CITY LIMITS: Miami

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ONE WAY →

City Limits: Miami is a selection of Miami's finest. The artwork in this show is tied together by a colorful and cultural thread. Each individual in this grouping has chosen to call South Florida home, and in doing so, remnants of this environment appear in their work.

Rather than using the Renaissance ideal of the one-point perspective, Felice Grodin depicts a multiplicity of lines both extruded and intersecting, which requires the viewer to constantly reposition themselves. At times from a secure vantage point, at times adrift within the shifting array of access points, they are equivalents of our perceived realities - that which mediates an entirety versus a collection of interwoven moments that emerge and recede. Her subject matter has recently become highly personal. Take for example Beneath James Central Tower, an ink drawing on Mylar paper. Several months ago after a dramatic rain storm in Miami Beach, her car garage flooded from floor to ceiling, leaving her Volkswagen bug nothing more than a giant sea shell. Grodin also lost a shipment of new work that was in transit that same week. During this destabilizing period in her life she dedicated all her time to working in her studio producing fresh work and using new techniques. As a result, Grodin unleashed paint on boards to create abstract expressionist templates for undercoats for her new drawings. These are now larger, far more gestural and not as controlled as in earlier work, which was heavily influenced by her Ivy League architectural background at Harvard. For Grodin, this new work symbolizes a fresh start, in a town known for starting over.

Michael Loveland's latest work has established distinctiveness from years of constant experimentation with urban artifacts that form a visual vocabulary. For Loveland, creating sculpture is a lengthy process that starts with collecting debris and objects from the area. He utilizes such items as road signs, wrought iron, and signage, that have been left abandoned or are the resultant debris of hurricanes and tropical storms. At times Loveland will trade a duplicated new sign in exchange for the original. Because his findings are regional, the works often have clues to the where he has found them such as Haitian Creole, Spanish text and photography from

abandoned structures that Loveland takes and transfers to metal sheets. The collecting and categorizing of their shape, size and color are the first steps in the creation of this body of work. Loveland has started to introduce discarded glass panes and mirror to his repertoire in order to add an extra layer of information. By designing a new way of displaying these collaged and manipulated relics Loveland has opened up a dynamic dialogue with what he finds and what is actually presented within a gallery setting.

Manny Prieres works primarily with graphite on paper to conjure up haunting works, both elegant and loaded with symbolism from Prieres' own personal and hidden language. Like a coat of arms, the work of Prieres depends on drawing mundane objects, such as tools, which are lavishly embellished and placed among text and symbols that are often identifiable by select castes of people, mostly from marginalized societies from our youth culture.

ZigZag Town is a painting of a landscape on golden vinyl fabric by Luis M. Alonzo-Barkigia. One can make out a glowing skyline with bolts of color in the sky. His materials are sexy, alluring and a direct result from living in Miami. The zigzag motifs reference natural disasters, often found in his work, as well as the combination of abstraction and appropriation. Objects such as building blocks, street signs, and human silhouette can be identified as well as the use of thread to add texture. This prolific artist has been producing painting, sculpture, video and performance all which examine our present human condition.

Carlos Betancourt has been collecting Christmas ornaments for fifteen years. Re-Collections III continues to explore the artist's fascination with collecting, and in this case, of a large-scale floor installation, giclee prints and a large print on canvas of the manipulated ornaments. For the floor installation, the artist meticulously places each exquisite ornament into a sublime pattern and uses them as sculptural objects that document the artist's past and links it to the present, as he traditionally does. Alluding to the fragility of life, these ornaments, manufactured to be temporal, have survived the test of time because of the care placed on them by their previous owners. In the prints, lone ornaments float in a black backdrop, many of them rare and worn out from use, acquire their beauty in their age, hence becoming objects of art. Looking closely at the photographs, the viewer can make out reflections of the artist, pictures from his extensive photo albums, and references to Pop culture and contemporary art, as it is in the case of "Damien Hirst meets Iris Chacon in a vintage Christmas ornament".

Vicenta Casañ has spent the last few years using her camera as her eyes, snapping images of what she see's with the intention of creating artworks that represent how she intimately views the city of Miami's changing skyline. Casañ recreates her own twisted interpretations of South Florida's transforming urban landscape. She chooses familiar locations, landmarks and structures but their tone is far more dramatic than ever before. For the most part, the images are desolate and vacant. The clouds look like explosions in the sky. The imagery hovers between past, present and the future. Like the calm before a storm or its devastating aftermath, Casañ's images appear suspiciously unsafe, foreign and yet strangely familiar.

Although firmly established by each artist's own terms, Miami's destabilizing effect and heterogeneous environment inevitably forces one to both confront and embrace a city that's own "limits" are richly ambiguous.

- José Carlos Diaz

CARLOS BETANCOURT ›› Re-Collections III, 2007 ›› vintage glass Christmas ornaments ›› variable dimensions (detail)