

WIDEWALLS

L.A. Louver to Chart Over Two Decades of Luis Bermudez's Sculptures

Exhibition Announcements



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"I come to my work, impelled to give tangible presence to the episodes in my life of peculiar intensity – the ones that announce their transcendence, and touch the common core of human experience," said Luis Bermudez (1953-2021) about his practice.

Exploring the interconnectedness between the nature of place, materiality, and identity, Bermudez was one of the leading figures on the LA scene who has influenced generations of creators through his engagement as an artist, curator, and educator.

Celebrating Bermudez's life and work, **L.A. Louver** in Venice, California, has prepared an overview exhibition of his sculptures titled *Sobre La Vida (About Life)*. The survey will feature his work made between 1986 and 2014.



Left: Luis Bermudez - El Caracol, C-6, 2013-2014, castable refractory with glazes, 24 x 14 x 14 in. (61 x 35.6 x 35.6 cm) / **Right:** Luis Bermudez - El Interno, 1-2, 1990, ceramic, 44 x 15 x 4 in. (111.8 x 38.1 x 10.2 cm)

Positive and Negative Elements

La Caja Series embodies the aesthetic and philosophical vocabulary of Luis Bermudez. Differing in textures and colours, the series comprises works with two complementary sides, poised close to each other, on the cusp of being joined together. Made of Bermudez's material of choice - a bespoke, **castable refractory** (a combination of cement and clay), they incite a potent sensorial experience through their scaled, gritty surfaces.

Combining 'negative' and 'positive' elements, the series evokes tension as a reflection on failed desires and strivings that remain unfulfilled. It also stands for metaphysical forces

that evade language; for positive and negative spaces that were a dominant thread through Bermudez's practice.

Vulnerable Offering and *Ultimate Offering* feature delicate, unglazed porcelain bowls atop winding reptilian bodies. Similar to **pre-Columbian iconography** and religious objects used in rituals, the works hold a **mystic aura** and become a venerated presence in themselves. To make them come alive but also preserve the mysticism, the artist intended these sculptures to be viewed from all sides, encouraging circumambulation around them.



Left: Luis Bermudez - Jumper, 1995-1997, ceramic (three elements), 27 x 24 x 8 in. (68.6 x 61 x 20.3 cm)
Right: Luis Bermudez - Vulnerable Offering, 2004, ceramic 30 1/2 x 9 x 9 in. (77.5 x 22.9 x 22.9 cm)

Challenging Perception

The Sacred Places and *Runes* series is presented through two pieces: *Othila (Separation)* (2013-2014) and *El Cenote, C-3* (2006). Taken together, they are metaphors for nonlinear time and narrative, drawing inspiration from non-Western philosophical traditions. Bermudez decided to hamper traditional interpretation and interaction by creating works that evoke **Mesoamerican heritage** but are also objects of transcendent contemplation, rendered both modern and ancient.

Finally, the fulfillment of Bermudez's interest in negative space, symbolism, environment, and experiential architecture is achieved in the immersive, large-scale installation *Sobre La Vida* (1993-1994).

Made of multiple facets, including four walls punctuated by ceramic portals and windows, a yoyo-like luna, a tree made from castable refractory and steel, and a human-scaled guardian figure whose silhouette is echoed in the structure's doorway, the piece challenges our subjective experiences of perception and interaction by offering **multiple perspectives**.



Luis Bermudez in Iceland in 2015. Photo by Karyn Craven. Courtesy of Luis Bermudez Estate

Luis Bermudez at L.A. Louver

The interstitial seam between **the subjective and the universal** that Bermudez explored throughout his oeuvre is demonstrated in the *La Cueva* and *La Cabeza* series. Mounted on the wall, the works feature faces existing at varying degrees of representation, from abstract forms in *La Cueva, C-5* to the forms of zoomorphic Pre-Columbian deities seen in *La Cabeza (Alter Ego)* and *La Cabeza (Seeking)*.

In *La Cabeza (Self Portrait)*, Bermudez's head emerges from a sharp-toothed creature. The artist decided to join the lineage of creators who give form to the fabric of reality, continuing his ancestral heritage and transforming it into contemporary masterpieces.

The exhibition *Luis Bermudez: Sobre La Vida* will be on view at L.A. Louver in Venice, CA, **from March 27th until May 2024.**

Featured image: Luis Bermudez - La Cabeza (Alter Ego VII), 2011-2012, castable refractory with glaze, 8 x 7 x 8 1/2 in. (20.3 x 17.8 x 21.6 cm)

<https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/la-louver-luis-bermudez>