

M I A M I

T I E R R A C A L I E N T E

IV Bienal del Caribe

## **MIAMI TIERRA CALIENTE**

Roberto Behar and Rosario Marquardt

Carlos Betancourt

Carol K. Brown

Westen Charles

William Cordova

Beatriz Monteavaro

Charo Oquet

Vickie Pierre

**Curated by**

Genaro Ambrosino

Charo Oquet

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IV Bienal del Caribe

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Centro Cultural Osvaldo Guayasam n

Zona Colonial, Santo Domingo, DR

## **MIAMI TIERRA CALIENTE: Una propuesta para la Bienal del Caribe**

Cuando propusimos llevar una selección de artistas residentes en Miami a la Bienal del Caribe nos hicimos la siguiente pregunta: ¿Cuál es el común denominador que auna a la comunidad artística de la ciudad? La respuesta fue evidente: El mismo común denominador que auna a la población de Miami en general; la diversidad de razas y culturas.

Miami es como un gran caldero en el cual se cuece de todo. A nivel étnico tenemos Norteamericanos, Sudamericanos y Centroamericanos de todos los países del sub continente. Infinidad de europeos, y además un enorme componente de "caribeños". Haitianos, Cubanos, Jamaicanos, Puertorriqueños y Dominicanos entre muchos otros, se mezclan en un maravilloso rompecabezas que le ha dado a Miami su carácter tan peculiar, como de capital de Latinoamérica.

Las diferentes tradiciones que cada grupo ha traído consigo, al entremezclarse en esta cálida tierra que nos ha abierto los brazos a tantos, han creado un tejido cultural y artístico muy particular puesto que, aun manteniendo de cierta manera intactas las características individuales y nacionales específicas a cada una, se han combinado con las de otras culturas de la región en una suerte de "sincretismo étnico-cultural" que está dándole cada vez más una individualidad, un carácter propio, diverso y caótico pero de gran belleza y diversidad al clima cultural de Miami. Es por ello que al hacer la selección de artistas para la Bienal, además de tomar en cuenta el indiscutible valor artístico de las propuestas mismas, tratamos de reflejar este aspecto fundamental de nuestra sociedad. La "representación" de Miami para MIAMI, TIERRA CALIENTE, la exposición que aquí presentamos, incluye a Roberto Behar y Rosario Marquardt de Argentina, William Cordova de Perú, Beatriz Monteavaro de Cuba, la Haitiano-Norteamericana Vickie Pierre. Carlos Betancourt de Puerto Rico, los también Norteamericanos Carol K. Brown y Westen Charles, y la Dominicana Charo Oquet.

Todos ellos vienen trabajando en Miami desde hace muchos años utilizando los más diversos medios. Como el espectador mismo podrá apreciar, la selección incluye desde dibujos y pinturas, hasta instalaciones, fotografías y videos. Entre los artistas encontramos a aquellos de más larga trayectoria, así como también a algunos muy jóvenes quienes, aunque estén relativamente recién comenzando su camino en las artes, lo están haciendo definitivamente con buen pie. De los currículos y las diferentes muestras en las que todos ellos han participado, se desprende la importancia del aporte que de una manera u otra todos ellos han hecho a las artes contemporáneas.

Debemos enfatizar que este selecto grupo no es sino la cima del iceberg de lo que constituye la avanzada artística de Miami, una ciudad a la que por muchos años se consideró un "desierto cultural" y que en estos momentos es una de las ciudades más vibrantes y fructíferas del orbe, no solamente en lo referente a las artes plásticas, sino también en cuanto a la música, la danza y el teatro. Así lo han reconocido los expertos, e inclusive diarios de tanto prestigio como el New York Times están cada día más atentos a lo que está pasando en ésta, nuestra tierra caliente.

No sabemos si será por el espíritu latinoamericano que permea cada rincón de la ciudad. O tal vez sea por la belleza de su entorno físico. Quizás tenga algo que ver su ubicación geográfica, al centro del continente americano. Lo más probable es que sea la mezcla de éstos y muchos otros maravillosos factores, pero lo cierto es que en Miami se puede respirar el aire de innovación, de creación, de experimentación, de libertad. Algo está definitivamente pasando, y seguirá pasando por muchos años más, de eso no tenemos dudas. Sabemos que éste es tan solo el comienzo, y nosotros nos sentimos orgullosos de traerles este pequeño abreboca, justo a tiempo para la gran comida.

