

DIANE DE POLIGNAC

# WIFREDO LAM (1902-1982)

Wifredo Lam was a Cuban artist who developed close ties to the surrealist movement and artists in the Cobra group. Profoundly shaped by his native country, Lam created a unique body of work that married the audacity of Western avant-garde painting and imagery from African and Caribbean cultures.



## BIOGRAPHY

### THE AFRO-CUBAN PAINTER'S EARLY LIFE

Wifredo Lam was born on 8 December 1902 in the city of Sagua La Grande in a sugar farming region of Cuba. Lam's mother was of mixed race—of Hispano-Congolese origin—and his father had immigrated to Cuba from China. The young artist grew up in a modest and open-minded family: his father, who ran a small business, was a literate man who mastered the art of calligraphy. As a child, Lam found himself at a crossroads between religions and civilisations, growing up in a culture that mixed monotheism and ancestor worship, Catholicism and the animist rites of African traditions.

Lam spent his childhood immersed in a green, tropical and lush sugar cane region—an “ocean of sugar cane” that would profoundly affect his sensibilities as an artist. Describing his childhood, the artist said: “When I was very young, I was surrounded by my little jungle...”. Lam realised his calling as an artist at around the age of seven, when he began drawing, producing landscapes and portraits. The young Lam discovered the masters—Leonardo da Vinci, Velasquez, Goya, Gauguin and Delacroix—by looking through black and white reproductions of art books he was able to get hold of.

Wifredo Lam arrived in Havana in 1916 to study law but went on to enrol at the San Alejandro fine arts school (the Escuela Profesional de Pintura y Escultura de San Alejandro) in 1918—where he mainly drew and produced portraits. Talking about his early work, Lam said: “There was an element of Chardin in what I did as a youth. As far as I can remember, the paintings I was trying to make were never brutal. (...) For I carry within me a Chinese heritage and a Cuban heritage and this counts enormously.” In 1923, Lam exhibited his first paintings at the Fine Arts Salon of Havana, after which he was invited to present his work in his home town. The event was a huge success, prompting the city council of Sagua La Grande to award him a grant to pursue his studies in Europe.

### THE PAINTER WIFREDO LAM IN EUROPE

Arriving in Madrid towards the end of 1923, Wifredo Lam made the acquaintance of Fernando Álvarez de Sotomayor, the Director of the Prado and an official portraitist. Álvarez de Sotomayor encouraged Lam to enrol at the Real Academia de Bellas Artes San Fernando, but Lam was soon disappointed by the traditionally academic climate at the academy, which was far from the modernity he was looking for. He turned to the Prado for inspiration, studying and reproducing works by masters of painting such as El Greco, Velázquez, Bosch and Dürer. He sent the copies to La Sagua Grande to justify his scholarship.

In Madrid, Lam also enrolled in private classes at the Escuela Libre de Pajase founded by Julio Moises, which drew on the support of other non-conformist painters such as Benjamín Palencia, Francisco Boreas and Salvador Dalí. With Cuba in political turmoil, Lam lost his scholarship and had to work as a portraitist for aristocratic circles in Madrid to support himself.

Lam also visited Cuenca in Spain's Castilla la Mancha region at the invitation of his friend Fernando Rodríguez Muñoz. Perched on a rocky spur in the mountains, the small Medieval town populated by poor peasants struck a chord with the Cuban painter, who was inspired to create a number of new works. Lam settled there for a while, sharing his studio and mixing with local artists and bohemian intellectuals—including the painters Vázquez Díaz and Santiago Rusiñol. For the first time, the artist experienced creative exchange in an artistic community.

Then Lam heard about Surrealism—a new movement just emerging in France at the time—and began to try his hand at automatic drawing. In 1929, Lam discovered works of art by Spanish painters living in Paris at an exhibition at the Jardín Botánico in Madrid. He was particularly struck by those by Pablo Picasso.

It was around this time that Lam experienced a political awakening, a revelation that made him want to convey what he described as “a general democratic proposition [...] for all people...” with his art. Wifredo Lam then married Eva Piriz, with whom he had a son—Wifredo Victor—but both mother and child died of tuberculosis in 1931. The loss, combined with the great economic recession that was shaking the world, plunged Lam into a period of despair. Lam continued to paint portraits in order to earn a living and the loss of his wife and child inspired him to create a series of paintings of mothers and children.

