

# Jorge Camacho

## *Five Paintings at Dusk*

December 14, 2024 – January 25, 2025



François Ghebaly New York is proud to present *Five Paintings at Dusk*, an exhibition of work by the late Cuban Surrealist painter Jorge Camacho.

“Bewitching us, [Camacho] imparts in his work this unlimited range of muted tones displaying the splendor of what may be at dusk that which the aurora is to our morning.”

André Breton, *Brousse au-devant de Camacho*, 1964

“An artist is always, despite himself, the voice of a transcendent and exclusive fear; the voice of his landscape and his people...Here is Jorge Camacho’s insular challenge.”

Reinaldo Arenas, *El reto insular de Jorge Camacho*, 1984

Hailed by writer and critic Zoé Valdés as the “last of the great Latin American Surrealists,” Cuban painter Jorge Camacho (1934 - 2011) crafts hazy, vespertine scenes that bridge mythology and occultism, Symbolist literature, Afro-Cuban traditions, and incisive reflections on the nation’s political and spiritual lot in the second half of the 20th century. Born in Havana in 1934, Camacho relocated to Paris in 1957 on scholarship from the Cuban government. There, he met André Breton in 1961 and was welcomed into the fold of the Surrealists, becoming one of Breton’s final protégés and honing over subsequent years a visual and symbolic sensibility all his own.

Produced between 1969 and 1974, the works in *Five Paintings at Dusk* reflect a period just after Camacho’s final exhibitions with the Surrealists. These works come on the heels of his inclusion in the 1967 Sal6n de Mayo, organized by Carlos Franqui alongside Wifredo Lam, Alexander Calder, Joan Mir6, Pablo Picasso, and

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others. Envisioned as a utopian display of art and Communism hand-in-hand, the exhibition would for many come to represent exactly the opposite as tides under Castro turned increasingly toward the authoritarian. For Camacho, rapidly changing conditions for Cubans in and outside of the country would help foster a lifelong friendship and shared political consciousness between himself and exiled gay Cuban author and activist Reinaldo Arenas. Their anti-authoritarian ideals and stark reflections on exile would inevitably find home in Camacho's work in the years to come.

"Camacho's paintings are landscapes," writes historian Christine Frérot. "But they are landscapes set as a theater stage on which, through metaphors, magic or cabalistic acts unfold." His images—dusken arenas where ossuaries, organic machines, extractive forces, and totemic figures intertwine—offer arcane, often harrowing portrayals of violence and punishment that merge the realm of dreams with the grave realities faced by his generation of Cubans in exile.

Written just two years before Camacho's inclusion in the seminal 1986 Venice Biennale, Arenas declares "Camacho is to our abrupt (and perennial) circumstance—aggressive and ragged terror, a deadliness somewhere between dance and disaffectation, counterpoint to the barbaric and the sublime—what Goya was to the stupor of his times."

A writer, collector, translator of Rimbaud and Mallarmé, and self-taught artist influenced greatly by the works of Tamayo, Tanguy, di Chirico, Bacon, and many others, Jorge Camacho was born in 1934 in Havana, Cuba. He would move to Paris in 1957, living and working there through the rest of his life until 2011. Selected solo exhibitions include La Maison de l'Amérique Latine, Paris; Galerie Thessa Hérold, Paris; Galerie Raymond Cordier, Paris; Galerie Maya, Brussels; Galerie Joan Prats, Barcelona; Galerie Mathias Fels, Paris; and Galería Cubana, Havana. Selected group exhibitions include Centre Pompidou, Paris; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the 42nd Venice Biennale, Venice; Musée de l'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris; Musée Ingres, Montauban; Galerie Maeght, Paris; Galerie de Seine, Paris; and Galerie de l'Œil, Paris. His work is held in the collections of the Centre Pompidou, Musée de l'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Centre National des Arts Plastiques, and Musée d'Arts de Nantes, among others. In 2022, collaborative works between Camacho, Wifredo Lam, Ted Joans, Joyce Mansour and others were on view at the Tate Modern in London and the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art in New York as part of the traveling exhibition *Surrealism Beyond Borders*.