



Guangdong Museum of Art Presents First Major Museum Retrospective of Oswaldo Vigas in Asia

Oswaldo Vigas: Reality Is What I Imagine brings seven decades of the Venezuelan artist's practice to China, reconsidering modernism through a transpacific dialogue between Latin America and Asia

GUANGZHOU, CHINA — August 2026 — The Guangdong Museum of Art presents *Oswaldo Vigas: Reality Is What I Imagine*, the first major museum retrospective of the Venezuelan artist in Asia, on view August 15 through November 22, 2026. Spanning seven decades of Vigas's practice, the exhibition brings together a focused selection of paintings and works alongside rarely seen archival materials, offering a new perspective on an artist whose work challenged the boundaries between abstraction and figuration, modernity and ancestry, and European artistic traditions and the cultural histories of Latin America.

Co-organized with Kwai Fung Hin Art Gallery and supported by the Oswaldo Vigas Foundation, the exhibition is co-curated by Venezuelan curator Gabriela Rangel and

Chinese curator Jiang Jun. Their collaboration places Vagas within a broader reconsideration of modernism beyond a predominantly Eurocentric framework, bringing a Latin American artistic experience into dialogue with a Chinese perspective on the multiple and multidirectional histories of modern art.

Rather than positioning Vagas as a peripheral figure within an established history of Western modernism, the exhibition examines how he developed an autonomous visual language from the intersection of multiple cultural histories. His seven-decade career moved between Venezuela and Paris and across abstraction, figuration, Informalism, and neo-figuration, while remaining deeply connected to the ancestral imagery, myths, and material culture of Latin America.

For Rangel, this refusal to settle into a single artistic category is central to understanding Vagas's contribution to modernism. She describes his practice as an "amphibian modernity"—one that moves between different cultural and aesthetic ecosystems rather than choosing between them. Vagas, she argues, did not simply adopt European modernism; he transformed it through a sustained engagement with the histories, symbols, and cultural memory of Latin America.

"I have never been rigorously abstract, nor rigorously figurative. What I have always tried to be, is rigorously Oswaldo Vagas."

— Oswaldo Vagas

Born in Valencia, Venezuela, in 1923, Vagas initially studied medicine before dedicating himself fully to painting. From the 1940s onward, he developed a distinctive body of work rooted simultaneously in international modernism and the cultural heritage of Latin America. His early *Brujas* (Witches) emerged from his exploration of pre-Columbian imagery, including the Venus of Tacarigua and Venezuela's ancient petroglyphs, transforming ancestral forms into hybrid figures that occupy the space

between the human, animal, and mineral worlds. His visual language also drew on African art and the ancestral traditions of the Americas.

During his years in Paris, from 1952 to 1964, Vigas encountered the international exchanges surrounding postwar modernism, yet rather than adopting a single European model, he developed an increasingly independent language that moved between organic geometric abstraction, Informalism, and neo-figuration, while retaining a connection to the symbolic forms of his earlier work.

Curator Jiang Jun approaches Vigas's work from a perspective that questions the traditional, Western-centered account of modernism. He places Vigas within a broader, polycentric and multidirectional history of modern art, in which different cultural traditions are understood as active sites of modernity rather than secondary responses to European models. Vigas's work becomes a particularly revealing case: an artist who engaged with European modernism while transforming that encounter through his own cultural and historical experience.

"Vigas's art transformed cultural friction, identity crises, and cultural consciousness into a powerful creative force, achieving a localized reconstruction of modernism."

— Jiang Jun, co-curator

Jun places Vigas's work in dialogue with ancient Chinese and Indigenous American civilizations. Through this comparative approach, he offers a different reading of Vigas's trajectory, one in which Vigas's engagement with modernism is shaped by the complex cultural history of Latin America.

This encounter between Latin American and Chinese perspectives is central to the exhibition. *Reality Is What I Imagine* is not simply a retrospective of a Venezuelan artist presented in China; it asks how modernism might be understood when viewed through multiple cultural and geographic centers. In this context, Vigas's work offers

a lens through which to reconsider modernism not as a universal model, but as a practice shaped and transformed through different cultural histories.

The exhibition therefore becomes more than a retrospective of a Venezuelan artist in China. By bringing Vigos's work to the Guangdong Museum of Art, the exhibition asks how modernism might be reconsidered when its history is viewed through multiple geographic and cultural centers.

The exhibition unfolds across four periods of Vigos's career: his early engagement with ancestral figuration and the *Brujas* series; his transformative years in Paris; his return to Venezuela and development of a syncretic neo-figuration; and the increasingly liberated biomorphic language of his later decades. Together, these works reveal a practice characterized not by stylistic consistency, but by continual movement, reinvention, and return.

"I believe that the most transcendent aspect of contemporary art is its ability to open a path back to our origins."

— Oswaldo Vigos

The presentation at the Guangdong Museum of Art marks a significant new chapter in the international recognition of Oswaldo Vigos, bringing his seven-decade practice to Chinese audiences and placing his work within a broader conversation about the multiple histories and geographies of modern art.

CURATORS

Gabriela Rangel is Executive Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art Tucson (MOCA). From 2019 to 2021, she served as Artistic Director of MALBA, Buenos Aires, and from 2004 to 2019 was Director of Visual Arts and Chief Curator at Americas Society in New York. She has curated numerous exhibitions of modern and

contemporary art and has contributed to publications including *Art in America*, *Hyperallergic*, *Parkett*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, and *Art Nexus*.

Jiang Jun is an independent curator and art critic, curator-at-large of the Shenzhen Museum of Contemporary Art & Urban Planning, and Chairman of the Art and Economy Professional Committee of the Zhejiang Creative Design Association. He studied at the Kunstakademie Münster and received a doctorate in Art Studies from the China Academy of Art. He co-curated the Chinese National Pavilion at the 60th Venice International Art Biennale, as well as the 7th Guangzhou Triennial and the 2023 Chengdu Biennale.

ABOUT OSWALDO VIGAS

Oswaldo Vigas (1923–2014) was one of the most distinctive figures of Latin American modern art. Over a career spanning more than seven decades, he developed a singular visual language informed by European modernism, Indigenous and pre-Columbian imagery, Venezuelan cultural traditions, and an ongoing exploration of the relationship between abstraction and figuration. His work was exhibited internationally throughout his lifetime and remains the subject of continued scholarly and institutional research.

ABOUT THE OSWALDO VIGAS FOUNDATION

The Oswaldo Vigas Foundation is a nonprofit institution dedicated to preserving, researching, and promoting the legacy of Oswaldo Vigas. In 2022, the Foundation launched the artist's online catalogue raisonné, documenting more than seven decades of his artistic production. The Foundation also supports publications, exhibitions, archival research, and scholarly projects related to Vigas's life and work.

ABOUT KWAI FUNG HIN ART GALLERY

Established in Hong Kong in 1991, Kwai Fung Hin is a leading art gallery with locations in Hong Kong and Singapore that specializes in 20th century modern and contemporary art. Kwai Fung Hin's mission is built on long-term relationships with a focused roster of talented artists, each recognized for their devoted vision, global perspective, and deep respect for their cultural roots. Through a multi-platform program of gallery and museum exhibitions, publications, education and archival works, the gallery's research driven approach provides dedicated support for their creative development and the preservation of their artistic legacies.

QUOTES GABRIELA RANGEL:

"Oswaldo Vagas's idea of modern art was rooted on an amphibian principle: he straddled a bridge between water and land, the voyage to Europe and the grounding histories of America."

"For Vagas, modern art was a knotted thread that would eventually open a creative door rather than constructing a canon."

Editorially derived statement — not a direct quote:

1. Vagas forged a singular path through modern art, moving between European avant-garde practices and the cultural histories of the Americas without allowing either to define the limits of his work

Rangel, Gabriela. "Oswaldo Vagas and the Invention of the Amphibian Modern." In *Oswaldo Vagas: Reality Is What I Imagine*. Guangzhou: Guangdong Museum of Art, 2026. Exhibition catalogue.

QUOTES FROM JIANG JUN TEXT:

"His art transformed cultural friction, identity crises, and cultural consciousness into a powerful creative force, achieving a localized reconstruction of modernism."

"His distinctive semi-abstraction speaks to both South America's cultural diversity and a unique artistic paradigm operating between continuity and rupture."

"Throughout his career, Vigas never blindly conformed to the currents of European modernism; in Chakrabarty's words, he 'provincialized' it into a specific instrument rather than submitting to a 'universal ideology.'"

Jiang Jun. "The Tension between Continuity and Rupture: Vigas and the Localized Reconstruction of Modernism." En *Oswaldo Vigas: La realidad es lo que imagino*. Guangzhou: Museo de Arte de Guangdong, 2026. Catálogo de exposición.

EXHIBITION DETAILS

Oswaldo Vigas: Reality Is What I Imagine

August 15 – November 22, 2026

Guangdong Museum of Art (Bai'etan), Halls 7 & 8, 2/F

Guangzhou, China

Art Talk: From Latin America to China: The Many Faces of Modernity

August 16, 2026, 2:30–4:30 p.m.

Guangdong Museum of Art, Seminar Room, 5/F

With Gabriela Rangel, Jiang Jun, and Lorenzo Vigas, Chairman of the Oswaldo Vigas Foundation.

Organized by: Guangdong Museum of Art

Co-organized with: Kwai Fung Hin Art Gallery

Supported by: Oswaldo Vigas Foundation