The 8th Floor is pleased to announce our winter exhibition *Aguas Malas*¹, featuring new work by New York-based Cuban artist Leslie Sardinias. The exhibition explores the loneliness experienced by “balseros” (rafters) as they struggle to navigate the treacherous waters between their past (Cuba) and their future (Miami). Through his mixed media works, Sardinias creates an imagined world located within the 90-mile expanse between Cuba and the United States, where tragedy frequently takes place – much of it lost or forgotten. Within this abstract realm Sardinias evokes the hopelessness that can accompany striving for a dream and the agony of the journey towards it. Upon entering the exhibition, viewers are thrust into a voyage seen from the “balseros’” point of view, experiencing its uncertainty. The individual works map a celestial region, which elicits personal, cultural and political consequences.

Rather than recount the conflict between Cuba and the United States in 1994, which led to massive emigration from the island, *Aguas Malas* instead pays tribute to those who risk everything in pursuit of a better future. The exhibition is also a poetic tribute to the sea, simultaneously an archetype of hope and opportunity, as well as isolation and despair. From Odysseus’ travels and Hemingway’s time in Cuba, to the artist’s own family and their arrival to the island from Europe during World War II, the accumulated mythos of the sea provides fertile ground for the project’s theme.

Born in 1974, Leslie Sardinias graduated from the National School of Fine Arts in Havana (1994), and from Parsons The New School for Design in New York (2000) with a Master’s degree in Design and Animation. After living in Europe for several years, Sardinias returned to New York, where he continues his investigative work in painting, animation, and design. He has participated extensively in both solo and group exhibitions, among the most notable being the VII Florence Biennial in 2001,

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¹ The literal translation of “aguas malas” is “bad waters.” However, in Spanish, it is also the name for jellyfish. The title of the exhibition, “Aguas Malas” is a play on idea of troubled waters, and also refers to the colorful and attractive, yet highly poisonous animals.
where he received the Lorenzo de Medici Award. In 2012, Sardinias’ animated video *Watching You* was displayed on billboards in New York’s Times Square. His works are part of numerous important collections internationally, including the Spanish Royal Collection, the Alex Rosenberg Private Collection, and the collection of the Arte Viva Foundation. His work has been exhibited at the National Museum of Fine Arts in Havana, Cuba; the Angel Museum in Segovia, Spain; the Casa Lamm Collection in Mexico City, Mexico; and the Deposito Bagagli Musei Vaticani in Rome, Italy.

*Aguas Malas* is curated by Yandro Miralles and Anjuli Nanda.

The 8th Floor is a private exhibition space established in 2010 to promote cultural and philanthropic initiatives. The 8th Floor is free and open to the public. Schools groups are encouraged: viewing hours are Tuesday through Friday, 12–6pm.

For more information about the exhibition, or to request press images, please contact Anjuli Nanda, ananda@the8thfloor.org or (646) 738-3988