)
 casting on Dawson Street, 1983
 Photographer:
 Jeannette Montgomery-Barron



Myra, 1980
acrylic on plaster, 17 x 14 x 8"
Photographer: Joel Holub

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1994 **Head and Shoulders**, Brooke Alexander, New York
Public Interventions, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston
Artist's Select, Part III, Artists Space, New York
- 1993 **In and Out of Place: Contemporary Art and the American Social Landscape**,
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
42nd Street Art Project, New York
Aperto 93, Venice Biennale
Sculptures and Multiples, Brooke Alexander, New York
- 1992 **Figures of Contemporary Sculpture (1970-1990): Images of Man**,
organized by Martin Bush, ACA Galleries, travelling exhibition in Japan
Americas, Expo 1992, Seville
- 1991 **Images of Labor: The 1990's**,
Bread & Roses Cultural Project, Gallery 1199, New York
- 1990 **The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980's**,
The Studio Museum in Harlem;
The New Museum of Contemporary Art;
Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, New York
- 1988 **Unity: A Collaborative Process**,
Goddard-Riverside Community Center, New York
Above it All,
P.S. 39 Longwood Arts Project
- 1987 **Out of the Studio: Art with Community, Part I**,
Institute for Art and Urban Resources, P.S. 1, Long Island City, NY
Sculpture, Anchorage Museum of History and Art, Anchorage
Working Spaces: New York from New York,
University Art Gallery, State University of New York at Binghamton
The Eighth Annual South Bronx Show, Fashion Moda, Bronx
- 1986 **The Gallery Show**, Exit Art, New York
American/Norwegian Exhibition,
Stavanger Fast Gallery, Stavanger, Norway
- 1985 **A Summer Place**, Sarah Rentschler Gallery, New York
Carnegie International,
Carnegie Institute Museum of Art, Pittsburgh
1985 Biennial Exhibition,
Group Material, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
- 1984 **The Human Condition: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art**,
Biennial III, San Francisco
Face It: 10 Contemporary Artists,
Freedman Gallery, Albright College, Reading, PA.
Traveled to Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH
- 1983 **Language, Drama, Source & Vision**,
The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York
Art and Social Change, USA,
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH
- 1982 **The 1982 South Bronx Show**,
Fashion Moda and the Bronx Council on the Arts, New York
- 1980 **Fashion Moda**, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York
Times Square Show, New York

PROJECTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH JOHN AHEARN

- 1993 **42nd Street Art Project** (with Creative Time)
storefront workshop in Time Square, (June - November 1993)
- 1992 **Washington Project of the Arts** (unfinished) casting in two communities in Washington D.C.
Anacosta and the Latin Youth Center in cooperation with W.P.A.
- 1991 **Cool Project - Three Outdoor Murals** done in Rotterdam
in collaboration with the Witte de With Art Center and the local community
- 1983-88 **Walton Avenue Sculpture Workshop**, low relief sculpture murals:
Back to School, outdoor mural at 172nd Street, Bronx, NY (1986)
City College of the City of New York, commissioned eight painted life casts of CCNY students
and teachers, on permanent display above student cafeteria (1985)
- 1981-85 **Intervale Avenue Outdoor Arts Projects**, supported by the National Endowment for the Arts,
Fashion Moda, the Bronx Council on the Arts, and the Federal Housing and
Urban Development Fund; low relief sculpture murals:
Life on Dawson Street, outdoor mural, Bronx, NY (1983-84)
We Are Family, outdoor mural, 877 Intervale Avenue, Bronx, NY (1982)
Double Dutch at Kelly Street I, outdoor mural, Bronx, NY (1981-82)





Mural, *We are Family*, 1981-82, (left to right) Layman, Victor and Ernest, Kate, Tawana and Staice and Iris and Smokey. Fox Street at Intervale Avenue. Photographer: Ivan Dalla Tana



Mural, *Homage to the People of the Bronx, Banana Kelly; Double Dutch*, 1981-82, (left to right) LaFreeda Mincey, Javette Potts, Tawana Brown and Staice Seabrine. Kelly Street at Intervale Avenue, Bronx, Photographer: Ivan Dalla Tana

Right: Mural, *Back to School*, 1985, 170th Street at Walton Avenue, Bronx
 Photographer: Ivan Dalla Tana

