

OCTAVIA

ART GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Enrique Alférez (1903 – 1999): *LOVERS*

February 17 – March 30, 2024

Opening Reception: Saturday, February 17, 6 – 8 pm

Octavia Art Gallery presents *LOVERS*, an exhibition of sculptures and drawings by Art Deco artist Enrique Alférez. The gallery is proud to represent the Estate of Enrique Alférez, and to host the first solo exhibition for the artist in the gallery. This retrospective has been assembled 25 years since the passing of the artist.

Artist Enrique Alférez was born in the state of Zacatecas, Mexico and lived nearly the entire 20th century. After service in the Mexican Revolution as a youth, he emigrated to Texas, studied sculpture at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and in 1929 first made his way to Louisiana. For almost 60 years, he worked in New Orleans, beginning in the 1930s. His lasting imprint is seen among Art Deco figurative sculptures, monuments, fountains, and architectural details in prominent locations from the Central Business District to the shore of Lake Pontchartrain and to New Orleans City Park.

Enrique Alférez's career has followed the historical development of sculpture in America in the 20th century. He has survived the critical preoccupation with sculptural abstraction and minimalism to see a renewed interest in the human figure in contemporary art.

Alférez's sculpture was most frequently based on the human form, primarily the female figure. He was a modernist who leaned on realism and drew extensively from classical sculpture, with careful attention to the revelation of character through physical features. He strove to better define the human figure and to capture emotion, individuality, and relationships between his subjects. Alférez also infused some of his figurative sculptures, bas-reliefs, and wood carvings with metaphor, allegory, and myth.

- Katie Bowler Young, author of *Enrique Alférez: Sculptor*

For *LOVERS*, Octavia presents a collection of Alférez's works, spanning seventy years, which are created out various materials, including bronze, terra-cotta, and wood, as well as drawings. The defining work in the exhibition, *Lovers*, depicts a man and woman embracing in a life size bronze sculpture with a rotating base. The larger-than-life *South Wind* is taken from Alférez's *Fountain of the Four Winds*, consisting of four kneeling figures, three female and one male, representing the four mythological winds. The *South Wind* holds a cloud over her shoulder, as though lifting it as a vessel toward the sky. Other notable bodies of work exhibited are Alférez's religious figures, pietá, and an altar piece. A collection of bronze Charros, which depict the traditional horsemen who participate in rodeo, or charrería, originating from Alférez's home state of Zacatecas. And lastly, several of Alférez's cast bronze and hand built terra-cotta female nudes will be exhibited. Art critic Roger Green remarked that the terra-cotta pieces had a "pitted surface texture" that he found "wonderfully suggestive and sensuous."

Alférez's work can be found in numerous private collections around the world, Chicago, Memphis, Baton Rouge and in New Orleans at the New Orleans Museum of Art, the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, the New Orleans Lakefront Airport, the Audubon Zoo, Poydras Street Corridor, and Charity Hospital, among others. The Helis Foundation Enrique Alférez Sculpture Garden, at City Park in the New Orleans Botanical Garden, is a fitting tribute to an artist who contributed substantially to the aesthetic environment. Also, within the park, Alférez's work can be seen on many of the iconic bridges and benches, Popp Fountain, and the gates of Tad Gormley Stadium.

The citizens of New Orleans take great pride in the unique treasury of public sculpture that Enrique Alférez has created within the city.