- Genaro Ambrosino, 2001

## **MIAMI - Looking North, Looking South, Looking East**

Miami is a city in constant movement. Throughout its recent history, Miami has seen the arrival of many new immigrants from the South: affluent Colombians, Argentines and, of course the late 80's and 90's migration of Cuban artists. These new groups have also opened new contemporary art galleries and have attracted collectors and dealers. New areas are emerging as places where project rooms, fine art galleries and artist studios are opening up.

Art MIAMI and the arrival of Art Basel Miami have made more people aware of Miami as a hot spot for contemporary American, Latin American and Caribbean art. Recently, several Miami museums have featured and purchased for their collections works of Miami-based artists. This has generated an immense interest by the general public in them. Miami is enjoying a renaissance - there is a struggle to articulate cultural forms that are continuously redefined. There exists now the recognition of other cultures without labeling them as "exotic" or "primitive".

All these things coexist in our city. Miami can be considered as a place where colonization is reversed. The colonized Latin and Caribbean cultures are now colonizing the colonizer. The now diverse groups of power are at a struggle with each other, as the existing power groups feel that their identity and powers are being usurped by the new arrivals. We are in a moment where the arts and our identities are being redefined. In the Caribbean we have a similar situation. We can see among the artists and the public a struggle, between willing to be more European, or more Caribbean.

Some don't want Miami to become a Latin American art ghetto; they prefer to see it as "mainstream". Yet, how can we forget the fact that the vast majority of our population comes from Latin American and the Caribbean? How can we only look North, and not South or East? Beware, It is in Miami where a new form of Caribbean and Latin American art is arising, a kind of universal space where everyone is brought together through their shared multicultural values, one with more curiosity, more tolerance and with more respect for the Caribbean roots and the preservations of its traditions. I hope that Miami in its trying to create its new identity, does not abandon its sense of "place" in favor of Western "hi-Tech Globalism" so popular today.

- Charo Oquet, 2001

## Roberto Behar and Rosario Marquardt

The work of Roberto and Rosario travels from painting to the urban realm and stretches and diffuses the boundaries of architecture and the visual arts. In their case, painting, installations and urban interventions are but three different expressions of the same idea: an idea that is both dream and obstinate reality.

Their works propose encounters of stories and spaces, which alternate between the private and the public, the intimate and the monumental, the quotidian and the fantastic.

Perhaps because they live in Miami, a city where almost everyone comes from somewhere else, their works elaborate upon a unique equilibrium between belonging and strangeness. Their works perform as poetic events bridging dreams, memories and desires.

Roberto and Rosario were born in Buenos Aires and Mar del Plata, Argentina. Their work has been exhibited in America and abroad. They have realized a number of widely recognized large scale urban interventions in Miami. In 1998 they received a Visual Arts Fellowship from the American Academy in Rome.



