

Rigo Peripheries Vol. 2: Echoes Within

May 22 - June 22, 2025
47 Orchard Street
New York City



From left to right: Rigo, "Head No. 11," ca. 2019; "Head No. 1," 2017; "Head No. 13," ca. 2019. Images courtesy of the artist and Thomas Nickles Project.

New York – Thomas Nickles Project is pleased to present *Peripheries Vol. 2: Echoes Within*, the first New York solo exhibition by Havana-based artist Rigo (José Rigoberto Rodríguez Camacho), on view from May 22 through June 22, 2025. Featuring a selection of Rigo's emotionally charged portraits, the exhibition marks the second installment of the gallery's *Peripheries* series—an ongoing curatorial program that investigates the limits of contemporary Cuban art and centers practices working outside traditional frameworks.

Though academically trained, Rigo operates at the margins, resisting categorization through both technique and intention. His paintings, shaped by a raw and intuitive process, move away from the rationality and realism of his earlier figurative work to instead give form to the inner complexities of the human condition. *Echoes Within* brings this tension to the surface through a chorus of painted faces, at once distorted yet tender, intimate yet unsettling. Each work is a psychological fragment, capturing the contradictions, fragility, and multiplicity that define human life.

"I want each face to establish a reflective dialogue with the public," Rigo says, "so they can see themselves reflected through their own emotional subjectivity." His creative process is rooted in spontaneity and emotional immediacy, with some works revealing sharper expressions of grief while others emerge from looser, more gestural abstraction. He begins paintings without predetermined ideas, letting stains, lines,

and textures – applied with brushes, hands, and fingers – guide the work. His shift from figuration to abstraction in the early 2000s marked what he calls a “liberation of the imagination,” opening space for intuition, subconscious feeling, and spiritual depth to emerge through layered compositions. His faces become multidimensional portraits of inner life – many selves colliding on a single plane.

Several works in the exhibition are what Rigo calls “illuminated collagraphs.” To make them, he first constructs a printing plate by layering crumpled paper, fabric, wood, and other materials onto thick cardboard. This textured surface is then inked and run through a press, transferring its embossed impression onto a second sheet of cardboard. Rigo then reworks these resulting prints by hand, adding layers of acrylic paint and drawing to create high-relief portraits that further disrupt the boundaries between painting and printmaking.

Rigo’s materials are as diverse as the emotional registers his works evoke. On cardboard, he blends watercolor, India ink, pastel, oil, acrylic, and at times, directly pasting nontraditional materials onto the surface. These media combinations allow him to experiment with color, surface, and emotion in unexpected ways, evoking both the messiness and fleeting clarity of the human experience.

Although his inspirations include well-known artists like Van Gogh, Picasso, and Cuban painter Antonia Eiriz, Rigo’s most vital influence remains his lived experience. “Living in Cuba is already a challenge,” he reflects. For him, making art is both a spiritual practice and a form of survival. His portraits channel the insularity of the island into a broader worldview, one that reaches beyond borders to tap into something deeply human and universally felt.

Echoes Within proposes that art is not a fixed language, it’s a feeling. In a world often defined by exclusion and silence, Rigo’s portraits insist on the urgency of seeing – and of being seen. Continuing the *Peripheries* series’ mission to broaden how we understand Cuban art, this exhibition encourages us to recognize the emotions we carry, even when we can’t name them. In Rigo’s hands, painting becomes an echo chamber of the soul – each face a quiet revelation, a call to self-recognition.

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RIGO (JOSÉ RIGOBERTO RODRÍGUEZ CAMACHO) (b. 1969, Havana, Cuba) creates expressive portraits that explore the multiplicity and fragility of the human condition. Through expressive brushstrokes and color, he brings human emotion and the essence of being to the surface, fashioning from it the human form in ways often turbulent, but always honest. Focusing on the human form and the face as a recurring image, he paints obsessively, each one conjuring a different personality.

Working across painting, printmaking, and mixed media, his faces emerge through a raw, intuitive process that prioritizes emotion over representation. His compositions often layer bold gestures, distorted features, and unconventional materials to construct interior worlds on a single plane.

Rigo graduated from San Alejandro Fine Arts Academy, Havana, in 1987 after graduating from the Escuela Elemental de Artes Plásticas 20 de Octubre in 1984. Though rooted in academic tradition, his practice gradually shifted away from figuration toward a liberated, abstract language shaped by spontaneity and introspection.

Rigo frequently works on cardboard using combinations of acrylic, ink, watercolor, pastel, oil, and collage. He also experiments with collagraphy, producing richly textured impressions that he further reworks by hand. These hybrid techniques reflect his belief that process and material are inseparable from meaning—each mark a reflection of an evolving emotional state.

Rigo has exhibited in solo and group shows across Cuba, Mexico, El Salvador, Italy, Canada, and the United States. His work is held in private collections throughout Europe, Latin America, and North America. He currently lives and works in Havana, Cuba.