

**RAUL VEGA**  
Textures of Life

Cover: Raúl Vega, Over the Falls series, 2018, oil on canvas, 48 x 60 inches.

© 2019 Raúl Vega Studio

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Hawley, Pennsylvania.

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*To Bruce Helander*



When I transfer what I see into a canvas, it becomes, without fail,  
a magical distortion of reality.

Raúl Vega



## CONTENTS

Textures and Patterns Inspired by Nature / By Bruce Helander	8
Living with Two Paintings by Raúl Vega: Revealing the Essence / By Jaime Rojas Elgueta	10
In Conversation with Raúl Vega / By Raisa Clavijo	14
Monarch	23
Provincetown	31
Rock	45
Water	59
Black Forest	73
Blue Leaving the Canvas	81
Running Water	95
Over the Edge	107
Water from Above	121
Over the Falls	139
Exhibitions 2010 - 2019	150

## Textures and Patterns Inspired by Nature

By Bruce Helander

Raúl Vega specializes in textured canvasses, using a rich mixture of layered paints, which are often applied with brushes in combination with pallet knife creating a dramatic and very intriguing optical and dimensional effect. He has developed a unique technique that benefits the artist's creative vision. His work is evidence that his patience and artistic development from his days formally studying art at the College of Mayaguez, University of Puerto Rico, and Catholic University of Ponce, PR, and later, at the prestigious Pratt Institute, have remarkably paid off.

His artwork has been exhibited at the Paul Fisher Gallery in West Palm Beach, in a series of artists' surveys, "Art at the Whitney" in West Palm Beach, Bluestone Gallery in Milford, PA, ArtHouse429 and The Center of Creative Education in WPB. Vega's work was also included in the recent "Bling" Art That Shines exhibition at the Cornell Museum of Art in Delray Beach. Vega distinguishes himself stylistically through his aggressive textured surfaces, and purposeful abstract patterns created by nature and manipulated by man. His work has expanded throughout his career while retaining certain characteristic elements of his unique style of painting.

The artist's work is in private and institutional collections around the world. It has been acquired by the Coral Springs Museum of Art and the Schacknow Museum of Fine Arts.

*Bruce Helander is an art critic, arts writer, curator and artist whose specialty is collage and assemblage. He has a master's degree in painting from the prestigious Rhode Island School of Design, where he later became the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs of the college. He is a former White House fellow of the National Endowment for the Arts and has won the South Florida Cultural Consortium fellowship for professional achievement in the visual arts. He is one of two 2014 inductees to the Florida Artists Hall of Fame, Florida's most prestigious arts and culture honor. Helander is the former Editor-in-Chief of The Art Economist magazine.*

## Living with Two Paintings by Raúl Vega: Revealing the Essence

By Jaime Rojas Elgueta

The gradual awakening of spring in Hawley, Pennsylvania, turned out to be the ideal time to take a closer look at two paintings by Raúl Vega in the setting of the historic Victorian house that holds them. “Falling,” a series that features varied and intense greens, rewards the effort of making one’s way down the imposing and steep wooden staircase darkened by time. “Provincetown,” on the other hand, creates an atmosphere suitable for interpretation and reflection in the library, which opens on to the living room and is punctuated by a light-filled bow window.

The vegetation struggling to emerge and the full bloom of the floral richness typical of the late Victorian style were an extraordinary context in which to navigate between the two paintings. They lay in opposition, one displaying the variety and sinuosity of tropical greens and the other enveloped in the severity of the distinct colors and edges of winter, including alternating white, black, coffee and arctic blue.

It’s easy to take a quick look at these paintings and dismiss them as typical impressionist fare, but when you look at them again and again over time you begin to see more. While Impressionism is interested in capturing light in all its nuances and fixing a point

in time, Raúl Vega, on the contrary, transforms it into a means of studying the molecules and fragments of nature that inhabit his work.

