

UPDATED RELEASE

January 24, 2019

Media Contacts:

Hayley Barton, 202.387.2151 x235

hbarton@phillipscollection.org

Third Eye

Tyler Mahowald, 212.355.9099 x311

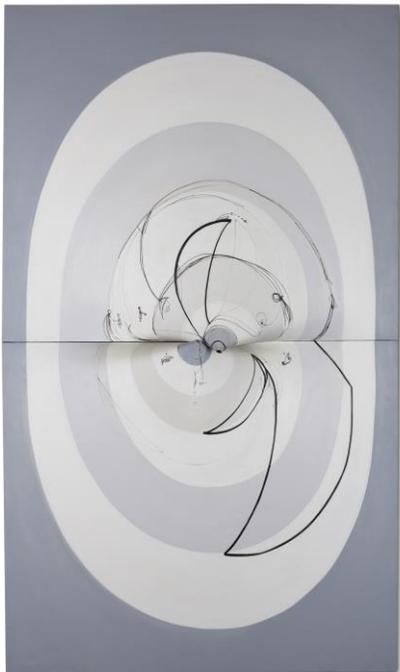
tyler@hellothirdeye.com

Online Press Room:

www.phillipscollection.org/press

THE PHILLIPS PRESENTS ZILIA SÁNCHEZ: SOY ISLA (I AM AN ISLAND)

First museum retrospective of Cuban artist Zilia Sánchez



WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Phillips Collection is delighted to present *Zilia Sánchez: Soy Isla (I Am an Island)*, the first museum retrospective of the prolific, innovative, and yet largely unknown Cuban artist Zilia Sánchez (b. 1926, Havana). The exhibition features over 60 works from the early 1950s to the present, including paintings, works on paper, shaped canvases, sculptural pieces, graphic illustrations, and ephemera. *Zilia Sánchez: Soy Isla (I Am an Island)* will be on view February 16–May 19, 2019, and will be accompanied by a major publication and newly commissioned artist’s documentary about her life and work.

The retrospective traces Sánchez’s artistic journey from her early days in Cuba to her extended travels in Europe in the 1950s and residence in New York in the 1960s, and finally her move to Puerto Rico, where she has lived and worked since the early 1970s.

“We hope that this exhibition will not only share the dynamic work of Zilia Sánchez, but also open a space for new research and scholarship in the years ahead. It will present a unique

opportunity for our audiences to experience an amazingly rich and deep body of work by an underrepresented Latina artist,” said **Dorothy Kosinski, Vradenburg Director and CEO of The Phillips Collection**. “In launching the first museum retrospective of this extraordinary artist, the Phillips is true to its tradition of ‘firsts’ in the field of modern art, which began when it opened to the public in 1921 as the first museum of modern art in the United States.”

Throughout Sánchez’s career, abstraction has prevailed and her subjects have largely remained the same: the female body and its surrounding space. With its classical elegance, sensuality, and poetic narratives, her work resists traditional categorization.

Sánchez frequently references narratives and protagonists from ancient mythology (such as Trojans, Amazonians, and Antigone—all warriors and female heroines), and her geometric works are rich with metaphorical meaning. The exhibition title, *Soy Isla*, alludes to Sánchez's experience as an islander at once connected and disconnected from the mainland/mainstream, physically and intellectually.

"*Soy Isla* refers to an island—either Cuba, where Zilia was born, grew up, and began her artistic career, or Puerto Rico, where she has long resided and worked, or both—surrounded by the vastness of the sea and the boundless horizon, yet never in complete isolation. It also refers to her own desire for solitary practice, forming an 'island' of her own within major art currents," said **Dr. Vesela Sretenović, Phillips Senior Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art**, who organized the exhibition.

In addition, the exhibition is complemented by a short, newly commissioned video produced by VideoArt Productions, Inc. Shot in San Juan, this non-linear, poetic documentary aims to capture Sánchez in places where she has lived and worked, including her studio, which is now being rebuilt after the devastation of Hurricane Maria.

For most of Sánchez's 70-year career, her art has been underrepresented in the United States. Recently her works have gained increased attention in the US, starting with solo exhibitions at Artists Space (2013) and Galerie Lelong (2014) and group shows at El Museo del Barrio (2016) and White Columns (2014), all in New York. A number of arts institutions, including the Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton; and the Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami, have recently acquired her work and have loaned works to the Phillips for the exhibition. In 2015, the Phillips acquired *Maquinista, diptico (Machinist, Diptych)* (2008).

EXHIBITION CREDITS

The exhibition is organized by The Phillips Collection.

With lead exhibition support and a Curatorial Fellowship from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts



Generous funding is provided by the Diane & Bruce Halle Foundation.



Additional support is provided by the Ednah Root Foundation, the Marion F. Goldin Charitable Fund, the Lichtenberg Family Foundation, PHILLIPS, and the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, which receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts, and from the Frauke and Willem de Looper Charitable Fund.



PHILLIPS

The artist documentary on Zilia Sánchez is made possible by Beatriz Bolton and the Dosal Family Foundation.

In-kind support is provided by **FARROW & BALL**
CRAFTSMEN IN PAINT AND PAPER

IMAGE GALLERY

High-resolution press images for *Zilia Sánchez: Soy Isla (I Am an Island)* are available upon request. Please contact hbarton@phillipscollection.org or 202.387.2151 x235.

CATALOGUE

The exhibition will be accompanied by a major publication, with a lead essay and interview with the artist by Dr. Sretenović and contributions from Dr. Ingrid Elliot, an independent scholar; Dr. Abigail McEwen, associate professor of Latin American art at the University of Maryland, Carla Acevedo-Yates, curator at Broad Art Museum, Michigan State University; and Mercedes Cortázar, Cuban poet and literary critic. The artist chronology is compiled by Alyson Cluck.

TRAVELING VENUES: Museo de Arte de Ponce, Puerto Rico, June 15–October 21, 2019, and El Museo del Barrio, November 20, 2019 – March 22, 2020

ABOUT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION

The Phillips Collection, America's first museum of Modern art, presents one of the world's most distinguished Impressionist and American Modern art collections. Including paintings by Renoir and Rothko, Bonnard and O'Keeffe, van Gogh, Diebenkorn, Daumier and Lawrence, among others, the museum continues to actively collect new acquisitions, many by contemporary artists such as Wolfgang Laib, Whitfield Lovell, Zilia Sánchez, and Leo Villareal. Its distinctive building combines extensive new galleries with the former home of its founder, Duncan Phillips. The Phillips's impact spreads nationally and internationally through its highly distinguished special exhibitions, programs, and events that catalyze dialogue surrounding the continuity between art of the past and the present. Among the Phillips's esteemed programs are its award-winning education programs for educators, students, and adults; well-established Phillips Music series; and sell-out Phillips after 5 events. The museum contributes to the art conversation on a global scale with events like Conversations with Artists and the International Forum. The Phillips Collection values its community partnerships with the University of Maryland—the museum's nexus for academic work, scholarly exchange, and interdisciplinary collaborations—and THEARC—the museum's new campus serving the Southeast DC community. The Phillips Collection is a private, non-government museum, supported primarily by donations.

IMAGE: Zilia Sánchez, *Soy Isla: Compréndelo y Retírate (I Am an Island: Understand and Retreat)*, 1990, Acrylic on stretched canvas, Collection of the Andreu-Pietri Family, San Juan, Puerto Rico

###