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1993 Jimenez, Carlos. "The Venice Biennial," *Art Nexus* (September-December)
Lingemanne, Suzanne. "Er sucht Seine Kopfe in Der Bronx,"
Art Kunstmagazine (April)
- 1992 Carl, Kathy. "Plaster People or Cara Cara," *Art in Progress* (October)
Kramer, Janet. "Whose art Is It?", *The New Yorker* (December 21)
Kuspit, Donald. "John Ahearn and Rigoberto Torres at the
Contemporary Arts Museum," *Artforum* (January)
Stein, Jerry. "Casting Kids, New York Artists Turn Cincinnati
Faces into Art," *Cincinnati Post* (February)
Welzenbach, Michael. "Faces Cast With Compassion," *The Washington Post* (October)
- 1991 Chadwick, Susan. "Mean Streets, Friendly Faces," *Houston Post Chronicle* (September)
Chadwick, Susan. "Sculptors Carve Hope Out of Urban Despair,"
Houston Post Calender (September)
Johnson, Patricia C. "Art of the People: Plaster Casts of Neighbors
Help Recreate World of South Bronx," *Houston Chronicle* (September)
Ludlam, Jane. "Casting Call: John Ahearn and Rigoberto Torres
Use Plaster and Fiberglass to Immortalize Their South
Bronx Neighbors," *Houston Press Newsweekly* (September)
Rigsby, David. "South Bronx Hall of Fame: Is Life Imitating
Art or Vice Versa?" *Public News* (October)
- 1988 Staff. "John Ahearn/Rigoberto Torres," *The New York Times* (April 1)
- 1987 Glueck, Grace. "An Immovable Feast: Murals in the City," *The New York Times* (July 22)
McCormick, Carlo. "John Ahearn with Rigoberto Torres: Brooke
Alexander," *Artforum* (February)
Smith, Paul. "John Ahearn and Rigoberto Torres at Brooke Alexander,"
Art in America (February)
- 1986 Hess, Elizabeth. "John Ahearn," *The Village Voice* (November)
McCormick, Carlo. "Soul Men," *Paper* (November)
- 1985 McGill, Douglas C., "Art People: Landscape of the Body," *The New York Times* (October)
- 1983 Glueck, Grace. "John Ahearn and Rigoberto Torres," *The New York Times* (July)
Howe, Katherine. "John Ahearn with Rigoberto Torres at Brooke
Alexander," *Images and Issues* (January/February)
Storr, Robert. "John Ahearn and Rigoberto Torres at Brooke
Alexander" *Art in America* (November)
- 1982 Shepherd, Joan. "Artistic 'Immortality' for Ordinary People,"
Manhattan and Bronx Metro (July)



Mice in the Pool, 1984, acrylic on canvas,
48 x 48" Photographer: Joel Holub



Rigoberto Torres painting, *Jack and Jill*, 1985,
oil on plaster, 42 x 42" Photographer: Joel Holub



Fashion Logs, 1985
acrylic on wood, 2 of 72 x 16 x 10"
Photographer: Joel Holub

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
The Lannan Foundation, Los Angeles
Baruch College, New York
City College of New York
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

THE WORKS OF ROGIBERTO TORRES

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

***Shirley*, 1979**

acrylic on plaster, 13 x 13 x 5"
Collection of John Ahearn

***Migna's Girls*, 1980**

acrylic on plaster, 16 x 19 x 6"
Courtesy Brooke Alexander, New York

***Myra*, 1980**

acrylic on plaster, 17 x 14 x 8"
Collection of John Ahearn

***Manny the Magician*, 1982-83**

acrylic on plaster, 25 x 25 x 14"
Collection of Lannan Foundation, Los Angeles

***Mabrick*, 1984**

oil on plaster, 32 x 30 x 9"
Collection of William and Norma Roth

***Mice in the Pool*, 1984**

acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48"
Collection of the artist

***Shorty Working at the
C & R Statuary Corporation*, 1985**

acrylic on plaster, 27 x 22 x 18"
Collection of John Ahearn

***Gibbie*, 1985**

from *Back to School* mural
acrylic on plaster, 51 x 27 x 13"
Collection of Gonzalez Family

***Jack and Jill*, 1985**

oil on plaster, 42 x 42"
Collection of the artist

***Fashion Logs*, 1985**

acrylic on wood, 72 x 16 x 10" each
Collection of the artist

***Benny*, 1987**

acrylic on plaster, 32 x 21 x 17"
Courtesy Brooke Alexander, New York

***Orlando the Donut Man*, 1987**

oil on fiberglass, 70 x 96 x 60"
Courtesy Brooke Alexander, New York

***Ruth Fernandez*, 1991**

oil on fiberglass, 74 x 41 x 26"
Courtesy Brooke Alexander, New York

***Margaret and Jill*, 1992**

acrylic on plaster,
Collection of Margaret A. Hutto and Jill L. Newmark

***Magic Kids (Joanna and Néné)*, 1992**

acrylic on plaster and wood, 54 x 58 x 18"
Courtesy Brooke Alexander, New York

***Margaret and Edwin*, 1992**

acrylic on plaster, 40 x 60 x 12"
Courtesy Brooke Alexander, New York

***Gabriella Pérez*, 1992**

acrylic on plaster, 26 x 21 x 8"
Courtesy Brooke Alexander, New York

***Jose and Laura*, 1993**

acrylic on plaster, 22 x 27 x 11"
Courtesy Brooke Alexander, New York

***Margie Villa*, 1993**

acrylic on plaster, 22 x 28 x 10"
Courtesy Brooke Alexander, New York

***Sahara*, 1993**

acrylic on plaster, 16 x 13 x 8"
Courtesy Brooke Alexander, New York

***Alex with Parrot*, 1993**

acrylic on plaster, 17 x 22 1/2 x 9"
Courtesy Brooke Alexander, New York

***Maria*, 1993**

oil on fiberglass, 70 x 33 x 10 1/2"
Courtesy Brooke Alexander, New York

Mermaid, 1993
acrylic on plaster, 35 x 45 x 9"
Courtesy Brooke Alexander, New York