More specifically, Impressionism focuses on the refraction of light to create a specific atmosphere and accentuate its changing effects on the components of the painting. Raúl Vega is interested in the impact of light on the pictorial subject; in his hands, light is a scalpel used to penetrate and rework the material. Indeed, Vega is incisive; he gets to the heart of each leafstalk, each molecule of water, each splinter derived from random tree barks in order to reveal its reason for being. This truth is evident both visually and tactilely and is powerful, making each detail approachable in its multiple variations of texture and color.

That shouldn't be a surprise, however, as Vega possesses a technical mastery more typical of the Renaissance than of today, skillfully combining painting with sculptural art. In fact, his paintings are carefully choreographed compositions consisting of distinct "sculptures" with their own identity that, in their totality, give his works pictorial specificity.

Time is also an important element in his work: Typically, there is a long, initial period of observing nature and noting its many characteristics, similarities and singularities. This may mean quiet, patient observation in different locations, some hot and others temperate, some flat and others mountainous, while he waits for it to express itself in its most basic and truthful ways. It is reminiscent of the Benedictine practice of “ora et labora”—praying and working, contemplating and acting. What results is a glimpse into the mystery of life, an understanding, for a moment, of the connection between us all.

*Jaime Rojas Elgueta, an Italian professional, was born in Chile and currently lives in Thessaloniki, Greece. He earned a Ph.D. at Sorbonne University (EHECS) in Paris and has been a diplomat, international consultant, book editor and art critic.*



7.16.11

Raul  
Vega

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## In Conversation with Raúl Vega

By Raisa Clavijo

***Raisa Clavijo - What is the idea behind your work? What inspires you?***

**Raúl Vega** - I was born in the southern city of Ponce, Puerto Rico. In my childhood, I was always surrounded by the vibrant colors and textures of the tropics. The constant movement of the ocean and the sugar cane fields, the mysterious interplay of sun and shadows, the perpetual motion of wind and palms would be part of the essential me and the major influences in the development of my art.

***R.C. - How do you translate concepts into forms? Tell me about your creative process.***

**R.V.** - I observe everything in great detail, and I always look for an 'enhanced' close-up and personal way to enter into the essence of what I am viewing. This unusual perspective allows me to play with the shapes, colors and textures I see and create my own reality by translating nature through my imagination.

***R.C. - In works before 2012, your paintings were still tied to figuration. How did you evolve to Abstract Expressionism?***

**R.V.** - After years of working with conceptual art, I reintroduced representational subjects to my work; and after proving to myself that I had control of my media, I found myself drawn more to texture and color than form. By experimenting, I developed my own technique of interlocking the colors with powerful brushstrokes to suggest light, movement and rhythm.

**R.C.** - *Which artists do you think have influenced your creative path?*

**R.V.** - During the time I attended Pratt Institute in New York, Pierre Soulages, Clyfford Still and Robert Motherwell were my favorites. I admired the freedom of expression in transferring their ideas to the canvas. Abstract Expressionism was a liberation from the tyranny of form.

**R.C.** - *Tell me what inspired the "Provincetown" series?*

**R.V.** - Walking along the beach in Provincetown, I was mesmerized by the power of life amid the eternal specter of decay and death, as viewed in the rotting wooden pilings of the long-decayed wharf standing stoically at low tide, covered by seaweed shimmering in the sunlight.

***R.C. - The abstraction in colors and textures of the sensations that nature transmits is a constant presence in your work since 2012. Tell me about this.***

**R.V.** - Over time, my paintings have evolved to become more abstract and less representational. In nature, the colors and textures always offer me a more real visual experience with no dimensional limitations. On the contrary, in my artwork, the representation of nature becomes a textural and colorful experience, that is to say a revealing distortion of reality.

***R.C. - What is the concept for "Water" series (2013)?***

**R.V.** The series "Water" was my attempt to capture the ephemeral quality of life's most essential component, H<sub>2</sub>O, seen through the lens of my unique style of continuous heavy brushstrokes in interlocking areas of color.

***R.C. - How was the series "Black Forest" (2014) born?***

**R.V.** - While hiking in the mountains of North Carolina, I encountered a group of decaying tree trunks surrounded by water. Studying the interlocking colors and textures of what was once a living green forest on its temporal return to mother earth, I felt an

inner epiphany for the sacred circle of life. When my good friend and mentor/artist Bruce Helander saw my paintings of distorted perspective close-ups of tree bark, he suggested to call the series "Black Forest." I added the element of shine with black reflective glitter powder, and the final result was magical.