Following the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, the Cuban painter Wifredo Lam became politically active and joined the Republican forces in their fight against Franco. It was during this period that Lam painted *La Guerra civil*. In the midst of the Spanish conflict, Lam left Spain to live in Paris. It was in the French capital that the artist met Pablo Picasso. The meeting was an aesthetic revelation for Lam and marked the beginnings of a profound friendship between the two artists. Lam's friendship with Picasso also connected him to avant-garde artists such as Georges Braque, Henri Matisse and Joan Miró, as well as art critics such as Michel Leiris and Christian Zervos. The Cuban artist also met a number of art dealers such as Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, and above all Pierre Loeb—from the Galerie Pierre—who organised his first solo exhibition in Paris in 1939.

## WIFREDO LAM IN EXILE, BETWEEN CUBA AND THE UNITED STATES

The Cuban painter Wifredo Lam was also associated with the surrealist group of artists, with whom he became particularly close. The artist developed strong ties with the group in Marseille when they were brought together in the city in 1940. Fleeing the war and waiting to go into exile in the United States, various artists gathered at the Villa Air Bel around André Breton, including Pierre Mabille, René Char, Max Ernst, Victor Brauner, Oscar Domínguez and André Masson. The Villa Air Bel became a place of artistic experimentation and Lam started to draw hybrid figures in ink in a foreshadowing of his later work in Cuba in the 1940s. In March 1941, the painter Wifredo Lam and his second wife Helena Holzer embarked with some 300 artists and intellectuals—including André Breton and Claude Lévi-Strauss—on a voyage to Martinique. On their arrival, however, they were forced to make a stop in Les Trois-Îlets, where Lam met Aimé Césaire, with whom he formed a deep friendship.

After an absence of nearly twenty years, Lam then made his way back to Cuba. The painter immersed himself in the culture of his native island, pursuing his artistic investigations by drawing on the Afro-Cuban culture he came from. Lam's stay in Cuba marked a particularly prolific period for the artist, who painted more than a hundred paintings during his time on the island, including *La Jungla*. Described as “delirious vegetation” by Leiris, the work caused a scandal when it was exhibited at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York, which regularly presented Lam's work during the 1940s.

Lam's paintings were also presented at a number of major exhibitions of Latin American painting in the United States during the 1940s, such as: *The Latin American Collection of The Museum of Modern Art* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1943; *Pictures by Two Cubans: Carreño and Lam* at the Institute of Modern Art in Boston in the same year; and *Lam, Matta: The Latin American Spirit* at the Arts Club in Chicago in 1944.

During the course of a stay in Haiti in 1946, Lam continued to heighten his artistic investigations, developing his work by drawing on Haitian culture for inspiration. Having explored Afro-Cuban rituals in Cuba, Lam attended voodoo ceremonies in Haiti in the company of André Breton and Pierre Mabille. Such experiences broadened Lam's horizons as an artist. Talking about his trip to Haiti, Lam said, “It is often assumed that my work took its final form in Haiti, but my stay there, like the trips I made to Venezuela, Colombia or to the Brazilian Mato Grosso only broadened its scope. I could have been a good painter from the School of Paris, but I felt like a snail out of its shell. What really broadened my painting was the presence of African poetry.”

The year 1947 represented an important artistic juncture for Lam, whose work became increasingly marked by the influence of Oceanic art and African art, as well as a more pronounced and frequent presence of esoteric elements.

From the late 1940s onwards, Lam split his time between Cuba, New York and Europe. Many artists had migrated to New York during the Second World War, including surrealist artists such as André Masson and Yves Tanguy. Lam was reunited there with Marcel Duchamp and also met a number of important figures in the city's art scene, such as Jeanne Reynal, James Johnson Sweeney and Isamu Noguchi. Lam also made contact with members of the American Abstract Expressionist movement such as Arshile Gorky, Robert Motherwell and Jackson Pollock, as well as Asger Jorn and other artists in the Cobra group. During their visits to New York, Lam and his wife were welcomed by Pierre and Teeny Matisse and the artist Jeanne Reynal, who received the couple at their homes.

