

The New York Times

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FRIDAY, JULY 16, 2004

ART IN REVIEW

'Incantations'

Metro Pictures
519 West 24th Street, Chelsea
Through July 30

A braided thread of quasi-mystical belief and ironic skepticism runs through a lot of contemporary art. It is what connects the works of eight artists in "Incantations," an entertaining exhibition organized by Nicelle Beauchene and Kent Henrickson.

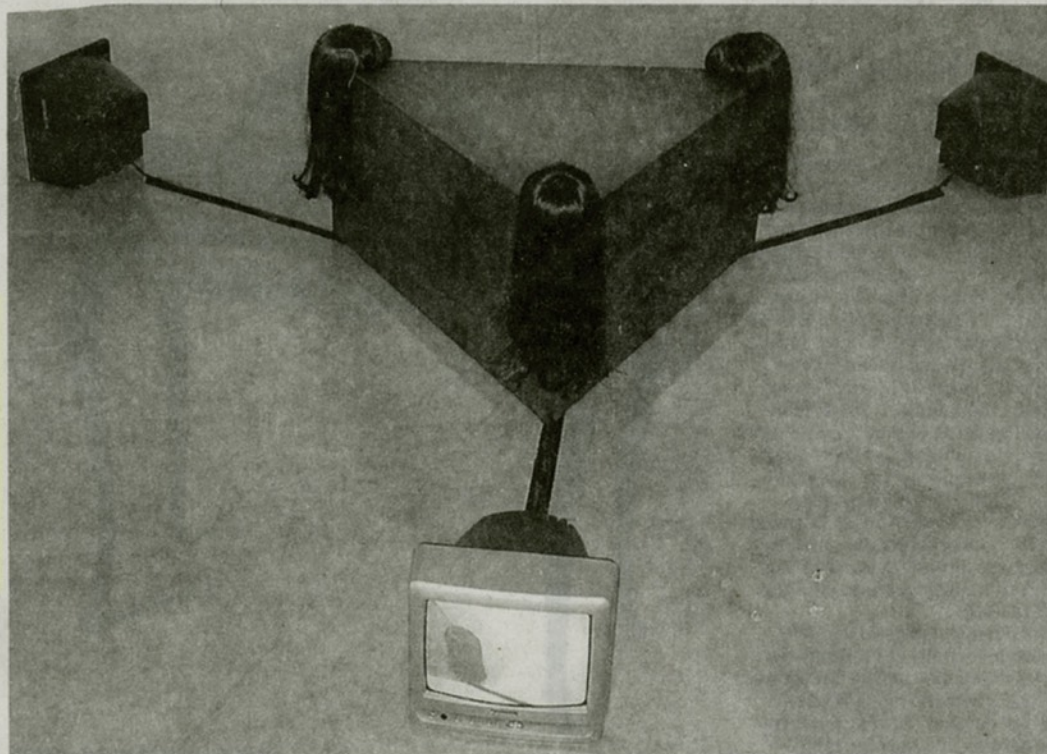
The show's most gripping work, a "Dr. Who"-like assemblage by John Espinosa, features a three-sided minimalist sculpture with a woman's long-haired wig hanging from each corner. A small television near each corner erratically broadcasts black-and-white images of the central sculpture. With futuristic sound effects, interruptions of static and a wildly zooming camera, Mr. Espinosa's work is at once comically ridiculous and magically entralling.

Christian Holstad's small, surrealist pictures also blend fact and fantasy to hair-raising effect. Each is a newspaper photograph partly erased and redrawn by the artist so that ghostly, possibly malevolent figures emerge from behind the degraded facade of public imagery.

Modernism's romance with presumably more primitive and therefore more soulful states of human evolution is affirmed and spoofed by Olaf Breuning's photographic portraits of himself and three cohorts in gorilla outfits and as painted and masked jungle savages; by Justin Samson's mysterious, museumlike display of Northwest Indian-style woven artifacts; and by Keegan McHargue's faux-Outsider painting and etchings.

Mike Kelley's voodoo-style assemblage centered around a skull in a bucket. Liz Craft's kitschy wooden chest loaded with bones and Cindy Sherman's self-portrait with plastic ants crawling over her face and hair also contribute to this fruitful conversation about the allure of the irrational in modern culture.

KEN JOHNSON



John Espinosa's "Zeta" (2004) in the exhibition "Incantations" at Metro Pictures in Chelsea.

Metro Pictures Gallery

The Miami Herald

Posted on Fri, Dec. 24, 2004

CULTURE / Suspension of disbelief

In his show at MoCA, John Espinosa freezes stares with arresting imagery.

By Carlos Suarez de Jesus

Confronting John Espinosa's startling exhibit at MOCA, mythographer Joseph Campbell's saying, "the psychotic drowns in the same waters a mystic swims in" seemed to hum in the air like the dissonant pitch of a warped tuning fork. For his first solo museum show, Espinosa orchestrates a mysterious and quirky vision of animals, birds, and people caught in transformative moments of "revelation and delusion" that reference his upbringing as a Jehovah's Witness raised in the shadow of Disney World. He wryly channels an otherworldly sensibility into his pieces, teetering across those murky liminal spaces between the sacred and the profane with phenomenal results.