***R.C. - In 2015 you created "Blue Leaving the Canvas," a series in which color seems to abandon the abstraction that you made of the landscape. Tell me about these works.***

**R.V.** - It was winter in New York City, where I was working in a very small studio. Blue was actually a blue Betta fish, a Siamese fighting fish, which shared the space with me for a couple of years in a glass bowl, full of green water plants. During the entire winter, Blue was my closest connection to the natural world. I contemplated the immense beauty of nature in the movements of his exquisite tail dancing in the water.

***R.C. - Last year you created the series "Water from Above." Tell me what inspired these paintings.***

**R.V.** - I found the color palette for the series walking in a local park in Massachusetts around a lake, on the surface of a dilapidated park bench. When I took a look down at the multiple layers

of blues, ochre, yellows and dark tones, I felt I was looking at water from above in abstract form.

***R.C. – Are you currently working on a new series?***

**R.V.** - Yes, currently I am working in a series of paintings inspired on my recent visit to Chile. Looking at the body of waters running down the Andes and the transparency of the glacier lakes, I really experienced the textures of life.

*Raisa Clavijo is the editor-in-chief of ARTPULSE and ARTDISTRICTS. She is an art historian, art critic and curator based in Miami. Former chief curator at Museo Arocena in Mexico (2002-2006), she founded Wynwood: The Art Magazine, in Miami, where she worked as editor from 2007 to 2009. She currently heads Artium Publishing.*



Raúl Vega's studio at Hawley , PA

For centuries, artists have had a special attraction to interpreting and documenting nature. In particular, landscape painting was a fascinating subject because of its rich earthy colors and engaging textures. Raúl Vega has immersed himself thoroughly in the creative process of abstracting flora and fauna into his recognizable signature works, which handsomely celebrate the inherent beauty of the environment.

*Bruce Helander, art critic, curator, editor and artist, West Palm Beach, FL.*

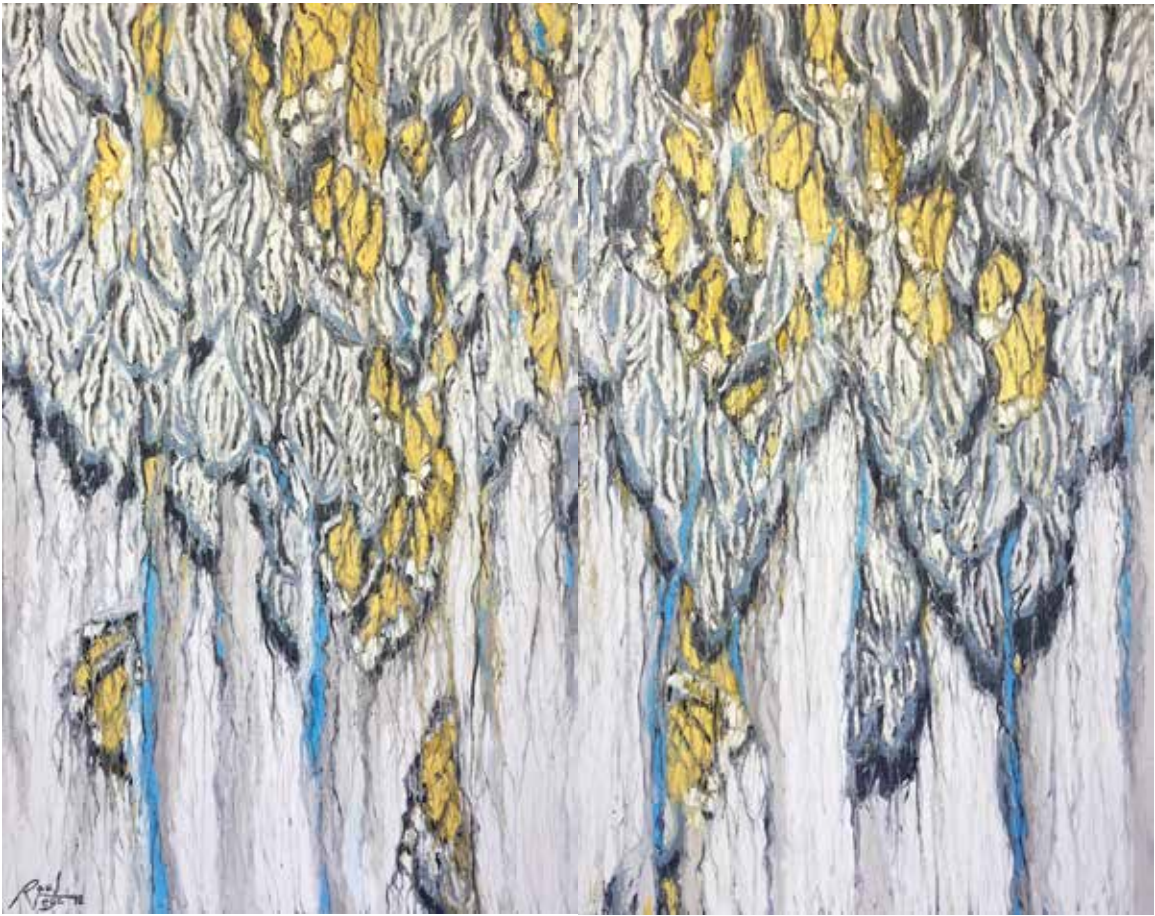
Raúl Vega's work transcends the physical surface of the canvas. The rich textures and colors of Raúl's seascapes are like entering a lenticular illusion where not only does the work come alive in three-dimensionality, but far into the fourth where you experience the aura and power of the waters.

