

## Sergio Vega

There are artists who may not be household names but are well respected in the art world and whose artworks demand high prices. Sergio Vega has built up a reputation as one of the most interesting multi media artists currently working. Born in 1959 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, he is based in Gainesville, Florida. As Professor of Creative Photography at the University of Florida, he teaches both photography and his other specialty, sculpture. In 1996, he gained a Master of Fine Arts degree in sculpture at Yale University.

The artist has exhibited extensively around the world in solo and group exhibitions, including at various Biennales. A truly international artist, his work has been seen in Chicago, New York, Prague, Venezuela, Italy, South Korea, Holland, France and Japan. Through his own experience and academic achievements, he is giving something back to the art world with his teaching. His exhibition in Paris in 2006, Crocodillian Fantasies, was his debut solo presentation in a European gallery. Sergio Vega creates in the medium of photography, text, installations, scale models and painting.

The artist is very much concerned with the theme of colonialism and the imperial impact of European rule in his native South America. One of his major works was the result of collaboration with fellow artist Miguel Angel Rios in 2000. Titled The Discovery of the Amazon, the piece contained sculptures, a wall painting and drawings to tell the story of the first expedition on the Amazon River by a European, the Spanish explorer, Francisco de Orellana. This exploration in 1541 was documented by a priest who wrote of a battle with the Amazons, a tribe of fierce, female warriors. Legend has it that the river got its name from this encounter. The collaboration involving Sergio Vega is satirical and juxtaposes contemporary images with historical ones.

The artist's playful nature is also evident in his exhibition of paper airplanes, he technique he refers to as aerogami. These small paper models are representations of actual military aircraft and were shown alongside photographs of their real counterparts. Another project has been developed over a number of years and was based on a book, in which the author searched for the origins of the Garden of Eden. The author claimed that Eden was located in South America. Sergio Vega took up the challenge of finding a specific location and concluded that the biblical paradise was in Brazil. The artwork, titled El Paraiso en el Nuevo Mundo was the result of his studies.