



Bienvenidos. Tus mundos son nuestro mundo.

IN THE CULTURE OF ONE WORLD

MENU



ALFONSO OSSORIO | Chelsea's blue-chip gallery trumpets this Philippine-born Abstract Expressionist

 Randy Gener | [CultureOfOneWorld.org](https://cultureofoneworld.org)  September 9, 2016

 [Invested Premises](#), [The Museum World](#), [The Next Wave](#)  [Visual Arts](#)

“

“The human being is the link between God and the material world...

Even a little waste piece of plastic or a bone is just as much alive as

the abstract concept of

God, which is

meaningless unless it is incarnated. ...[O]ne of the

things I try to do is to infuse into the inanimate a

reference back to the whole hierarchy of human

experience beginning with the material, using

objects instead of just paint.” — Alfonso Ossorio,

1968 Oral history interview, Archives of American

Art, Smithsonian Institution



Alfonso Ossorio
Congregations, 1959-1969 | Courtesy
of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

NEW YORK CITY | You must get to know this exquisitely out-of-the-box painter. His name is Alfonso Ossorio. Let me tell you why.

Born in Manila, the Philippines, and educated in Catholic boarding schools before coming to the United States in 1930, Ossorio is remembered in today's art circles as a contemporary of Jackson Pollock and Jean Dubuffet. A collector, he was Pollock's close friend and most important patron. Interest in his life and vibrantly hallucinatory art has been climbing steadily ever since

In the late 1940s, Ossorio formed vital friendships with Jackson Pollock and Jean Dubuffet, who showed him the value of reaching inward for inspiration rather than starting with an object or world external to himself. In 1950, Ossorio traveled to Victorias, Negros, to work on a mural for the Church of Saint Joseph the Worker, which his family had built.

The trip signaled his first time in the Philippines since his childhood, and it opened old wounds from his youth, prompting him to produce a stunning set of wax-resist paintings collectively known as the Victorias Drawings and centered on themes of childhood, birth, sexuality, mythology, and religion.



Alfonso Ossorio (1916-1990) | Photo: GeringerArt

Celebrating Ossorio's centennial birthday, **Michael Rosenfeld Gallery** throws open its blue-chip doors to *Alfonso Ossorio* —*Congregations: The First Decade, 1959-1969*, an exhibition of twenty-four of the mixed-media assemblages coined by the artist as “congregations” that have become emblematic of Ossorio's vision and capacity for innovation.

This exhibition, running September 10 – October 29, 2016, is the first to be dedicated exclusively to his congregations in almost two decades. The last such show was curated by Klaus Kertess for the Parrish Art Museum (Southampton, NY) in 1997. That same year, **Michael Rosenfeld Gallery** presented its own *Alfonso Ossorio: The Shingle Figures, 1962-1963*.

The illustrated catalogue for *Alfonso Ossorio—Congregations: The First Decade, 1959-1969* will feature a full-text reprint of Forrest Selvig’s 1968 oral history interview with Ossorio for the Smithsonian Institution’s Archives of American Art. It was in this interview that Ossorio first publicly used the word “congregation” to refer to these assemblages.

The choice of a word replete with associations to religious practice is appropriate given Ossorio’s lifelong relationship with Catholicism, but the significance runs deeper than its connection to worship (in fact, in Catholicism, “congregation” is rarely used in that sense). “Congregation” evokes a collective as well as the *process* of coming together. Thus, in addition to highlighting the spiritual themes that run through Ossorio’s entire body of work, “congregation” also reveals something about his aesthetic practice—how he conceives of artistic form and how he goes about putting a work of art together.

Often within deep wooden frames, Ossorio’s congregations bring together such disparate found objects as glass eyes, shells, animal bones, shards, pearls, feathers, and driftwood—synthesizing beauty with decay, refinement with crudeness, and reanimating (or resurrecting) these dead objects as vivid art.

His congregations, like human ones, are both unified and atomized at the same time. As Kent Minturn has explained, in these assemblages: “Ossorio’s mode of presentation is ‘everything all at once.’ Paradoxically, however, it is impossible for the viewer to perceive them in one fell swoop, to see a work entirely in one single glance. Each time the viewer confronts a congregation and tries to unravel its meaning, the work tells a new story.”