*Rolando Chang Barrero, curator of The Box Gallery, West Palm Beach.*



# MONARCH

Monarch series  
2011, oil on canvas  
diptych, 60 x 76 inches



Monarch series  
2011, oil on canvas  
60 x 38 inches



Monarch series  
2011, oil on canvas  
60 x 38 inches





# PROVINCETOWN

Provincetown series  
2012, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Provincetown series  
2012, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Provincetown series  
2012, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Provincetown series  
2012, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Provincetown series  
2012, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Provincetown series  
2012, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches





**ROCK**

Rock series  
2013, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Rock series  
2013, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



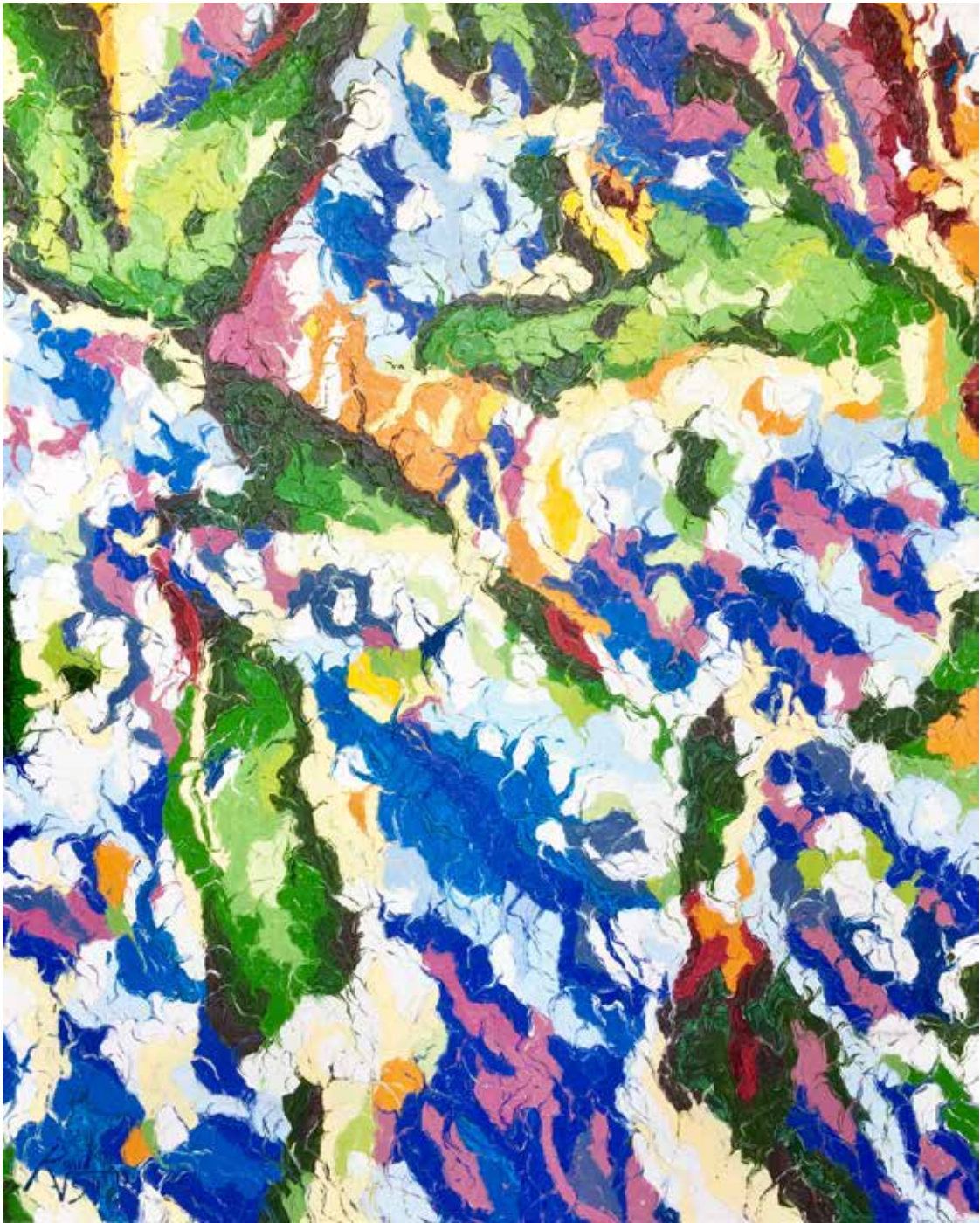
Rock series  
2013, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Rock series  
2013, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Rock series  
2013, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Rock series  
2013, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches





# WATER



Water series triptych  
2013, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches each



Water series  
2013, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Water series  
2013, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Water series  
2013, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Water series  
2013, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Water series  
2013, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches





# BLACK FOREST

Black Forest series  
2014, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Black Forest series  
2014, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Black Forest series  
2014, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches





# **BLUE LEAVING THE CANVAS**

Blue Leaving the Canvas series  
2015, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Blue Leaving the Canvas series  
2015, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Blue Leaving the Canvas series  
2015, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Blue Leaving the Canvas series  
2015, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Blue Leaving the Canvas series  
2015, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Blue Leaving the Canvas series  
2015, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches





# **RUNNING WATER**

Running Water series  
2016, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Running Water series  
2016, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Running Water series  
2016, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Running Water series  
2016, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Running Water series  
2016, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches





# OVER THE EDGE



Over the Edge series, triptych  
2016, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches each



Over the Edge series  
2016, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Over the Edge series  
2016, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



