

# Fine Illuminations: A visual essay on refinement, finesse, and global Cuba



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***Image by Juan Carlos Alom***

“Fino,” is a term frequently used by Cubans to evoke anything from refined, fine, educated, picky and glamorous, to elegant, delicate, gay, sexually repressed, and even whiter. Jacqueline Loss will consider how Cubans’ perception of this category reveals their racial, class, and gender anxieties, alluded to in the citation above. Building on diverse discussions on aesthetic judgment, Bourdieu’s *Distinction* and Sianne Ngai’s analysis of the zany, cute, and interesting for late capitalism, Loss seeks to theorize and historicize another category, “lo fino” (that which is fino), through which Cubans delineate their complex relationships toward capitalist and socialist consumption as well as contrasting modes of

comportment that have been affected by distinct ideologies and historical encounters. Wedding artistic practice to cultural studies scholarship, Loss seeks to not only trace the lineage and repercussions of this term for Cubans, but also to show how this aesthetic category is conditioned by place and circumstance. The resulting tapestry composed of interviewees’ words, archival research, and photographs by the internationally acclaimed Cuban photographer, Juan Carlos Alom, begins to tell a story about how a seemingly small, apparently aesthetic category elucidates the intersections among race, gender, and aesthetic theories.