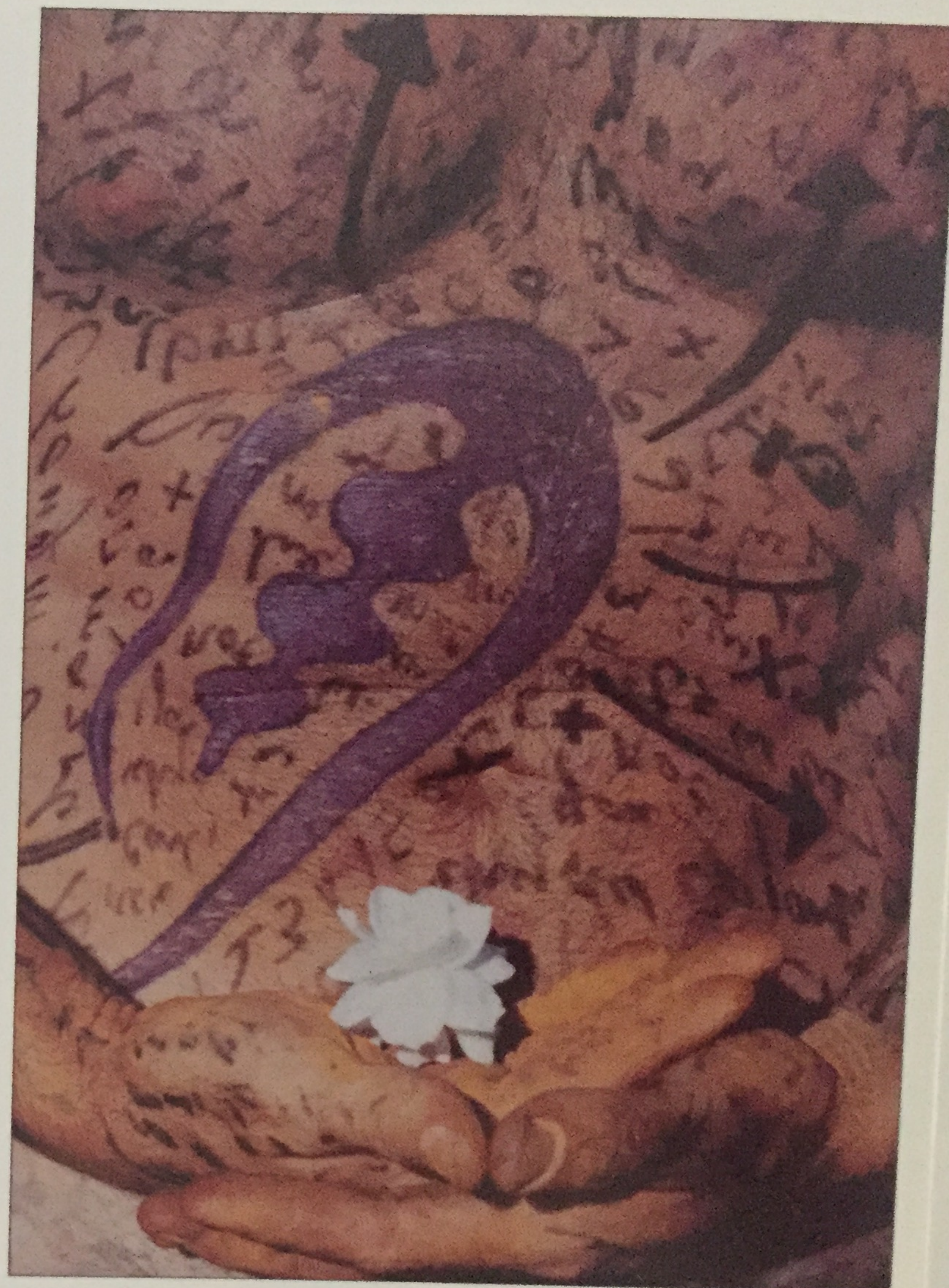
**December 16, 2000**  
Color Photograph, 12 x 18, 2000

## Carlos Betancourt

My art work is an attempt to create images that brings forth the power of symbols: how they harmonize creator, creation and nature, how they transcend their own physical representations, how they communicate knowledge beyond reason, how they fold meaning into image.

The photographs are the result and documentation of a temporal installation or event. The reverse script that may cover each person is a method of narrating letters to a particular deity, historical figure or family member. The symbols are chosen from a created alphabet and code, derived from African civilizations like Adrinka and Ejagham and by pre-Colombian cultures like the Maya, Hopi, Taino, Nasca and Tequesta.. The transfixing of these images has led me to appreciate and accept symbols as a way of communicating.

Carlos Betancourt was raised in Puerto Rico by exiled Cuban parents and now lives in Miami. The Miami-based artist is perhaps best known for his recent monumental installation titled *The Sounds, Symbols Project* erected on the sands of Miami Beach on the eve of the 2000 vernal equinox. The massive event was sponsored by the American Foundation for the Arts. He was recently awarded a major commission from the Art in Public Places Trust of Miami-Dade to create environmental installations in the new Miami International Airport terminal. Betancourt will have a solo show at the Robert Miller Gallery in New York City in 2002, as well as an Art Basel Special Project in December 2001. He is represented in the public collections of Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in Washington DC, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and at the Bass Museum in Miami Beach.

