

François Ghebaly



The New York Times

[What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in January](#)

by Jillian Steinhauer, January 16, 2025

The Cuban artist and poet Jorge Camacho (1934-2011) had professional success during his lifetime, exhibiting in galleries, at the 1967 Salón de Mayo in Havana and at the 1986 Venice Biennale. However, his work hasn't been seen much in the United States. This exhibition, "Five Paintings at Dusk," offers a fascinating introduction.

Camacho was a late Surrealist who first encountered the movement as a teenager in postwar Cuba. He was studying law but gave it up to become a painter. In 1959, he got a scholarship from his country's new revolutionary government to go to Paris, where he met André Breton, Surrealism's ringleader. Breton took an interest in Camacho, who ended up staying in Paris until he died.

Camacho's art has some of the hallmarks of traditional Surrealism, namely biomorphic forms filling nebulous landscapes. But his compositions feel more classical, centered on vertical and horizontal axes that are marked by pillars and poles — albeit shot through with bones and body parts.

Suggestions of violence abound, not least in the spikes and fire, which are likely references to political repression in Cuba. The biggest work, "The Scissors" (1973), looks like it could be an abstracted medieval torture tableau; the others evoke occult rituals and societies.

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Perhaps what's most striking is Camacho's palette. As the "dusk" in the show's title suggests, the works, all made between 1969 and 1974, are suffused with glowing and fleshy pinks, muted and earthy greens: a soft counterpoint to the brutal imagery. The paintings are visions of a world in twilight, both literally and as a more existential knell.