## WIFREDO LAM, ALBISSOLA AND THE COBRA MOVEMENT

Throughout the 1950s, Wifredo Lam developed close ties with the Cobra movement, the Italian avant-garde and the international Situationist movement. In 1954, the Cuban painter met the poets Gherasim Luca and Alain Jouffroy. Lam was invited—with Cobra artists, among others—to take part in the International Meeting of Sculpture and Ceramics in Albissola, Italy. He attended the meeting alongside Karel Appel, Enrico Baj and Corneille, as well as Lucio Fontana and Roberto Matta. The small village of Albissola on Italy's Ligurian coast became a gathering point for international artistic experimentation during the 1960s. In 1964, Lam even set up a studio in his house in Albissola Marina, dividing his time from then on between Paris and Italy. Divorced from Helena, Lam married the Swedish artist Lou Laurin in 1960.

The 1960s were also marked by the artist's considerable production of engravings. Lam shared a special relationship with numerous poets and writers and printmaking was the medium through which he collaborated with them. Working with writers such as Aimé Césaire, André Breton, René Char, Alain Jouffroy and Michel Leiris, the artist produced large-format portfolios of prints, in collaboration with print studios such as Broder, Mathieu and Upiglio, to illustrate their collections of poems. Lam's published works include *Le voyage de l'arbre* by Hubert Juin (1960), *Le rempart de brindilles* by René Char (1963), *Apostroph'Apocalypse* by Gherasim Luca (1965) and *L'Antichambre de la Nature* by Alain Jouffroy (1966). Lam continued to collaborate with the master engraver Giorgio Upiglio—from the studio Grafica Uno in Milan—all the way up to the artist's death in 1982.

## **INTERNATIONAL ACCLAIM FOR WIFREDO LAM'S WORK**

The Cuban painter Wifredo Lam soon won international acclaim for his work, his pieces presented in art galleries and museums all around the world. Exhibited in the United States, Mexico, Cuba, Venezuela, Brazil, France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, England, Russia and Czechoslovakia, Lam received many awards—including the Grand Prize at the Havana Salon in 1951 and the Guggenheim International Award in 1964.

Lam also took part in a number of major international art events, such as Documenta II and III in Kassel in 1959 and 1964, the Venice Biennale in 1972, and the Salón de Mayo in 1967—at which the collective work *Cuba Colectiva* was created.

Numerous retrospectives of Lam's work were presented in the years that followed, including a monographic exhibition that travelled from the Kunsthalle in Basel to the Kestner-Gesellschaft in Hanover, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the Moderna Museet in Stockholm and the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels between 1966 and 1967. A touring retrospective of painter's work also travelled from the Museo Nacional de Arte Contemporáneo in Madrid to the Museum of Ixelles in Brussels and the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris between 1982 and 1983.

After a stroke in August 1978, Wifredo Lam found himself partially paralysed and dependent on a wheelchair. Lam died in Paris in 1982—at the same moment that his touring retrospective was starting in Madrid. A state funeral was held for the artist in Cuba.

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## SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Amstelveen, Cobra Museum of Modern Art  
Barcelona, Fundació Joan Miró  
London, Tate Modern  
Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía  
New York, NY, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum  
Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Pompidou  
Paris, Musée Dapper

## SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Salón de Bellas Artes, Havana, 1923  
Solo exhibition, La Sociedad-Círculo de Cultura y Recreos, Sagua La Grande (Cuba), 1923  
Solo exhibition, Galería Vilches, Madrid, 1928  
*Federación ibérica de artistas pintores*, Museo de Arte Moderno, Madrid, 1931  
Solo exhibition, Círculo de Arte, León (Spain), 1932  
*Iva Exposición colectiva de arte*, El Salón Permanente de Arte, León (Spain), 1932  
Solo exhibitions, Galerie Pierre, Paris, 1939, 1946  
*Drawings by Picasso and Gouaches by Wifredo Lam*, Perls Galleries, New York, 1939  
Solo exhibitions, Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York, 1942, 1944, 1945, 1948, 1950, 1982  
*First Papers of Surrealism*, group exhibition, Whitelaw Reid Mansion, New York, 1942  
*The Latin American Collection of The Museum of Modern Art*, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1943  
*Pictures by Two Cubans: Carreño and Lam*, the Institute of Modern Art, Boston, 1943  
Group exhibitions, Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York, 1943, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1967  
*Lam, Matta: The Latin American Spirit*, the Arts Club, Chicago, 1944  
*Les peintres modernes cubains*, Centre d'Art Gallery, Port-au-Prince (Haiti), 1945  
*Les peintres de Paris, Picasso, Miró, Lam*, UNESCO, Paris, 1946  
Group exhibition, Galerie Pierre, Paris, 1946  
Solo exhibition, Centre d'Art, 25<sup>th</sup> exhibition of the Centre d'Art, Port-au-Prince (Haiti), 1946  
*The Cuban Painter Wifredo Lam, Twenty Drawings*, the London Gallery Bookshop, London, 1946  
*Le Surréalisme en 1947*, Galerie Maeght, Paris; the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, 1947  
*40,000 Years of Modern Art: A Comparison of Primitive and Modern*, Academy Hall, the Institute of Contemporary Art, London, 1948–1949  
*Lam, obras recientes 1950*, Parque Central, Havana, 1951  
Salon Nacional de Pintura, Escultura y Grabado, Havana, 1951  
*Lam y nuestro tiempo, París 1938-1951 La Habana*, Galería Sociedad Nuestro Tiempo, Havana, 1952  
*L'Œuvre du XXe siècle, peintures-sculptures*, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, 1952

