



Arroz con Mango: The Secret Lives of Three Writers is a collective exhibition of visual arts featuring three renowned Cuban-American writers: Ana Menéndez, Cristina García, and Virgil Suárez. The art show will take place at the Books&Books bookstore in Coral Gables, Miami.

These three celebrated writers have decided to reunite, come out of the closet, and show fragments of their secret lives in a different artistic setting, parallel to their writing. Thus, the public will be able to enjoy around twenty works, including paintings, collages, and sculptural objects. As an organic counterweight to the world of written language, they created a space dominated by visual grammar and conceptual flavor. It's not a new phenomenon, we must admit: writers tend to assemble images and texts, even though many don't want to expose themselves.

In general, we can draw some features in this exhibition:

The Dadaist lineage

A Kaleidoscopic and fragmented approach to reality

The presence of text and writing in the artworks plays a significant role.

Bonus: On opening day (September 5th at 7 pm), the event includes a short "kitchen talk" with the artists, so they'll answer all sorts of questions from the audience. All artworks will be available for sale, with proceeds being given to the bookstore as part of a charitable fundraiser. So every purchase directly supports the bookstore's mission, making it a fantastic way to contribute to the community's literary resources.

Arroz con Mango: The Secret Lives of Three Writers is curated by Elvia Rosa Castro, art critic, independent curator, and editor of the website El Señor Corchea.

 Location: Books & Books

265 Aragon Ave, Coral Gables, FL 33134

 Date: September 5th, 2025

 Hour: 7 pm

Arroz con Mango: *The Secret Lives of Three Writers* es un muestra colectiva de artes visuales integrada por tres reconocidos escritores cubano-americanos: Ana Menéndez, Cristina García y Virgil Suárez y que será exhibida en la librería Books&Books de Coral Gables, Miami

Estos tres cracks han decidido reunirse, salir del closet, y mostrar fragmentos de su vida secreta en otro escenario de las artes, paralela al ejercicio de la escritura. Así, el público podrá disfrutar de una veintena de obras que incluyen pinturas, collages, y objetos esculturales. La exposición posee cierto linaje dadaísta y la presencia textual en las obras ocupa un papel crucial. Como un contrapeso orgánico al mundo del lenguaje escrito se han creado también un espacio dominado por la gramática visual. No es un fenómeno inédito, debemos aceptar: los escritores tienden a ensamblar imágenes y textos, aunque muchos no quieran exponerse.

Bonus: El día del opening (September 5th a las 7pm), la jornada estará precedida por un conversatorio corto con los artistas donde responderán la batería de preguntas que el público desee realizar. Todas las obras de arte estarán a la venta, y lo recaudado se donará a la librería como parte de una campaña benéfica. De esta manera, cada compra apoya directamente la misión de la librería, lo que la convierte en una excelente manera de contribuir a los recursos literarios de la comunidad.

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Lugar: Books & Books

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## ARTISTS BIO AND STATEMENTS

Ana Menendez

Bio: Ana Menéndez has published five books of fiction, most recently *The Apartment*. She was a Fulbright Scholar in Egypt, and her awards include a Pushcart Prize for fiction and an ASNE first prize for commentary. In 2023, she exhibited her artwork at Books & Books. Lately she's become interested in botanical drawings, palm trees, and Islamic geometric and biomorphic art. She believes every writer should cultivate an "incompetent art", and she practices what she preaches.

Artist Statement: Like my books, my visual art varies from project to project. In that sense, my output is truly an arroz con mango of various techniques, styles, and content – guided by whatever text I'm

working on at the time. My early poetry journals were filled with sketches. In the late 90s, I supplemented my writing with photography from conflict zones. My second book considers the generative power of image (and includes an original charcoal drawing). For my latest book, I produced a series of portraits. My only theme is experimentation: So apologies for the mejunge presented here!

### Cristina García

Bio: Cristina García was born in Havana in 1958 and grew up in New York City. She's the author of eight novels—from *Dreaming in Cuban* to *Vanishing Maps*—as well as anthologies, books for young readers, and poetry. Her work has been nominated for a National Book Award and translated into fifteen languages. A recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Whiting Writers' Award, and an NEA grant, García has taught at universities nationwide. She's also a working playwright with recent productions in Washington D.C. and Berkeley, CA.

Artist Statement: As a lifelong novelist, collaging makes so much literary sense to me. Juxtaposing improbable images that unleash evocative new narratives? What's not to love? It's what I admire most about poets; their capacity to think in imagistic, non-linear ways that result in magical, unexpected, often explosive beauty. They lead us places we couldn't have gone without them. That's what I hope to do with my collages—to invite you to venture into my small worlds of intrigue and story, worlds I hope will excite your curiosity.

### Virgil Suárez

Bio: Virgil Suárez was born in Havana, Cuba in 1962. At the age of twelve he arrived in the United States. He received an MFA from Louisiana State University in 1987. He is the author of eight collections of poetry, most recently *90 MILES: SELECTED AND NEW* and *THE PAINTED BUNTING'S LAST MOLT*, published by the University of Pittsburgh Press. His work has appeared in a multitude of magazines and journals internationally. He is the recipient of an NEA, a State of Florida Individual Artist Grant, and the Latino Literature Prize. He lives with his wife in Fucked Up Florida.

Artist Statement: Both my photographs and mixed media art try to capture the erasure of time. Both also concern themselves with decay, detritus, and the decomposition of man-made things. Both of these things also inform my poetry and writing. Nature wins each and every time. Humankind eventually will perish and the planet will recalibrate itself. Even in the face of some cataclysmic and or nuclear disaster the planet will survive and morph into something new. I am also concerned with the plight of the underdog, the inaudible voices that perish daily trying to survive. My attempt to preserve witness to the mundane and the daily grind of lives being worn down to nothing.