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On View | A Cuban Art Collective's Revelations in Reverse

By Erica Bellman



Since the early 1990s, the Cuban art collective [Los Carpinteros](#) has been creating elegant sculptures, drawings and installations that engage the public with a mix of wry humor and political resonance. For last year's Havana Biennial, the artists directed a film called "Conga Irreversible," in which 100 performers enacted a traditional Cuban *comparsa* — a ceremonial procession — down Havana's historic Paseo del Prado, entirely in reverse. Marco Castillo, one of the group's founders, compared the experience to directing an opera. "An original score was composed," he recalled. "All of the costumes were custom designed."

A video installation documenting the event is at the center of Los Carpinteros' new show "Irreversible," which opens on May 11 to coincide with the [Frieze Art Fair](#) and will remain at [Sean Kelly Gallery](#) through June 22. A group of trenchant new sculptures fills out the rest of the space. "Tomates" consists of more than 200 elements that resemble splattered ripe tomatoes — perhaps hurled by angry protestors. Three

architectural structures built entirely from plastic Legos allude to the artists' impulse to democratize monuments erected during the cold war. "We used Legos because they're very accessible — you can build them yourself," said Dagoberto Rodríguez, another member of the collective. There are also aluminum portraits cast in the stylized manner of revolutionary icons like Che Guevara that depict the artists' relatives, a means of giving voice to the greater Cuban populace. A desire to connect with viewers pervades the entire show. "The central interest and objective of the exhibition is to create a truly public art," Rodríguez said.

"Irreversible" is on view from May 11 through June 22 at Sean Kelly Gallery, 475 10th Avenue, New York; skny.com