

*Cómo lo vemos a Usted
(y cómo nos ven)*



*How we see You
(and how you see us)*

**A Collaborative Photographic Portrait Project
In Havana, Cuba**

Jeffrey Cardenas / Yanela Piñeiro

Havana's acclaimed Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes has presented a major exhibition by Key West photographer Jeffrey Cardenas and Cuban Yanela Piñeiro. The collaborative project *Como lo vemos a Usted / How We See You*, is a photographic narrative that not only speaks to how two disparate photographers—a Cuban and an American—look at their subjects but also at how their subjects look back.

For many reasons—and to a great extent because of foreigners—Cuba has been subjected to isolation. The next decade will bring foreigners to Cuba in numbers greater than in any time before. In this moment before the certain rush of foreigners that will inundate Cuba there is an opportunity for clarity, a window into the humanities of two incongruent neighbors. It is a moment to observe who we are and how we relate to others around us—which is, of course, also the essence of photography.

In July 2014, the project was photographed in the portal of Fototeca de Cuba at Havana's Plaza Vieja. One photographer is a maturing American male, Jeffrey Cardenas, and the other photographer is a young Cuban female, Yanela Piñeiro Gutierrez. The general public—Cuban nationals only—were invited to a brief series of portraits in open-air studios with each photographer. The subjects in these portraits were whoever chose to be photographed, no one was encouraged and no one was turned away. Subjects were not told what to wear or how to pose. Diversity of character was the goal. Subjects were young, old, racially and socially varied. How did the image change when these two photographers, using identical but separate cameras set against neutral backdrops, make their portraits within moments of each other?

Over the course of three days some 600 subjects choose to pose. More than 10,500 RAW images were exposed. Each photographer selected the image they felt best represented the subject's persona. Those two images were then combined into a single, large-format diptych printed via dye sublimation on sheets of aluminum. Which persona did the subject show to which photographer?

The narrative of each image may be subtle or it may be distinct, but each image tells a story that is authentic.

Como lo vemos a Usted is a portfolio of 100 black-and-white images, both diptychs and individual portraits. This is a true collaborative project from two photographers with sincere passion for the arts. Jeffrey Cardenas at 58 years old brings years of experience in documentary photography for newspapers and magazines worldwide. He has been exhibited and he has photographed and written several books. In 1980, he was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting for a series of articles about the Mariel Boatlift. Yanela Piñeiro at just 15 years of age is a savant of Cuba's visual arts. She is the youngest member ever of Asociación Hermanos Saíz and her work has been extensively exhibited and awarded in Cuba. Both are classically trained photographers and the body of work that resulted in *Cómo lo vemos a Usted* is a testament to their collective skill and passion as artists.

The images are printed in three large-format sizes: They are diptychs in size 102cm x 76cm and 76cm x 61cm, and single portraits sized 61cm x 91cm. The printing process is unique. Printing on metal preserved the photos by infusing dyes directly into specially coated aluminum sheets. Some art critics compare the process to a form of sculpture. Because the image is infused into the surface and not on it, photographs take on an almost magical luminescence. The background of the image is pure white. The black and white photographic tones are both subtle and vibrant. The luminescence is breathtaking. Detail and resolution are unsurpassed. The dye-sublimation process produces archival quality. Because the project *Cómo lo vemos a Usted* is ultimately about self-reflection this photographic process fits perfectly with the concept.

The photography at Havana's Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes exhibited until February 2, 2015 before returning to the United States. A large-format photography book of the project is available at Amazon.com The entire collection of *Cómo lo vemos a Usted* can be viewed on the web gallery: www.JeffreyCardenas.com.

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