Standing Still While We Move Across Land, 2004, a large sculptural diorama that gives the one-man show its name, depicts a flock of birds frozen in mid-flight at contrasting heights, an arrangement that suggests the points of a star. The five birds project what appear to be light beams from their eyes, perhaps alluding to the forces of spirit struggling against those of darkness. The thin yellow rods jutting from their eyes converge in a geometric cat's cradle between the orbiting birds, seemingly hinting at the universe in expansion. The artist incorporates ultraviolet light and phosphorescent pigments in the structure, which appears to hover within three transecting grids, to diagram the flow of body heat exchanged between the avian entities.

In a small collage on paper titled *People With Eyes, 2004*, a concentric swirl of faces leer at the spectator with vacant yellow eyes and toothy grins. Arranged in a mandala-like pattern, the work is strikingly peopled by what made me think of a busload of tent revivalists in rapture or fugitive B-movie zombies from a George Romero nightmare. Other collages in the show, one featuring a ring of clasped hands at a Victorian seance, bespeak Espinosa's interest in metaphysical esoterica.

In another sculpture, *A Billion Years, 2004*, a chocolate-colored hare seems to melt atop a stack of rectangular and square blocks painted over to suggest deep galactic space. Black rods emerge from the animal's eyes and extend outward in linear folds brushed red at their tip. In ancient myth, the hare was considered to define the concept of being and elemental existence. It was also, appropriately, a symbol of fecundity; with this unusual body of work, Espinosa tips his hand as an inventive and peculiar talent.

Standing Still While We Move Across Land is on view through January 30, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, 770 NE 125th St., North Miami; 305-893-6211. The museum is also screening **Cut/Film as Found Object**, contemporary video works, through January 30.

CORTESÍA/Charest-Weinberg Gallery



DETALLE DE "GLASS DELUSION (MIRAGE ARTIFACT)", 2011. PLEXIGLÁS, ACERO, 53 X 30 X 30 PULGADAS.

JOHN ESPINOSA

VER EL BOSQUE BAJO LOS ÁRBOLES

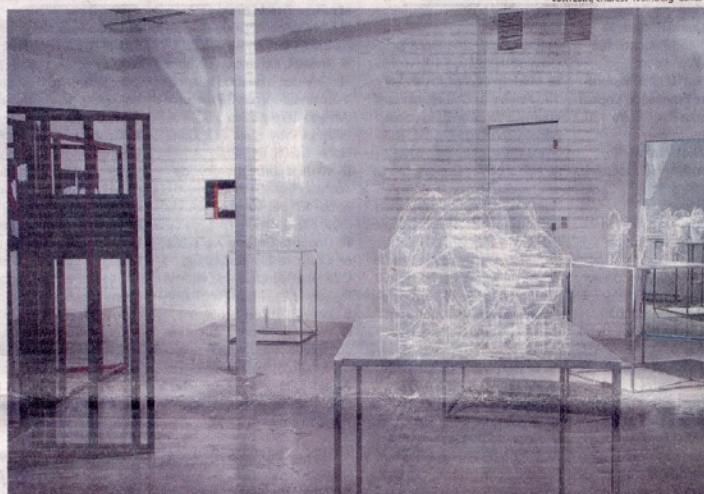
ADRIANA HERRERA
Especial/El Nuevo Herald

John Espinosa (Bogotá, 1969) pertenece a esa generación de artistas graduados de New World School of the Arts a fines del milenio, que ensancharon el pensamiento en las prácticas del arte contemporáneo en la ciudad. Está en los catálogos y fue parte de las exhibiciones correspondientes: *Moca and Miami*, del MOCA, e *Interplay*, en The Moore Space. *Forest*, en Charest-Weinberg Gallery revela un sistema peculiar de pensamiento y creación donde los objetos funcionan al modo de icebergs que apenas asoman en la superficie. Lo que aparece sólo indica la inmensa masa que yace bajo lo que se ve.

La metáfora del iceberg refiere a la teoría de la omisión: lo explícito, lo que se muestra o narra (visual y/o textualmente) oculta y señala un complejo universo informativo. Muchas instalaciones de Espinosa refieren a narrativas contemporáneas, incluyendo desastres como Chernobyl, o el suicidio colectivo ocurrido en Guyana, pero también funcionan como ejercicios generales de reflexión sobre el modo en que los imaginarios sociales y las creencias se forman a partir del control informativo.

Sus piezas reproducen el fenómeno de bloques de datos, y la manera en que su "traducción" en lenguajes distintos transforma el lenguaje original o lo distorsiona, pero a la vez se reproduce y recrea inagotables posibilidades, con la intervención del espectador. Igualmente, aborda la noción de la filtración de datos y su efecto desestabilizador, pero también de apertura o liberación: en cualquier sistema informativo.

