

Audio Transcript for Sandra Ramos Interview

When I was a child, I loved going to my best friend Wendy's house. Her grandmother was a painter. The smell of oil, the bright colors on the canvases, and the subjects that emanated from her portraits and landscapes opened the door to a new, creative world. Unlike Wendy's household, I grew up in an environment that privileged empiricism over creativity since my parents were scientists, specifically chemists. Thanks to Grandma Gloria, I began studying at the Elementary School of Visual Arts in Havana when I was 12 years old, and from then on art became my primary language, my particular voice through which I express myself. I am, with my story, an entity of change in this shared world of ours. Later, I was lucky enough to study in San Alejandro and at the Institute of Arts in Havana, where I was part of a new generation of artists who, through engraving, painting, installation and performance, advocated for an open, alternative way of thinking, which allowed for freedom of expression in the 1990s Cuba during the "Special Period," a moment in history defined by economic embargos imposed on Cuba by western powers.

As a Cuban artist, my work explores memory and history through various media and popular characters such as the Pioneer Girl, Abela's "El Bobo", and Liborio. These references allow me to portray the political contradictions and social difficulties of life in Cuba. My vignettes are inspired by comics and political satire common in the visual culture of the Cold War period. Etching prints such as *Growing Miracles*, *Tornado*, and *Pandora's Box* satirically examine how political power and indoctrination are imposed through education, shaping and defining people's lives in totalitarian regimes. Art has been for me a way to expressing dissent, raise my voice, seek freedom through creativity, and analyze the complex relationship between Cuba and the United States.

