



DETROIT
INSTITUTE
OF ARTS

THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS PRESENTS THE EXHIBITION
RUBEN AND ISABEL TOLEDO: LABOR OF LOVE,
ON VIEW DECEMBER 16, 2018 THROUGH JULY 7, 2019

Exhibition Includes New Works by the Toledos in Response to Iconic Works in the
Museum's Collection, and a Collaboration with Sew Great Detroit



Ruben and Isabel Toledo by Karl Lagerfeld

Detroit, Michigan, December 6, 2018—The Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) presents *Ruben and Isabel Toledo: Labor of Love*, a major exhibition of new works created by the artistic couple in response to works in the DIA's permanent collection. This three-part exhibition project includes a large-scale installation designed by the Toledos in response to iconic Diego Rivera cartoons from his *Detroit Industry Murals*; additional new works by the Toledos responding to works in the DIA's collection, located throughout the museum; and a collaboration with local nonprofit Sew Great Detroit, through which the Toledos worked with seamstresses from the organization to generate a collection of handmade limited-edition tote bags to complement the exhibition.

For *Labor of Love*, Ruben and Isabel Toledo produced an innovative range of new works that highlight their creative synergy, connect the past with the present, and will inspire the DIA's visitors to understand connections between fashion and art with the works in the DIA's collection—in new and unexpected ways.

Ruben & Isabel Toledo: Labor of Love will open at the DIA on December 16, 2018, and run

through July 7, 2019. The exhibition is organized by Laurie Ann Farrell, the DIA's Curator and Department Head for The James Pearson Duffy Department of Modern & Contemporary Art.

Isabel Toledo (Cuban-American, b. 1961) is a renowned fashion designer and artist whose oeuvre includes the dress that Michelle Obama wore to President Barack Obama's 2009 Inauguration. Ruben Toledo (Cuban-American, b. 1961) is an artist whose paintings and illustrations also have strong connections to fashion and style.

This exhibition marks the first time the artists have made works inspired by a major museum's collection. Working within the framework of the DIA's world-class, encyclopedic collection, the Toledos engaged with works by Francisco Goya, Alison Saar, Eva Hesse, Donald Judd, Robert Motherwell, and others from Central Africa and ancient Egypt. By mining the DIA's collection as inspiration for new sculptures, paintings, drawings, and installations, the Toledos, together with the DIA, present the Museum's collection in a new light.

Explains Farrell, "The cumulative experience of a large exhibition and the discovery of works across a variety of galleries will introduce visitors to the power and poetry of the Toledos' collaborative process while simultaneously offering new insights into works that span cultures and time."

Adds Salvador Salort-Pons, the DIA's Director, President, and CEO, "Isabel and Ruben's inspiring work in dialogue with our world class collection will infuse our building with 'a Cuban accent.' I am excited to see the energy of this dialogue, which together with our impactful interpretive models will help the museum fulfill its mission to 'help visitors find personal meaning in art, individually and with each other.' This exhibition is a good example of the ways that the DIA can resonate with a broad and diverse audience, and find new opportunities to engage people with art and fashion."

The museum's expansive holdings are displayed in 130 galleries spanning three floors of the 658,000-square-foot museum. Visitors will have the opportunity to discover original Toledo creations positioned alongside the works that inspired their conception within 10 different galleries ranging from ancient Egyptian through contemporary art, throughout the entire museum. A printed gallery guide will include a map of where the Toledo works are located within the galleries along with a short introductory text in both English and Spanish.

For example, in the Egyptian Galleries, Ruben and Isabel collaborated on a linen sculpture that invites viewers to consider the way ancient Egyptians took such great care of the dead, protecting the body with bandaging to prepare it for the afterlife. The Toledos' work, *Human Remains*, displays how linen records the shape of the wearer by molding to the body. The geometric patterns on their sculpture are inspired by the mummy on view in the center of the gallery.

Another example is *First Lady Silhouette*, created by Isabel, which holds court in an Early American period room. Viewers will delight in seeing fabric used to create Michelle Obama's lemongrass colored coat and dress adorning this new work's breastplate on a dress that is designed to mirror those worn in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The skirt of the dress also features Ruben's illustrations reimagining President Barack Obama and the Former First Lady on

their historic promenade to the White House in 2009.

In addition, the Toledos have designed an immersive experience set within a 10,000-square-foot temporary exhibition space. The gallery will present five original, rarely seen cartoons from Diego Rivera's *Detroit Industry Murals* in the DIA's collection alongside new works by the Toledos that explore Detroit's history of industry and modernization. While interpreting the epic Rivera murals, the Toledos creatively draw parallels to their worlds of fashion and art. Extrapolating on the past, present, and future in art, the artists project and distill the poetic and spiritual essence that they see as essential to all of the arts.

