

OCTAVIA

ART GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Figures & Forms: The Estates of Enrique Alférez and Fritz Bultman

March 7 – April 11, 2026

Opening Reception: Saturday, March 7, 6 – 8 pm

Octavia Art Gallery is proud to present *Figures & Forms: The Estates of Enrique Alférez and Fritz Bultman*. This landmark exhibition showcases the estates of two artists whose contributions have profoundly influenced both the local and national art scenes. Featuring several works never before publicly exhibited, this exhibition offers collectors and art enthusiasts a rare opportunity to engage with these historically significant works firsthand.

Enrique Alférez, born in Zacatecas, Mexico, immigrated to the United States after serving in the Mexican Revolution and settled in New Orleans in 1929. Over nearly 70 years, Alférez left an indelible mark on the city through Art Deco figurative sculptures, monuments, fountains, and architectural details spanning the Central Business District, Lake Pontchartrain, and City Park. A modernist grounded in realism and classical sculpture, Alférez devoted his career to the human form, primarily the female figure, capturing emotion, individuality, and relationships with meticulous attention to detail. His work often incorporates metaphor, and myth, bridging classical traditions with modern sensibilities.

“Alférez’s sculpture has survived the historical currents of abstraction and minimalism to find renewed appreciation in today’s art scene,” notes Katie Bowler Young, author of *Enrique Alférez: Sculptor*. “The citizens of New Orleans rightly take pride in the city’s treasury of public sculpture that he created.”

Fritz Bultman (1919–1985), born in New Orleans, was a pioneering American Abstract Expressionist painter, sculptor, and collagist, and a member of the New York School. At 16, he moved to Germany to join the Bauhaus, where he met Maria Hofmann, wife of Hans Hofmann, which led to his study under Hofmann in New York. Bultman distinguished himself with meticulously organized abstract compositions, sculpture, and innovative collage techniques, often painting his materials before assembling them. Drawing inspiration from psychotherapy, myth, eroticism, and sexual symbolism, he developed a deeply personal and expressive artistic language.

In 1950, Bultman and 27 other prominent artists signed a letter protesting the conservative selection of works for an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. These artists, known as “The Irascibles,” included Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Jackson Pollock, and Mark Rothko. However, Bultman was absent from the iconic photograph due to a sculpture study opportunity in Italy, earning him the nickname “The Missing Irascible.” This absence affected his recognition despite high praise from peers such as Robert Motherwell, who stated that of all the painters of his generation, Bultman was “the one [most] drastically and shockingly underrated.”

Alférez’s work can be found in numerous public collections such as the New Orleans Museum of Art, Ogden Museum of Southern Art, New Orleans Botanical Garden, New Orleans Lakefront Airport, Audubon Zoo, and the Helis Foundation Enrique Alférez Sculpture Garden at City Park.

Throughout Bultman’s career, he received several awards including Fulbright and Guggenheim Fellowships, and was a founding member of the Long Point Gallery in Provincetown, Massachusetts. His work is held in major collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, Museum of Modern Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Smithsonian American Art Museum, and 1 World Trade Center, among others.

Figures & Forms presents a rare opportunity to experience the breadth and depth of these two influential artists whose legacies continue to resonate in New Orleans and beyond.