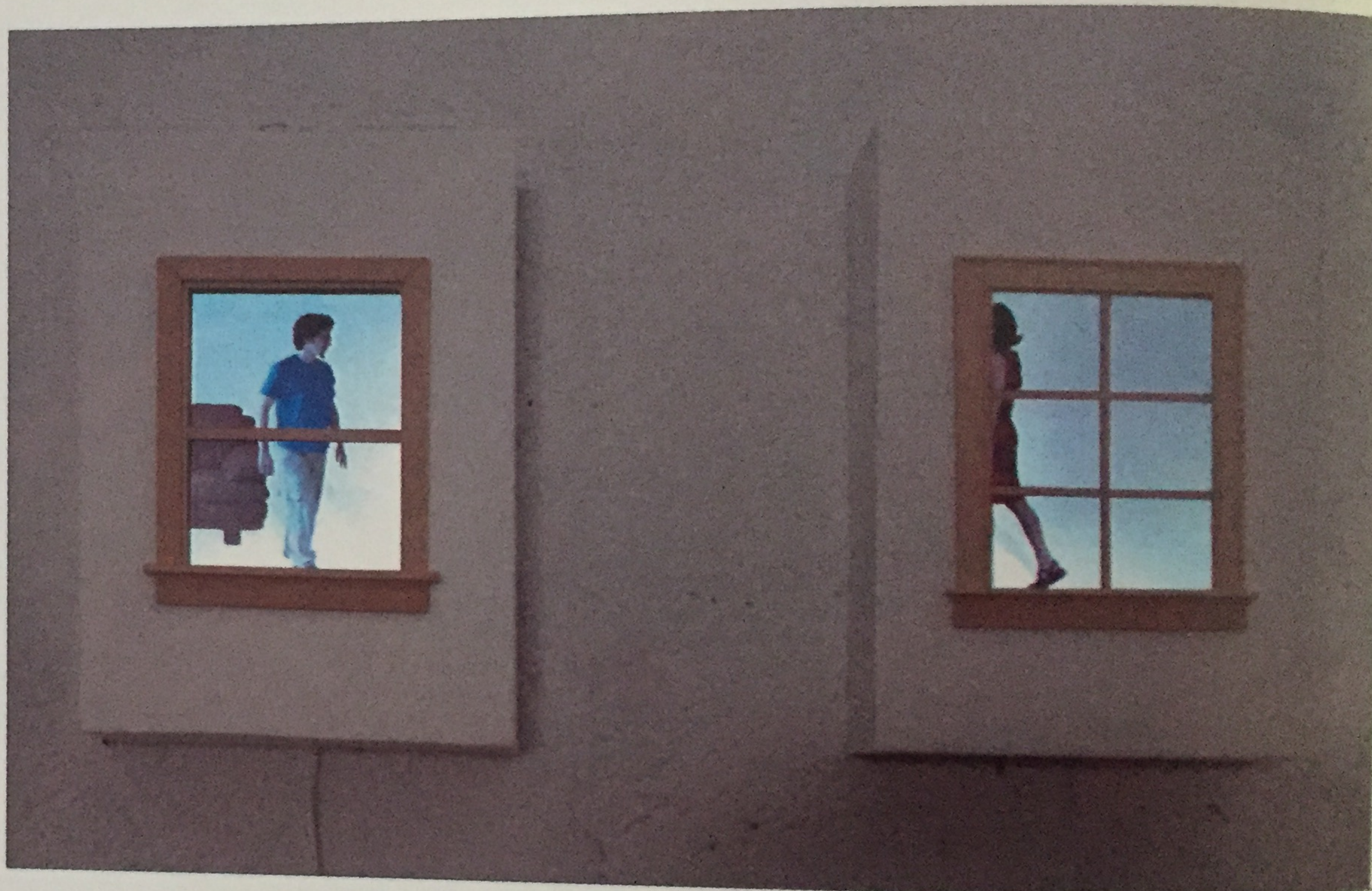


***Ri and Flamboyant***  
*Color Print on Vinyl, 60 X 43.75 , 2001*

## Carol K. Brown

Brown is interested in the idea of the viewer as voyeur. The images flash, implying movement. High technology is combined with hand craftsmanship and a crude simplicity. Repetitions of motion create a feeling that the figures inside the windows are somehow entrapped; that we are witnessing something that perhaps we shouldn't see. The work conveys a feeling of spying on unknowing people in a moment of privacy.

Carol K. Brown resides on Miami Beach. Her work is owned by many museums and public collections including the Miami Art Museum, The Denver Art Museum, The Jacksonville Art Museum, The Art Museum at FIU, and Miami-Dade Art in Public Places. She has exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Boise Art Museum, Boulder Museum of Contemporary art, The Contemporary Art Center of New Orleans, The John & Mable Ringling Art Museum and Lehman College. Brown has won a number of grants including two from the National Endowment for the Arts.



189E. 3rd Street#9;  
9.5" x 18.5" x 2.5" Wood and LCD screen, 2001

## Westen Charles

Westen Charles explores interpretations between related and unrelated imagery. "While waiting at the dentist's office I began browsing through various magazines on the table. After flipping through a teen fashion magazine, I picked up a pet magazine that specialized in Dalmatians. I was quick to realize that although the magazines were completely different in subject matter, they shared many similarities."

Charles combines head-shots from teen fashion magazines with portraits of dogs from pet owner magazines. The two images are cropped into circles and shown side by side looking straight forward at the viewer. At first glance the portraits are seemingly disjointed, however they do share an intimate gaze, which invites a more intriguing dialogue.

