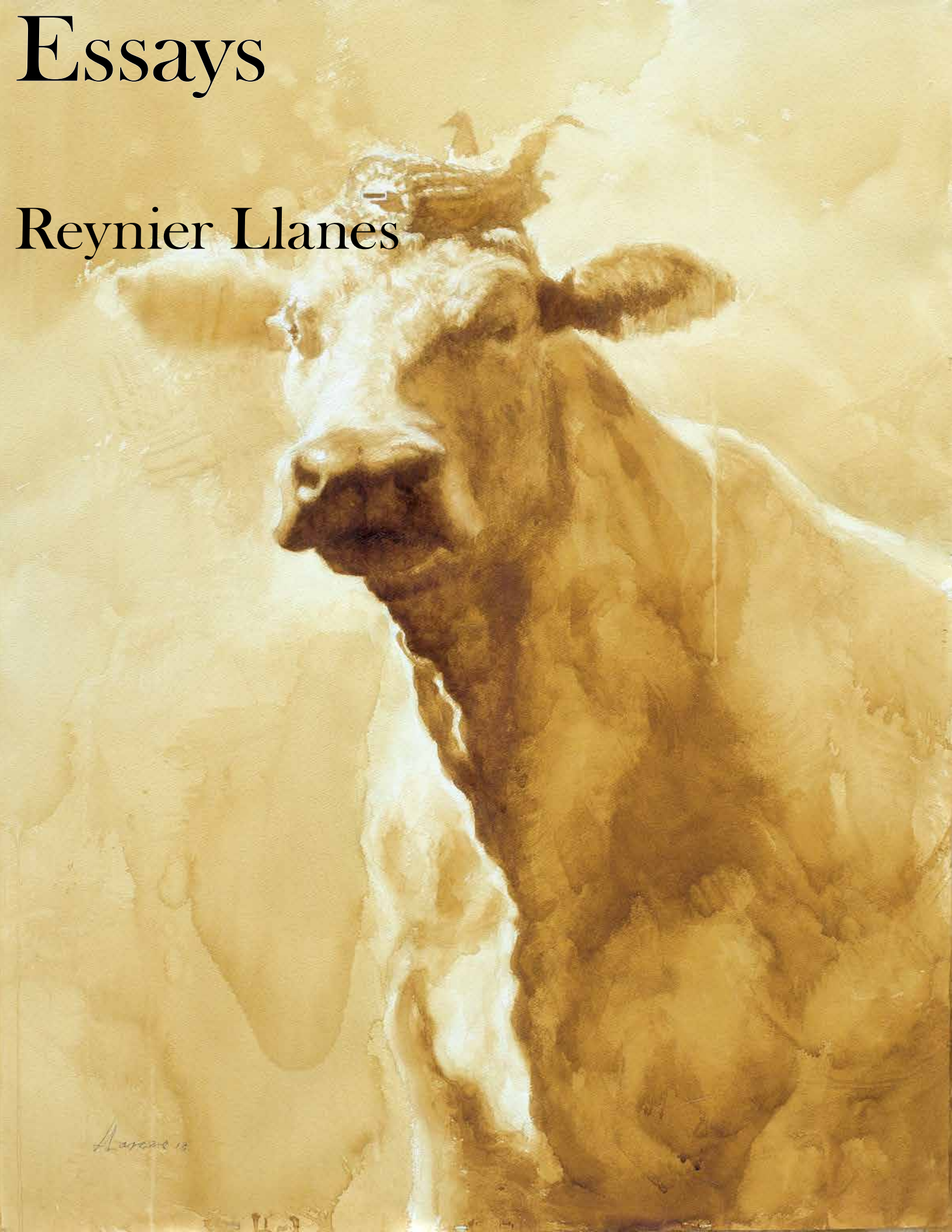


Essays

Reynier Llanes



A. Llanes 12

When There Are No Words Director's Address

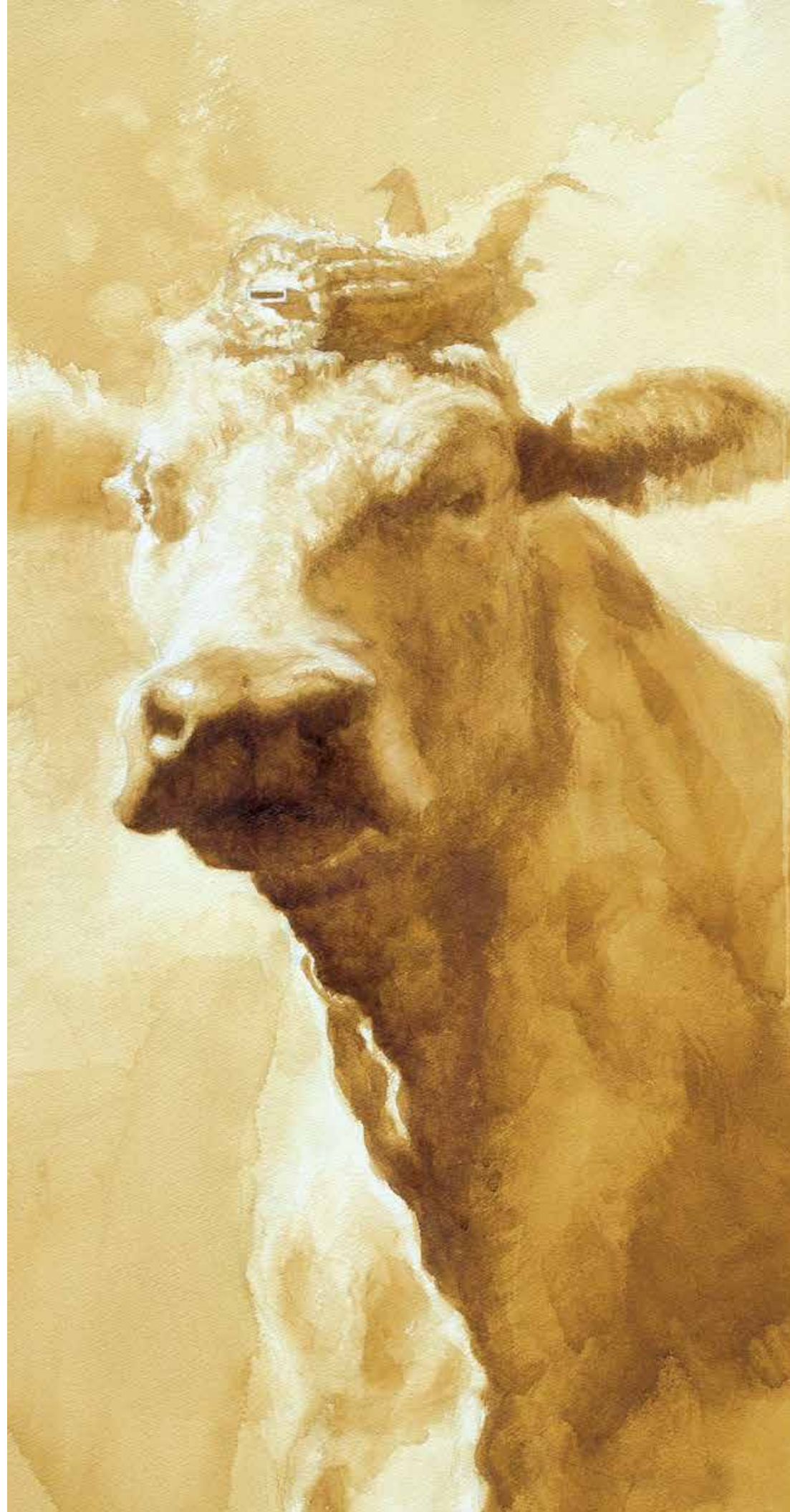
A native of Pinar del Rio, Cuba, Reynier Llanes cultivated his artistic talent from a young age, despite the difficulty of the time period within the country, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Llanes attended the Instructores del Arte, studying with nationally renowned artist Juan Miguel Suarez, and moved to Havana at the age of 20, where he continued his work, study and collaboration with other artists.

“I had the privilege of growing up and being educated in a culturally rich environment,” Llanes writes. “Cuban culture has learned to be creative in the wake of economic hardships, innovating and re-inventing itself with tools, objects and designs that influence life and all forms of artistic expression.”

The central use of Cuban coffee as medium is a distinguishing factor of Llanes' work. His initial conception of coffee-as-paint involved family within a home environment in Cuba when Llanes was a child. Llanes was enjoying the daily tradition of socializing over a cup of strong Cuban coffee, when it spilled on his paper. As it dried, Llanes noticed the characteristics of the substance and how it manipulated colors and images, similar to watercolor paint. Llanes' Bodega series involves expressionism as a style, coffee as a medium and ancestry and culture as foundational concepts. A Cuban bodega was historically the site of distribution of state-subsidized food rationing, and as such, the bodega became a central site of daily community interaction. Light and lines function as characters in these paintings, telling a story of Cuban history and exploring a key object within a still-life setting.

The Fables and Animals series continues the threads of oral tradition, cultural heritage or myth and fantasy that are woven into Llanes' works. In his artist statement, Llanes writes, “My Fables and Animals series garners inspiration from a series of fables and folklore as once told by my grandfather during my childhood days in Cuba.” Llanes creates a memorable character in Yolanda, a personified cow who appears in a variety of contexts and is able to travel through space and time. To Llanes, and thus to the viewer, Yolanda and the animals in the series symbolize imagination and hope.

Llanes' history with our Art Museum spans more than a decade and began when he was artist in residence at Jonathan Green Studios in Charleston. Green suggested an exhibition of Llanes' coffee



paintings at our location, and the 2011 event was such a success that we arranged a second exhibit in 2015 with Llanes and other Cuban artists from his private collection.

Throughout our relationship, Llanes has been a generous supporter of our Art Museum. He has donated a coffee painting to our permanent collection as well as donating works of art to all 10 of our Collectors' Events – an important fundraising event for the Art Museum.

Llanes has written, “Museums are among my favorite places to visit and study. They have the privileged duty of showing the history of our roots through the vehicle of art.”

The Art Museum is proud to be one of those places and to provide an outlet for this gifted artist's voice.

**Patricia Goodwin,
Executive Director**