Ruben Toledo's *Color Code* paintings line the first gallery of the *Labor of Love* special exhibition, with four paintings of reclining women that recall Diego Rivera's monumental women known as the *Four Races* in the *Detroit Industry Murals*. Ruben's larger-than-life figures are artfully camouflaged through the patterned surface of their skin. The artist notes that his women have been weaponized as a commentary on our current political climate. His contemporary adaptations of Rivera's women offer insight into the various ways that Ruben's work bridges gaps between art and fashion.

The DIA and the Toledos partnered with the nonprofit Sew Great Detroit (SGD), a branch of Alternatives for Girls (AFG), as another component of the exhibition. The Sew Great Detroit seamstresses' interaction with the artists offered many insights into the realities of the fashion industry—a field in which many of the participants have strong interest. This year-long partnership has been documented and will be presented as part of the exhibition. This is an unprecedented partnership for both the Toledos and the DIA.

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About Ruben and Isabel Toledo

The Cuban-born Toledos met in high school in New Jersey and married in 1984. Andy Warhol was a guiding light for them; they met him as teenagers at a Fiorucci store. Traversing the fashion, illustration and the fine art world, Warhol taught them by example the value and cultural richness of a borderless artistic world. They have utilized this creative freedom and risk-taking approach in both of their individual works and their collaborative projects. This exhibition will further advance this fearless approach by allowing them to incorporate illustration, photographic research and social anthropology as well as film-making techniques to explore new ways of demonstrating the creative cross pollination they thrive on.

A muse to her husband's sculpture, painting and illustration, Isabel Toledo's sculptural designs are often influenced by her husband's creative sketches for her designs. Ruben's surreal view of life brings humor and unconventionality to his wife's industrial world. The Toledos' long history of collaboration includes creating original costumes and scenography for the Broadway musical *After Midnight* (2014) for which Isabel Toledo received a Tony nomination for costume design. Most recently, the couple reimagined *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker* for the Miami City Ballet and Music Center in Los Angeles in 2017. Their combined work over the past 30 years both inside and outside the art world has resulted in a highly personal visual language with a diverse and cohesive rhythm.

In 1985 Isabel Toledo presented her first fashion collection. She went from being a designer's designer with an underground cult-like following to being a global household name when Michelle Obama wore her lemongrass lace ensemble to President Barack Obama's inauguration ceremony in 2009. Isabel Toledo was presented with the third annual Couture Council Award for Artistry of Fashion from the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology in 2008.

Ruben is a painter, sculptor and fashion chronicler who creates incisive illustrations for top international magazines, journals and fashion retailers, including the *New Yorker*, *Vogue*, Louis Vuitton, Nordstrom, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Visionair* and *The New York Times*. His work has been shown at prestigious institutions including the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Arts, New York, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and the Pitti Palace in Florence.

Along with her husband, Ruben Toledo, Isabel was the recipient of the Cooper-Hewitt Design Award for their work in fashion in 2005, she was also the recipient of an Otis Critics' award by the Los Angeles-based Otis College of Art and Design. In 2010, the Toledos were awarded honorary doctoral degrees in fine arts by Otis College in Los Angeles, CA.

About Alternatives For Girls' Sew Great Detroit Program

Alternatives For Girls (AFG) is a Detroit-based 501(c)3 nonprofit serving homeless and high-risk girls and young women through safe shelter, street outreach, educational support, crisis intervention, and counseling.

AFG's Sew Great Detroit is a social enterprise program that provides sewing and employment training. Women in the program learn valuable skills, like machine sewing and hand finishing techniques, understanding characteristics of fabric, fabric cutting methods, and beginning design concepts. The women earn an hourly wage for their work, which is supported through contracted sewing projects.

More information about can be found at www.AlternativesForGirls.org

About The Detroit Institute of Arts

The Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA), one of the premier art museums in the United States, is home to more than 60,000 works that comprise a multicultural survey of human creativity from ancient times through the 21st century. From the first Van Gogh painting to enter a U.S. museum (*Self-Portrait*, 1887), to Diego Rivera's world-renowned *Detroit Industry Murals* (1932–33), the DIA's collection is known for its quality, range and depth. The DIA's mission is to create opportunities for all visitors to find personal meaning in art individually and with each other.

Sponsorship

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For more information, please visit: <https://www.dia.org>

Join the conversation on social media by using @diadetroit and #DIAeveryday, #LaborOfLoveDetroit, and #LaborDeAmorDetroit

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