The Rescue, 1993
oil on fiberglass, 96 x 48 x 26"
Courtesy Brooke Alexander, New York

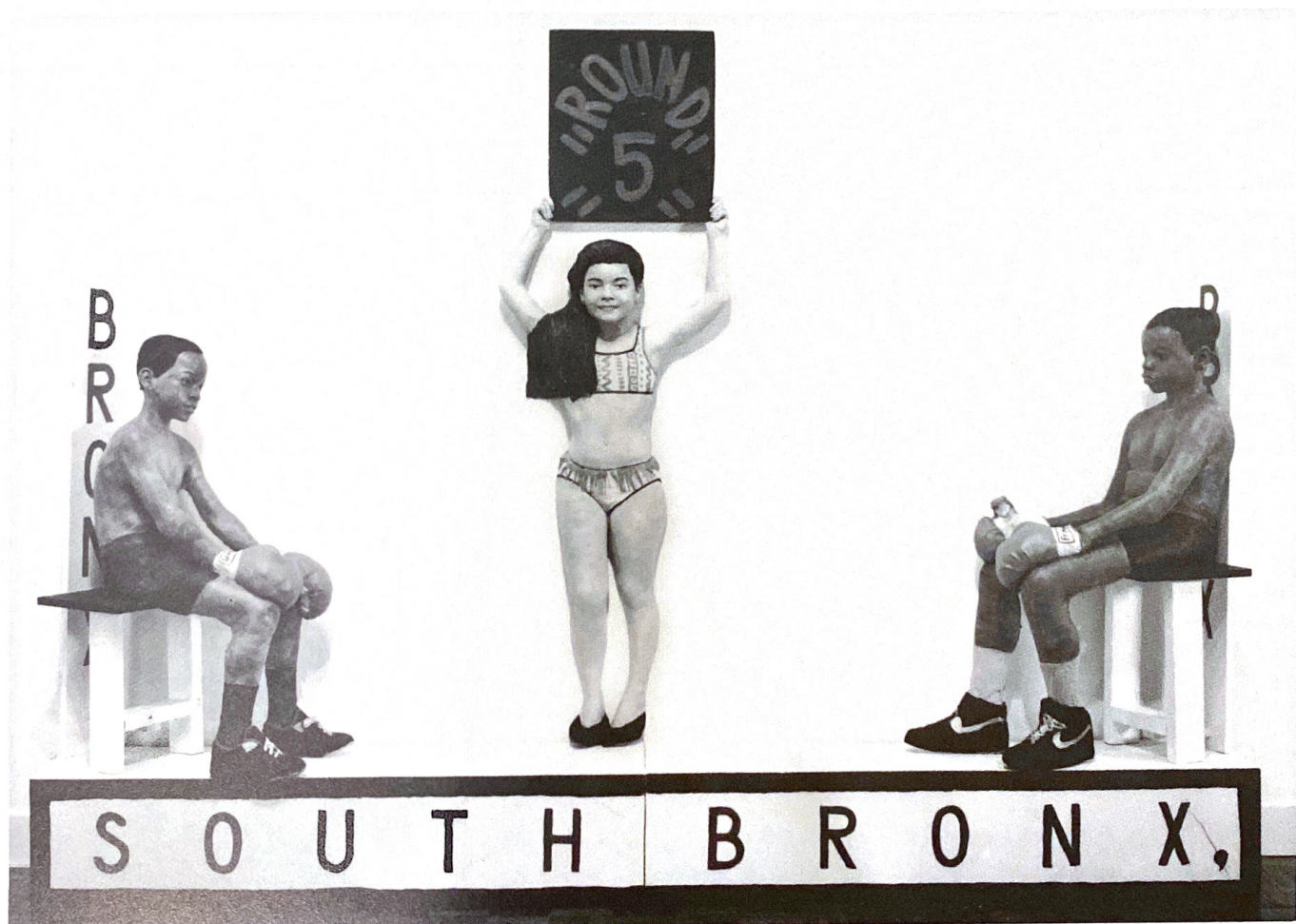
The Boxing Match, 1993
acrylic on plaster and wood, 89 x 120 x 19"
Courtesy Brooke Alexander, New York

Jullissa, 1993
acrylic on plaster,
Courtesy Brooke Alexander, New York

Fortune Teller, 1995
acrylic on plaster and wood, 47 x 32 x 21"
Courtesy Brooke Alexander, New York

Uncle Tito at the Liquor Store, 1983/1995
acrylic on plaster, 48 x 48 x 14"
Collection of the artist

Julio, Jose and Junito, 1991/1995
oil on fiberglass, 105 x 26 x 9 1/2"
Courtesy Brooke Alexander, New York



The Boxing Match, 1993
acrylic on plaster and wood, 89 x 120 x 19"
Photographer: Ivan Dalla Tana

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