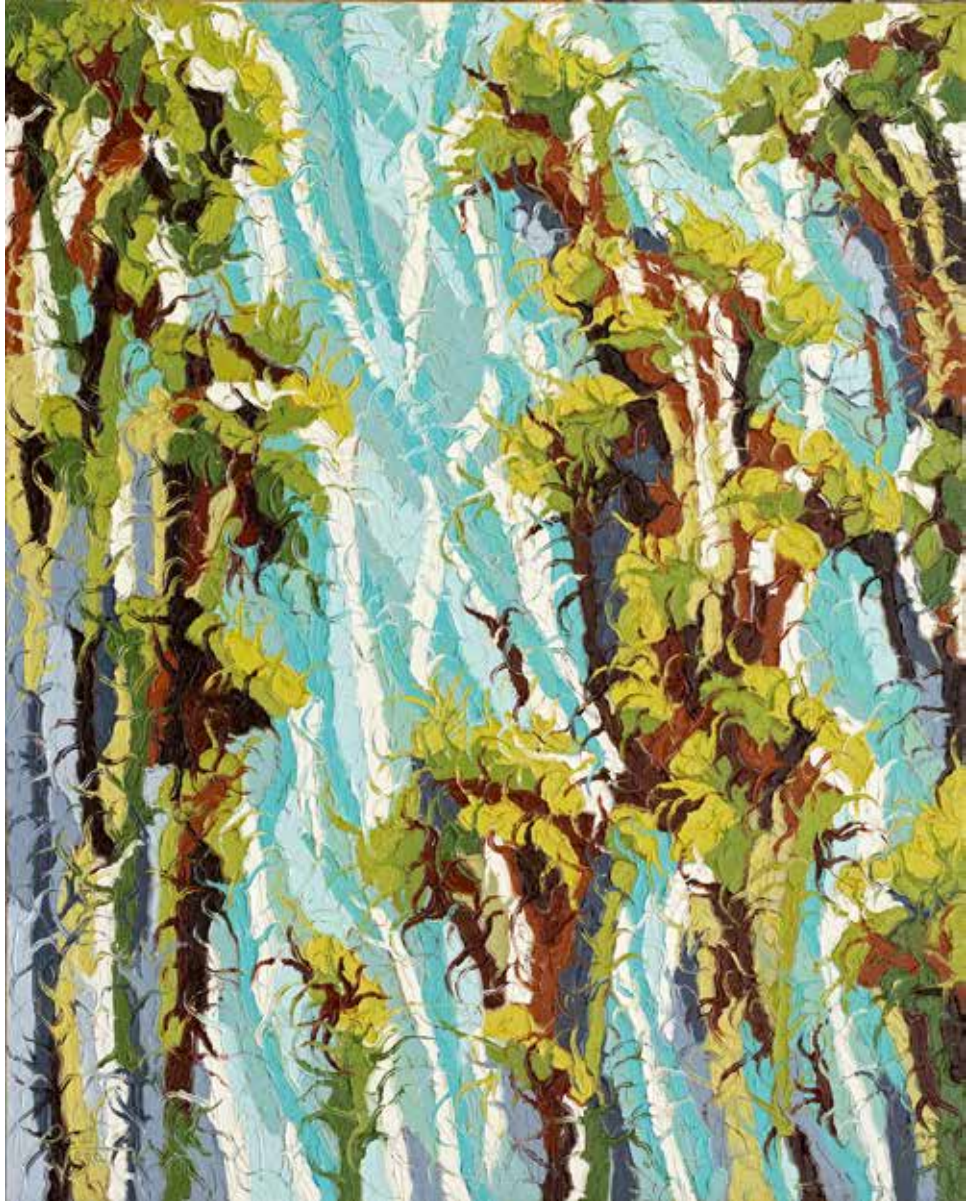
Over the Edge series  
2016, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Over the Edge series  
2016, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Over the Edge series  
2016, oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches





# **WATER FROM ABOVE**

Water from Above series  
2017, oil on canvas  
48 x 60 inches



Water from Above series  
2017, oil on canvas  
48 x 60 inches



Water from Above series  
2017, oil on canvas  
48 x 60 inches



Water from Above series  
2017, oil on canvas  
48 x 60 inches





Water from Above series, triptych  
2017, oil on canvas  
48 x 60 inches each



Water from Above series  
2017, oil on canvas  
48 x 60 inches



Water from Above series  
2017, oil on canvas  
48 x 60 inches



Water from Above series  
2017, oil on canvas  
48 x 60 inches





# OVER THE FALLS



Over the Falls series, polyptych  
2018, oil on canvas  
48 x 60 inches each



Over the Falls series  
2018, oil on canvas  
48 x 60 inches



Over the Falls series  
2018, oil on canvas  
48 x 60 inches



Over the Falls series  
2018, oil on canvas  
48 x 60 inches



Over the Falls series  
2018, oil on canvas  
48 x 60 inches





## **RAÚL VEGA**

1980-1981 Pratt Institute, New York, USA.