*Wifredo Lam*, Institute of Contemporary Art, London, 1953  
*Lam, peintures récentes*, Galerie Maeght, Paris, 1955  
*Wifredo Lam*, Universidad de La Habana, Pabellón de Ciencias Sociales, Havana, 1955  
*Lam*, Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas, 1955  
*Wifredo Lam*, Instituto Venezolano-Francés, Caracas, 1955  
*Wifredo Lam*, Colibri Gallery, Malmö (Sweden), 1955  
*Wifredo Lam, oleos 37-39, obras recientes 56-57, gouaches, pasteles, dibujos, litografías, grabados, collages*, Centro de Bellas Artes, Maracaibo (Venezuela), 1957  
*Exposition de dessins de Wifredo Lam*, Galerie Cahiers d'Art, Paris, 1957  
*Some Recent Gifts*, group exhibition, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1959  
*Contemporary Drawings of Latin America*, OAS Headquarters, Washington, D.C., 1959  
*Documenta II*, Kassel (Germany), 1959; *Documenta III*, Kassel (Germany), 1964  
*The United States Collects Pan-American Art*, the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, 1959  
Solo exhibitions, Galleria Pagani del Grattacielo, Milan, 1959, 1960  
*Wifredo Lam, pastelli e guaches 1953-60*, Galleria del Disegno, Milan, 1960  
*Pittura Contemporánea en Cuba*, Museu de Arte Moderna, São Paulo, 1960  
*Wifredo Lam*, University of Notre-Dame Art Gallery, Notre Dame (Indiana), 1961  
*Wifredo Lam*, Galleria dell'Obelisco, Rome, 1961  
*Wifredo Lam*, Galerie La Cour d'Ingres, Paris, 1961  
Solo exhibition, Galleria il Canale, Venice, 1961  
Solo exhibitions, Galerie La Cour d'Ingres, Paris, 1961, 1974–75, 1976  
*Wifredo Lam*, Galerie D. Benador, Geneva, 1962  
*Wifredo Lam, oleos, temperas y dibujos*, Galería de La Habana, Havana; Cienfuegos; Santiago de Cuba, 1962  
*Lam, dipinti, pastelli, acqueforti, presentation of the series Images*, Galleria L'Annunciata, Milan, 1962  
*Lam, Paintings from 1938 to 1962*, Albert Loeb Gallery, New York, 1962  
*Wifredo Lam: A Decade 1942-1952, Oils, Gouaches, Drawings, Graphics*, Pyramid Galleries, Washington, D.C., 1963  
*Wifredo Lam. Catalogue Suites, no. 3*, Galerie Jan Krugier, Geneva, 1963  
*Wifredo Lam, aguafuertes*, Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, Havana; Cienfuegos; Camagüey; Matanzas, 1963  
*Wifredo Lam, œuvres gravées : eaux-fortes et lithographies 1954-1963*, Galleria Pescetto-Arte Contemporanea, Albissola (Italy), 1963  
*Exposizione Latino-americana*, Palazzo Callicola, Sala Wifredo Lam, Spoleto (Italy), 1963  
*Aguafuertes de Lam*, Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas, 1964  
*Artistes latino-américains de Paris*, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, 1965  
*Lam, oleos y aguafuertes*, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, 1966

