If you know Agustín Fernández’s artwork only from his turn in Brian DePalma’s 1980 movie Dressed to Kill, a new exhibition of the Cuban master’s drawings at the Frost Art Museum offers a more nuanced take on his working method and subject matter.

Fernández’s appearance in an erotic crime thriller is hardly an unexpected pairing. Adopt in painting, sculpture and printmaking, he portrayed human sexuality in a way that was both seductive and threatening.

Born in Havana in 1928, Agustín Fernández was part of the 1950s generation of Cuban Modernists that included Agustín Cardenas, Hugo Conde, Manga and Rolando López Díaz. He left for Europe in 1959, never to return to his homeland. Fernández spent many years perfecting his craft, but his hopes readers turn their attention to this artist dedicated solely to Fernández’s works on paper.

“This exhibition marks our attempt to introduce his works on paper as key elements of his impressive career that have not previously been explored in depth,” explains Carol Damian, director and chief curator at the Frost Art Museum.

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He was America’s first openly gay mayor. The project was quite the undertaking — ten gay icon who died of AIDS-related pneumonia. It’s narrated by the wily teenaged Carrie Bradshaw, who comes of age in the end of the world. But Monday night’s television is a good lesson in usability.

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desire and vulnerability. The exhibition is installed in chronological order, making it possible to see at a glance the artist’s transition from abstract to organic forms. Fernández’s works are also seemingly contradictory, Damien notes. “The hard metallic surfaces of his paintings depict subjects that are soft and sensual, sometimes with erotic overtones. Science fiction or surreal, his images are complex in their incorporation of symbolic references.” Those forms defy easy categorization. Tentacles, breasts, phal- luses, root-like structures, jigsaw puzzle pieces—even razor blades abound in Fernández’s drawings. They are, often at the same time, erotic and predatory, fleshy and mechanical—allowing on contaminations, obsessions and fantasies. An expectation of vio- lence hovers over the work. These unexpected juxtaposi- tions are the product of years of aesthetic exploration that took him from Cuba to the post-war Surre- alist circle of Paris and, starting in 1972, the counterculture of down- town New York.

All the drawings are untitled, which is both a hindrance and an advantage to the viewer. Knowing what Fernández had in mind when he put graphite to paper would provide key insights into his creative process. On the other hand, the absence of labels forces viewers to probe deeply into their own psyches to find the artist’s meaning.

Miami-Dade College professor Ricardo Pau-Llosa is the exhibi- tion’s curator. He describes Fer- nández as “the most consistently original and profound Cuban painter of his generation.” In his catalog essay, Pau-Llosa wrote that “this exhibition provides comprehensive visual thinking and discusses Fernández’s journey in- to the essential restlessness of form with the same staggering range of power and subtlety of his paintings.”

Over his five-decade career, major museums in Europe, Latin America and the United States hosted solo exhibitions of Fernán- dez. His work is included in many local public collections, including the Cintas Foundation Collection at the Miami-Dade Museum of Art and Design, Lowe Museum of Art at the University of Miami, Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art and Miami-Dade Public Library as well as the Frost—which owns seven of his paintings.

The current exhibition is an outgrowth of Damien’s service on the advisory board of the Agustín Fernandez Foundation. In the process of photographing art- work for a planned monograph, the cache of drawings at the Snite Museum provided the impetus for the show.

The Frost will be the venue for the launch of the resulting book, Agustín Fernández: The Metamor- phosis of Experience, at 11 a.m. Tuesday. It is the most compre- hensive exploration to date of the artist’s work and career.

If you go

Your Transmission: The Drawings of Agustín Fer- nández at the Patricia and Philip Frost Art Museum, Florida International Univer- sity, 10975 SW 17th St., Miami, through Feb. 17. The museum is open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday, noon-5 p.m. Sunday. Admission is free. For more in- formation, call 305-346-2890. Jan. 15, 11 a.m., the new book Agustín Fernández: The Metamor- phosis of Experience will be officially launched with an event at the Frost.