1978 – 1979 Catholic University of Ponce, Puerto Rico.

1975 – 1977 College of Mayaguez, University of Puerto Rico.

### **EXHIBITIONS 2010 - 2019**

#### **2019**

Art Palm Beach. ARTPULSE Projects, Booth 600. 650 Okeechobee Boulevard, West Palm Beach, FL. (January 16th – 20th, 2019).

#### **2018**

Raúl Vega: Water from Above. Steven Johnson Gallery Season Opening Studio. 1608 S Dixie Hwy, West Palm Beach, FL.

Raúl Vega: Water from Above. The Box Gallery. 811 B. Belvedere Rd, West Palm Beach, FL. (January 13th – 27th, 2018).

## **2017**

A Survey of Collected Works. Coral Springs Museum of Art. (June 22nd, 2017 - September 2nd, 2017).

Art Palm Beach. AB ART Gallery Miami Booth 109. 650 Okeechobee Boulevard, West Palm Beach, FL. (January 17th – 22nd, 2017).

Unleashed Art Fair. 1500 Elizabeth Avenue, West Palm Beach, FL. Warehouse District. (January 21st, 2017).

Art-Concept. Miami. (November 29th - Dec 4th, 2017).

Raúl Vega's work was displayed on ARTPULSE and ARTDIS-TRICTS magazines.

Raúl Vega was featured at the Private Key Gallery. 565 NW 27th Street, Miami, FL. Wynwood Art District, Miami.

## **2016**

Art Show at The Whitney Building. 410 Evernia Street, West Palm Beach, FL. May 25th, 2016.

## **2015**

"BLING" Art That Shines. 51. N Swinton Ave, Delray Beach, FL. (March 24th – July 5th, 2015).

Art Show. Center of Creative Education. 425 24th Street, West Palm Beach, FL. (March 26th, 2015).

## **2014**

Studio and Garden Tour. Raúl Vega Art Studio. 543 Hudson Street, Hawley, PA.

Raúl Vega 2014 Collection at the Hotel Ledges. 120 Falls Ave., Hawley, PA.

ArtHouse429. The Greatest Little Show on Earth. Center for Creative Education. 425 24th Street, West Palm Beach, FL. (January 28, 2014).

ArtHouse429. Live Demonstration. West Palm Beach, FL. (January 9th, 2014).

## **2013**

ArtHouse429. Season II Group Exhibition featuring gallery's artists. West Palm Beach, FL. (December 12th, 2013 – January 7th, 2014).

Raúl Vega was featured in Palm Beach Society Magazine. "Art Aficionados." March 8-14 issue, 2013, p. 32.

"ArtHouse429 recently celebrated the opening of its inaugural exhibition." Palm Beach Society Magazine. February 1-14 issue, 2013, p. 44.

ArtHouse429 Inaugural Group Show. West Palm Beach, FL. (January 17th, 2013).

ArtHouse429 exhibition at ArtPalmBeach. (January 24th – 28th, 2013).

Raúl Vega Collection at the Hotel Ledges. 120 Falls Ave., Hawley, PA.

## **2012**

Art at the Whitney. The Whitney Building, 410 Evernia Street. West Palm Beach, FL. (February 16th, 2012).

Blue Stone Gallery exhibition in Milford Pennsylvania. Curator Bruce Helander introduced and signed copies of his new best-selling book, Learning to See.

## **2011**

Raúl Vega's paintings were on display at The Whitney Building. 410 Evernia Street, West Palm Beach, FL. (January – February, 2011).

Raúl Vega "Art on the Edge" at the Hawley Silk Mill, PA. (July 2nd – September 5th, 2011).

## **2010**

Raúl Vega was featured in ART OF THE TIMES Magazine. West Palm Beach. Vol. 15, Spring 2010.

Raúl Vega: Recent Flora Paintings, curated by Bruce Helander. Art at the Whitney. The Whitney Building, 410 Evernia Street. West Palm Beach, FL. (January – February 2010).

Solo exhibition at Blue Stone Gallery, Milford Pennsylvania. (October 2010).

Solo exhibition at Paul Fisher Gallery, Palm Beach, FL.