- Wifredo Lam*, Andersen Gallery, Malmö (Sweden), 1966
- Wifredo Lam Malerei, Vic Gentils Bildhauerei*, touring exhibition: Kunsthalle, Basel; Kestner-Gesellschaft, Hanover; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, 1966–1967
- Wifredo Lam Malerei, Vic Gentils Bildhauerei*, Kunsthalle, Basel, 1966–1967
- Dix Ans d'art vivant 1955-1965*, Fondation Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence (France), 1967
- Lumière et Mouvement*, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, 1967
- Salon de Mai, Paris, 1967; Salon de Mayo, Pabellón de Cuba, Havana; Museo Bacardí, Santiago (Cuba), 1967
- Expo' 67*, Cuban Pavilion/French Pavilion/United States Pavilion, Montreal, 1967
- Solo exhibitions, Galerie Albert Loeb, Paris, 1967, 1971, 1972, 1974, 1976, 1987
- Wifredo Lam Etchings*, Montreal School of Fine Arts, Montreal, 1967
- Totems et Tabous, Lam, Matta, Penalba*, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, 1968
- Wifredo Lam, Ælbilder, Zeichnungen, Druckgraphik*, Frankfurter Kunstkabinett Hanna Bekker Vom Rath, Frankfurt, 1969
- Lam on Paper*, Cisneros Gallery, New York, 1969
- Twentieth Century Art from the Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller Collection*, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1969
- Contemporary Art Dialogue Between the East and the West*, the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, 1970
- Wifredo Lam*, Gimpel Gallery, London; New York; Zurich, 1970–1971
- Lam, sculptures*, Galerie Tronche, Paris, 1972
- Surrealism*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Gothenburg; Sundsvall; Malmö, 1972
- Le Surréalisme 1922-1942*, touring exhibition: Haus der Kunst, Munich; Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, 1972
- Venice Biennale, Venice, 1972
- Lam*, Galerie de Zwarte Panter, Antwerp, 1974
- Wifredo Lam, Pleni Luna*, A. H. Grafik Gallery, Stockholm, 1974
- Kunst van de 20° Eeuw*, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, 1974
- Phases entre deux octobres: 1964-1974*, Museum of Ixelles, Brussels; Museum Van Elsene, Brussels, 1974
- Surrealist Masters*, the Surrealist Art Centre, London, 1974
- Lam, pastelli e opere grafiche di Wifredo Oscar de la Concepción Lam y Castilla*, Delta International Art Center, Rome, 1975
- Wifredo Lam ceramiche, acqueforti, lithografie*, Museo Della Ceramica, Albissola (Italy), 1975
- Wifredo Lam*, Galleria della Grafica Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, 1975
- Wifredo Lam, ceramiche, bronzi, serigrafie a gran Fuoco*, Studio Circolo d'Arte il Forno, Albissola (Italy), 1976
- Wifredo Lam*, Estudio Actual Centro de Arte Contemporáneo, Caracas, 1976
- Wifredo Lam: olis, aiguades i obra gravada*, Galería Joan Prats, Barcelona, 1976
- Maestros latinoamericanos*, Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico, 1976
- Paris-New York*, Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Pompidou, Paris, 1976
- Litografias 1973-1976, Libros, Wifredo Lam*, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, 1977
- Wifredo Lam*, Artek Gallery, Helsinki, 1977
- Wifredo Lam*, touring exhibition: Ordrupgaard, Charlottenlund (Denmark); Sonja Henie, Niels Onstad Foundation, Høvikkoden (Norway), 1978
- Wifredo Lam*, Museo de Arte Moderno, Bosque de Chapultepec, Mexico, 1978–1979
- Wifredo Lam, La Jungle*, Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Pompidou, Paris, 1979
- L'Aventure de Pierre Loeb, la Galerie Pierre, Paris 1924-1964*, touring exhibition: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris; Museum of Ixelles, Brussels, 1979
- Wifredo Lam*, Grand Palais, FIAC, Galerie Michel Delorme, Paris, 1981
- Paris 1937-Paris 1957*, Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Pompidou, Paris, 1981
- Les Fruits de l'exil, hommage à Lam*, Grand Palais, Paris, 1982
- In Memoriam Wifredo Lam*, Sala Thalia, Paramaribo (Suriname), 1982
- Wifredo Lam, 1902-1982*, touring exhibition: Museo Nacional de Arte Contemporáneo, Madrid; Museum of Ixelles, Brussels; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, 1982–1983
- La Rime et la Raison, les collections Mênil, Houston-New York*, Grand Palais, Paris, 1984
- "Primitivism" in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art. Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, touring exhibition: the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Detroit; Dallas, 1984
- In the Mind's Eye, Dada and Surrealism, Dada and Surrealism in Chicago Collections*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1984–1985
- Wifredo Lam 1925-1927, in homage to Wifredo Lam in Cuenca*, Junta de Comunidades de Castilla-La Manche, Cuenca (Spain), 1985
- Wifredo Lam 1902-1982*, Galeria Krzysztofory and Galeria Sztuki Latyno-amerykanskiej, Krakow, 1985
- Wifredo Lam, pintura y obra gráfica 1938-1976*, touring exhibition: 18th São Paulo Biennale, Cuban Pavilion (Wifredo Lam Room), São Paulo; Museo Nacional de Artes Plásticas, Montevideo; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires; Museo de Arte Moderno, Bogotá; Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas, 1985–1987
- Wifredo Lam*, Cuban Cultural Centre, Prague, 1986
- São Paulo Biennales, São Paulo, 1986, 1996
- Wifredo Lam, peintures*, Galerie Maeght Lelong, Paris, 1987
- Wifredo Lam*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje (Macedonia), 1987
- Tres obras maestras de Wifredo Lam*, Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico, 1987
- La Femme et le Surréalisme*, Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne, 1987
- Fifty Years of Collecting: An Anniversary Selection, Painting since World War II*, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1987
- Solo exhibitions, Galerie Lelong, Paris, 1988, 1990, 1991
- Wifredo Lam*, touring exhibition: Kunstsammlung Nordrhein Westfalen, Düsseldorf; Kunstverein, Hamburg, 1988–1989

- Wifredo Lam, œuvres de Cuba*, Maison de l'Amérique Latine, Paris, 1989
- Wifredo Lam. Aguafuertes y litografía*, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, 1989–1990
- Solo exhibitions, Galerie Lelong, New York, 1990, 1992, 1996
- Anxious Visions: Surrealist Art*, University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, 1990
- Gráfica de Wifredo Lam*, Istituto Italo-Latino-Americano, Rome, 1991
- Wifredo Lam desconocido*, Casa de Las Américas, Cuarta Bienal de La Habana, Havana, 1991
- Wifredo Lam*, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, 1991
- Wifredo Lam*, touring exhibition in China: Central Institute of Fine Arts, Beijing; Palace of Fine Arts, Shanghai; Institute of Fine Arts, Hangzhou; Institute of Fine Arts, Guangzhou; Art Center, Hong Kong, 1991–1992
- André Breton, La beauté convulsive*, touring group exhibition: Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Pompidou; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 1991
- Wifredo Lam, obras desde 1938 hasta 1975, de regreso al Caribe*, Arsenal de la Puntilla, San Juan (Puerto Rico), 1992
- Grabados de Wifredo Lam*, Teatro Nacional, Havana, 1992
- Wifredo Lam, obras sobre papel*, Centro Cultural Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, 1992–1993
- Wifredo Lam: A Retrospective of Works on Paper*, Americas Society, New York; *Wifredo Lam, obra sobre paper*, Fundació La Caixa, Barcelona, 1992–1993
- Wifredo Lam*, touring exhibition: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, 1992–1993
- Wifredo Lam ou l'Éloge du Métissage*, touring exhibition: Villa Médicis, Rome; Palazzo de La Permanente, Milan, 1992–1993
- Wifredo Lam and his Contemporaries 1938-1952*, the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, 1992–1993
- Crosscurrents of Modernism, Four Latin American Pioneers: Diego Rivera, Joaquín Torres-García, Wifredo Lam, Matta*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., 1992
- Wifredo Lam*, Grafik, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, 1993
- Wifredo Lam en la Colección Castillo*, Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Wifredo Lam, Havana, 1993
- Lateinamerika und der Surrealismus*, Bochum Museum, Bochum (Germany), 1993
- Wifredo Lam*, Musée du Dessin et de l'Estampe Originale de Gravelines, Gravelines (France), 1993–1994
- Wifredo Lam, œuvre gravé et lithographié*, Maison de l'Amérique Latine, Paris, 1994
- Wifredo Lam y la aventura del grabado*, Museo Provincial de Bellas Artes "Emiliano Guiñazu", Casa Fader, Mendoza (Argentina), 1994
- Wifredo Lam, Pasión y Magia sobre Papel*, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires; Santiago (Chile), 1995
- Wifredo Lam. La seducción del grabado*, Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Wifredo Lam, Havana, 1996
- Cuba siglo XX, modernidad y sincretismo*, touring group exhibition in Spain: Centro Atlantico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas de la Gran Canaria; Fundació La Caixa, Palma de Mallorca; Centre d'Art Santa Monica, Barcelona, 1996
- Surrealism: Two Private Eyes, The Nesuhi Ertegun and Daniel Filipacchi Collections*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1999
- Varian Fry et les candidats à l'exil, Marseille 1940-1941*, Mona Bismarck Foundation, Paris, 1999
- La Aventura de la creación, Obra sobre papel, 1938-1947*, Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, VII Bienal de La Habana, Havana, 2000
- Les surréalistes en exil et les débuts de l'école de New York*, Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Strasbourg, 2000