Charles was born in Miami. He received his undergraduate degree in sculpture from Pratt Institute in 1995 and his Graduate degree in sculpture from the University of Miami in 1999. His art work is conceptual in nature using many approaches including painting, photography, sculpture and video. Charles works in Miami and is also a co-founder of the alternative exhibition space *Local Projects*.



**Untitled #1 (From the Lipstick and Doggy Dick Series)**

*Duralflex (Edition of 5), 30 x 40, size, 2001*



## William Cordova

I begin with things in my immediate environment. I may have a bucket in my studio, or I may see a pile of furniture thrown out with the trash or picture in a book that I may happen to be reading. I simply begin to free-associate things that can be said to have cultural significance, that play a part in everyone's memory/life, like vinyl records for instance.

My work also points simultaneously at the music I grew up with (what my siblings played, 70s rock) and what I chose to listen to when I came of age (rap).

William Cordova was born in Lima, Peru and now lives and works in Miami. He is a graduate of the Art Institute of Chicago. He has exhibited at galleries in Miami, Texas, Chicago, Lima, Tel Aviv, Rio de Janeiro and other cities.



**So Could Any One??**  
Mixed Media on Paper, 8 x 10, 2001

## Beatriz Monteavaro

My work deals with good and evil, perception and empowerment. I use customized superhero and villain action figures to symbolically play out moral scenarios. Superheroes represent benevolent power. They are characters that use their advantages for the good of humanity. This is a concept I wish to promote because often the people with the most power end up being the most corrupt.

The Good Gang and Foe Squad are superhero and super villain teams that I've developed in my drawing books. The characters in them are absurd amalgamations of superficial stereotypes present in comic book tradition. The Good Gang's members, Power Woman, The Dwarf, Adam (rock star Adam Ant) and The Eyeball, demonstrate virtue with their beauty, youth, strength and wisdom. The Foe Squad's membership, Evilman, Skull Head, and Super Devil, similarly personify evil through their baldness, agedness and deformity.

I have customized commercially available action figures into the form and design of my characters, by resculpting and repainting them. I use these figures as models for photos and drawings, and as actors in video.

Beatriz Monteavaro is a graduate of Tyler School of Art at Temple University. Recent and current exhibits include those at Spacio Minimo, Madrid; NFA Space in Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art and Ambrosino Gallery in Miami and the Artcenter/South Florida in Miami Beach.



**Ladron #2 Burns**  
*Ink on Paper, 5 x 3.5, 2001*

## Charo Oquet

I am inspired by my heritage in the Dominican Republic, and the influences of Africa's heritage on the Americas, taking different forms and manifestations. These photographic and installation projects transform ordinary practices, habits or objects. They make the familiar seem strange, interrelating biography, history, secular celebrations and religious beliefs, transforming our perception and understanding of everyday life. This approach challenges our perceptions of art, life, and the relationship between the two. The aspiration of my artistic practice is to help reaffirm our potential as catalysts of positive change.

Charo is a native of Santo Domingo. She has worked and exhibited in Dominican Republic, New Zealand, London, New York and Miami, where she now lives. She is founder of the Dominican Arts Series, now in its sixth season. Recent exhibitions include Florida Atlantic University Art Gallery (March 2001), Hollywood Art and Culture Center (May 2001), Barcelona's Galeria Senda (June 2001) and Florida International University (September 2001).



**Girl in Vietnam DR**  
Color photograph, 16 x 20, 2001

## Vickie Pierre

My work expresses my emotional experience with a private world that is inspired by memory, fantasy, beauty and decoration. This landscape or dream-scape is the forum where stories are told, ticklish erotic tales that are sentimental and nostalgic.

It is the result of a tug of war between organic forms immersed in and emerging from the surrounding space that is made up of transparencies of color and latent images manipulated into sensual and whimsical personalities.

These bulbous and delicate forms, floating in space, create a state of suspension. They become light and weightless, drifting in and out of focus beyond conscious recognition and into the realm of memories distorted with time and dreams unremembered once awakened.

Vickie Pierre is a graduate of School of Visual Arts in New York City. She has recently exhibited at Ambrosino Gallery and Cronos Gallery in Miami, and the HereArt Gallery in New York, and at International Young Art, Sotheby's Tel Aviv, Israel.



**Pink**  
Oil on Canvas, 9 x 9, 1999

The work of Carol K. Brown, Westen Charles, William Cordova, Beatriz Monteavaro and Vickie Pierre appears courtesy of Ambrosino Gallery, Miami, FL

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For information about Rhythm Foundation, visit [www.rhythmfoundation.com](http://www.rhythmfoundation.com)

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