

**Miguel Luciano**  
Curated by Juan Sánchez

December 7 - January 27, 2007  
(Opening Thursday, December 7, 6-8pm)

“Luciano critically reconstructs, subverts and establishes new hierarchies, meanings and allegories that redefine the Puerto Rican paradigm.”

– Juan Sánchez

Miguel Luciano’s work addresses the playful and painful exchanges between Puerto Rico and the United States, questioning the efficacy of a colonial relationship that continues to exist today. In his first solo exhibition in New York, the artist reorganizes religious, popular and commercial iconographic imagery into fluctuating new hierarchies, as a means of re-examining the portrayal of Puerto Rican identity in popular culture from a site of resistance.

The over ten recently completed paintings and works on paper on view feature appropriated popular imagery ranging from cereal boxes and children’s books, to vintage consumer product and packaging labels, and contemporary Japanese manga illustrations. By reconfiguring these supposedly benign forms of cultural nostalgia in conceptually provocative ways, he exposes and subverts the messages of racism, demoralization, and alienation buried within their branding. He reinvents the images of our youth, and by telling alternative stories, he challenges the viewer to see them in a new context. In Luciano’s visually arresting compositions, familiar characters are locked into unfamiliar relationships. Tainos (the indigenous people of Puerto Rico) are transformed into cosmic travelers, a normally innocuous Ronald McDonald becomes a violent Conquistador, and generic manga characters, whose strength and superiority are usually referenced by the adoption of Aryan features, turn into superheroes emboldened with special plátano powers. These syncretic depictions are layered with subtle doses of irony that often blur the fine line between humor and rage.



Miguel Luciano, drawing from the *Manga-Mancha* series, 2006  
India ink on paper, 17” x 14”



Miguel Luciano, *Plátano Pride*, 2006  
Archival inkjet print, 36” x 26”

Recent works on view also include selections from the *Pure Plantainum* project, the artist’s ongoing commemoration of the plátano as both a stereotypical-yet-iconic Puerto Rican and Caribbean symbol. Envisioned as both a celebration and a lament, this series of sculptures and photographs features actual green plantains plated in pure platinum. By emphasizing the pristine exterior, Luciano alludes in part to the reckless pursuit of material pleasure, while subtly referencing the duality of outward vs. inward character, and the pre-eminence of pride over shame.

In an effort to expand critical consciousness regarding Puerto Rican identity, Luciano challenges the persistence of racial hierarchies and stereotypes as by-products of colonialism. He undermines these constructs by depicting the hybridized nature of contemporary belief systems and in doing so, expands the dialogue to include larger, transnational issues related to commodification of culture and colonial dependency.

(Cont.)

*Catalogue available.*

#### **ARTIST'S BIO:**

Miguel Luciano was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1972. He received his BFA from the New World School of the Arts, in Miami, FL and an MFA from the University of Florida at Gainesville, FL. His work has been exhibited internationally at The Ljubljana Biennial, Slovenia; The San Juan Triennial, Puerto Rico; and Zverev Center for Contemporary Art, Moscow, and nationally at The Newark Museum, NJ; Jersey City Museum, NJ; El Museo del Barrio, NY; Bronx Museum of Art, NY; Exit Art, NY; Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, Inc., NY and The Chelsea Art Museum, NY. Solo exhibitions include the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture in San Juan, Puerto Rico; Real Art Ways, Hartford, CT; and Galería Tinta Roja, Chicago, IL. Luciano has participated in the LMCC/Workspace 120 Broadway Artist Residency, the Bronx Museum of Art Artists in the Marketplace (AIM) program, and the Kitchen's Music Image Sound Text in Community (MISTIC) Residency. He has received a NYFA award for painting and two Artists and Communities Grants from the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation (MAAF). His work is featured in the permanent collections of El Museo del Barrio, NY and the Newark Museum, NJ.

#### **ABOUT CUE:**

CUE Art Foundation, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit arts organization, is dedicated to providing a comprehensive creative forum for contemporary art by supporting under-recognized artists via a multi-faceted mission spanning the realms of gallery exhibitions, public programming, professional development programs and arts-in-education.

CUE Art Foundation was established in June of 2002 with the aim of providing educational programs for young artists and aspiring art professionals in New York and from around the country. These programs draw on the unique community of artists, critics, and educators brought together by the Foundation's season of exhibitions, public lectures, workshops, and its studio residency program: all are designed to be of lasting practical benefit to aspiring and under-recognized artists. The entire CUE identity is characterized by artistic quality, independent judgment and the discovery of genuine talent, and provides long-term benefits both for creative individuals associated with CUE and the larger art marketplace. Located in New York's Chelsea gallery district, CUE's 4,500 square feet of gallery, studio and office space serves as the nexus for educational programs and exhibitions conducted by CUE.

CUE Art Foundation's operations and programs are made possible with the generous support of foundations, corporations, government agencies, individuals and its membership. Support for exhibitions is provided by Accademia Charitable Foundation, Ltd., The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The Greenwall Foundation, Holland & Knight Charitable Foundation, Inc., Viking Foundation, and with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York State Council on the Arts, a State Agency.

For additional information, please contact Kara Smith, Programs Assistant, CUE Art Foundation, 212-206-3583, or email [kara.smith@cueartfoundation.org](mailto:kara.smith@cueartfoundation.org). Gallery hours: Tues.-Sat., 10am-6pm.