- Le surréalisme, une révolution 1922-1944. Hommage à Max Ernst*, Centro Saint-Benin, Aoste (Italy), 2000
- Surrealism, desire unbound*, Tate Modern, London; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2001
- Lam métis*, Musée Dapper, Paris, 2001–2002
- Wifredo Lam, Wifredo Lam. Imágenes desde el grabado*, Centro de Arte Contemporáneo, Havana, 2001–2002
- Wifredo Lam, Testaments intimes*, Agora, Conseil Régional de La Martinique, Fort-de-France (Martinique), 2002
- La Révolution surréaliste*, Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Pompidou, 2002
- Wifredo Lam: The Changing Image*, Centennial Exhibition, Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama (Japan), 2002–2003
- Wifredo Lam: un percoso Cuba – Italia*, Refettorio delle Stelline, Milan, 2002–2003
- Wifredo Lam, de lo circunscrito y lo eterno*, Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Wifredo Lam, Havana, 2002–2003
- Lam, la ceramica e i totem*, Museo Civico di Arte Contemporanea, Albissola Marina; Grafica, Galleria del Bostrico, Albissola Marina; Momenti di vita, Circolo degli Artisti, Albissola Marina (Italy), 2002–2003
- Wifredo Lam. Cartografía íntima*, touring exhibition of Spain: Madrid, La Coruña, Tenerife, Cuenca, Santillana del Mar, Salamanca, 2003–2004
- Wifredo Lam*, Casa de Andrés Laguna, Segovia (Spain), 2004
- Wifredo Lam*, Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Wifredo Lam, Havana, 2004
- Wifredo Lam, l'urgence poétique*, L'Archipel, Basse-Terre (Guadeloupe); Centre des Arts, Pointe-à-Pitre (Guadeloupe), 2004
- The Pierre and Maria-Gaetana Matisse Collection*, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2004–2005
- La dona, metamorfosi de la modernitat*, Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, 2004–2005
- Wifredo Lam, los años decisivos*, Centro Cultural del Convenio Andrés Bello, Bogota, 2005
- Lam et les poètes*, Musée Campredon, Maison René Char, L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue (France), 2005
- Wifredo Lam. Cartografía íntima*, Instituto Cervantes, Alcalá de Henares (Spain); Instituto Cervantes, Brussels, 2006
- Un viaje por la obra de Wifredo Lam*, Centro de Arte Martha Machado, Nueva Gerona (Cuba), 2006
- El último viaje del buque fantasma*, Museo Provincial, Cienfuegos (Cuba), 2006
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*Wifredo Lam in North America*, touring exhibition in the United States: Haggerty Museum of Art, Milwaukee; Miami Art Museum, Miami; Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach; St. Petersburg (FL), 2007–2008

*Cuba art et histoire de 1868 à nos jours*, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal, 2008–2009

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*Aimé Césaire, Lam, Picasso "Nous nous sommes trouvés"*, Grand Palais, Paris, 2011

*Les musées sont des mondes, J.M.G Le Clézio*, Musée de Louvre, Paris, 2011–2012

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*La Triennale 2012 "Intense proximité"*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2012

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*Wifredo Lam: Imagining New Worlds*, Boston College, Boston; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, 2015

*Wifredo Lam: O Espírito da Criação*, Museu Oscar Niemeyer, Curitiba (Brazil), 2015

*Wifredo Lam, retrospective*, Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2015

*Leiris & Co*, Centre Pompidou-Metz, Metz, 2015

*Wifredo Lam*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 2016

*The Ey Exhibition: Wifredo Lam*, Tate Modern, London, 2016

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