Resisting immediate and complete apprehension, Ossorio’s work demands time and attention from its viewers. In return, the congregations enthrall and entrance, they pulse with energy, oscillating between the material and the transcendental, and providing a unique experience with every viewing.

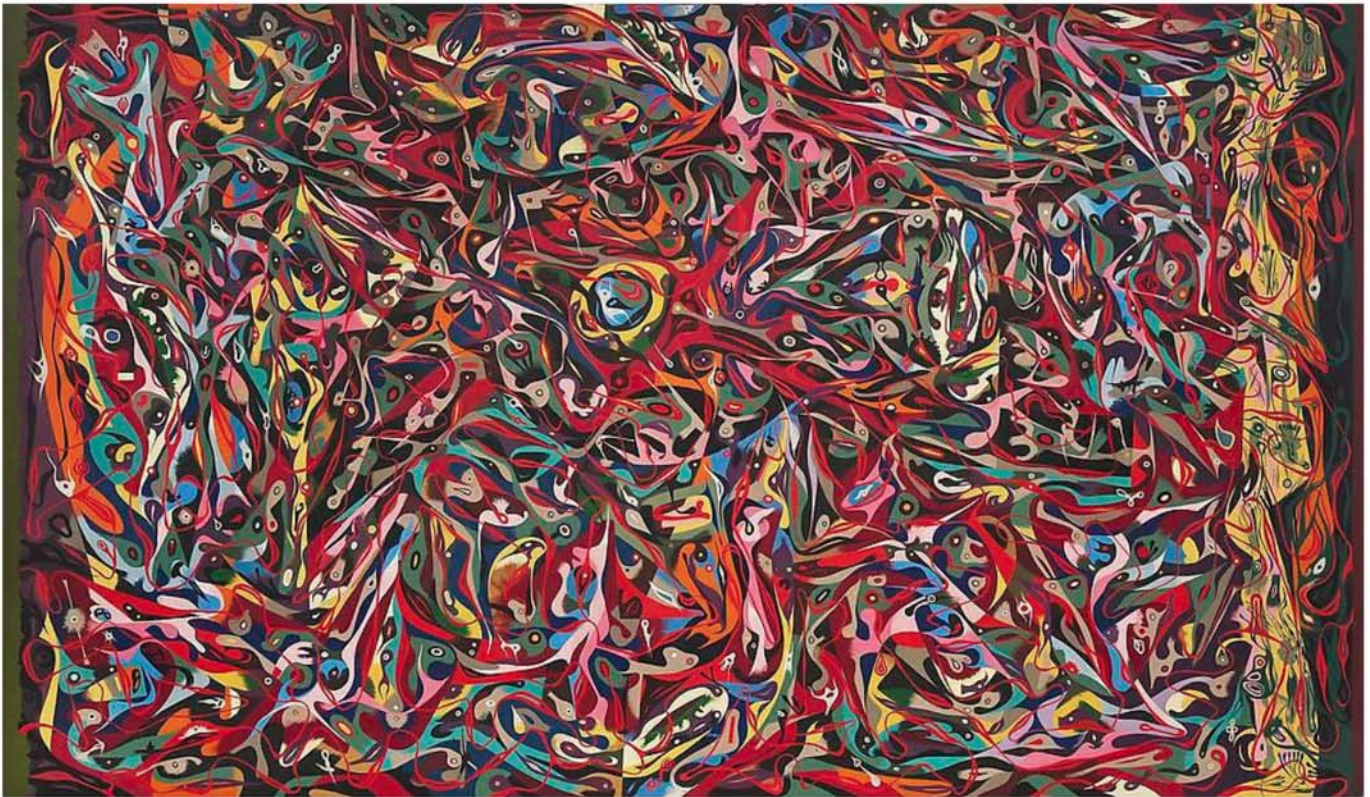
— *rg*

“

Michael Rosenfeld Gallery is located at 100 11th Avenue

(at 19th Street), New York, NY, 10011. Gallery

*hours are Tuesday–Saturday, 10AM–6PM. For
additional information, please contact Marjorie Van
Cura at 212.247.0082 or mv@michaelrosenfeldart.com.*



Alfonso Ossorio, "Beach Comber," 1953, oil on canvas, 84 3/8 x 144 3/8 in. | Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY.