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The celebrated Miami-based artist has a not-to-be-missed book that should live on your coffee table. Forever.

BY ERIN DOSTAL KULLER



There's something incredibly inspiring about a great artist's retrospective. A few years ago, I went to New York City's Guggenheim Museum for its celebrated "Picasso: Black And White" exhibit and lost track of time. Three hours later, I emerged in awe of the sheer breadth of the Spaniard's work, the continual development in his artistry and the decades upon decades of obvious obsession with shape and color (or lack thereof). Now, it's Carlos Betancourt's turn to showcase his long, illustrious career.

The artist, born in Puerto Rico of Cuban parents, has a new book, *Carlos Betancourt: Imperfect Utopia* (Skira Rizzoli), which showcases his more than three decades of inspired work. His fearless, compelling artworks are part of the permanent collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and The Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC, among many other prestigious collections. In Miami and abroad, he has become to art what Gloria Estefan is to music: pure legend.

The well-traveled, world-renowned artist comes across as endlessly upbeat, drawing you in. It's as if he's saying: "Go ahead—try to be in a bad mood around me. I dare you."

Truth is, he's more than just an artist. He's also been named one of People magazine's "Sexiest People Alive." And, really, how cool is that?

Upon meeting Betancourt, the first thing you notice is his positivity. It's magnetic. The well-traveled, world-renowned artist comes across as endlessly upbeat, drawing you in. It's as if he's saying: "Go ahead—try to be in a bad mood around me. I dare you."

Using lush colors and complex, layered compositions, his mixed-media installations, photographs and sculptures explore relevant issues of memory, identity and beauty. The results are uniquely refreshing and thought provoking, much like the artist himself.



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