El origen de este interés es autobiográfico. Cuando Espinosa llegó a los Estados Unidos con sus padres, no había cumplido cinco años, pero de un



VISTA DE LA INSTALACIÓN "THE FOREST" DE JOHN ESPINOSA, 2011.

modo vertiginoso, ligado a la supervivencia del grupo familiar en un país cuya lengua no hablaban los adultos, se convirtió en su traductor oficial. Comprendió, que toda traducción era aproximativa.

De adolescente, el descubrimiento de *Two stage transfer drawing (advancing to a future state)*, del artista conceptual Dennis Oppenheim, recién fallecido, fue una revelación sobre la posibilidad de hacer arte sobre el modo en que un lenguaje se trasvasa a otro sistema. En esa obra, Oppenheim trazaba en la pared dibujos que alguien hacía sobre su espalda y viceversa. El resultado no era nunca idéntico. La indagación de Espinosa en la trasposición de datos a otros contextos genera objetos escultóricos que contienen y ocultan información, pero también la transforman al infinito. Comparte con Oppenheim una característica el hecho de que niega a sus objetos "su status escultórico" y, en cambio, los presenta como "complejas cons-

trucciones, sistemas abiertos tanto a lo aleatorio como a enigmáticos modos de funcionamiento", como señala David Hunt.

Un ejemplo perfecto de este tipo de ejercicio es la pieza *The Way The Morning Broke Was Quite Unusual*. Líquido de Kool Aid (la bebida usada por la secta de Jim Jones para suicidarse) es bombeado desde tanques de acrílico sensible a los rayos UV hasta el centro de una escultura. El líquido se absorbe en cada capa y la espuma se tiñe de los colores de éste. El objeto resultante tiene una belleza ambigua que puede asociarse con espacios cósmicos, gracias a los efectos luminosos, claves en sus obras, pero que habla aquí de ese amanecer de muerte colectiva correlacionado con una creencia (en este caso fatal) que se extiende. En varias obras suyas la muerte es un referente que moviliza y puede llegar a acercar sistemas de imaginarios provenientes de campos distantes. La noción de la filtración de la creencia es un

eje conceptual de su trabajo.

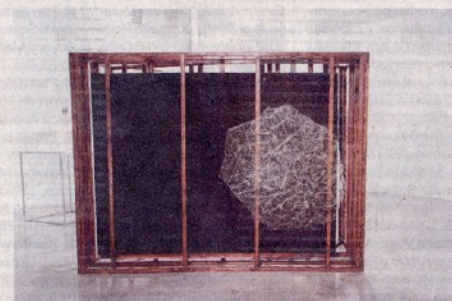
El planteamiento en *Forest* parte de una narrativa: el espectador decidirá si creerla o no, que consiste en que descubrió, al raspar la pared de su estudio, unos dibujos de procedencia y uso desconocido. En *Glass Delusion (open source)* deconstruyó su información: las líneas que los conformaban, y la traspasó a una instala-

ción de madera-sucedánea de la pared, usada como derivación y a la vez soporte del dibujo. Paralelamente, en *Glass Delusion (mirage artifact)* proyectó las dimensiones del dibujo en el diseño de esculturas tridimensionales en plexiglas transparentes. A su vez, estas arquitecturas translúcidas, bosques urbanos de hielo (o icebergs que contienen diversas capas informativas) se proyectan en la pared formando la ilusión de piezas abstractas suspendidas en el aire que son en realidad intangibles, objetos inexistentes: puro efecto óptico.

John Espinosa crea tensiones entre lo tangible y lo intangible, entre lo narrativo y lo indecible, entre la visión subjetiva y los imaginarios colectivos, en una obra que gira en torno a la filtración o traducción de sistemas de lenguaje o información en otros. Hay que indagar en el proceso de sus obras para descubrir lo que yace bajo el bosque de sus instalaciones capaces de provocar la seducción de los objetos bellos e indefinibles.

Adriana Herrera es escritora y crítica de arte. Colabora con galerías y museos, y asesora publicaciones especializadas.

"Forest" de John Espinosa. Charest-Weinberg Gallery, 250 NW 23 St., #408. Hasta el 21 de mayo. (305) 292-0411.



"GLASS DELUSION (OPEN SOURCE)" 2011, MADERA, FOTOGRAFÍA, ESPUMA GOMA, ACRÍLICOS, PLEXIGLÁS Y RESINA, 96 X 72 X 42 PULGADAS. FOTO EN LA PARED: 26 X 19 PULGADAS.

CORTESÍA/Charest-Weinberg Gallery

Art in America

NOVEMBER 1999

REPORT FROM MIAMI: PART II

Miami Heats Up

Powerhouse collectors, exceptional city support for public sculpture and a strong Latin American presence shape the character of the Miami art community.

BY RONI FEINSTEIN

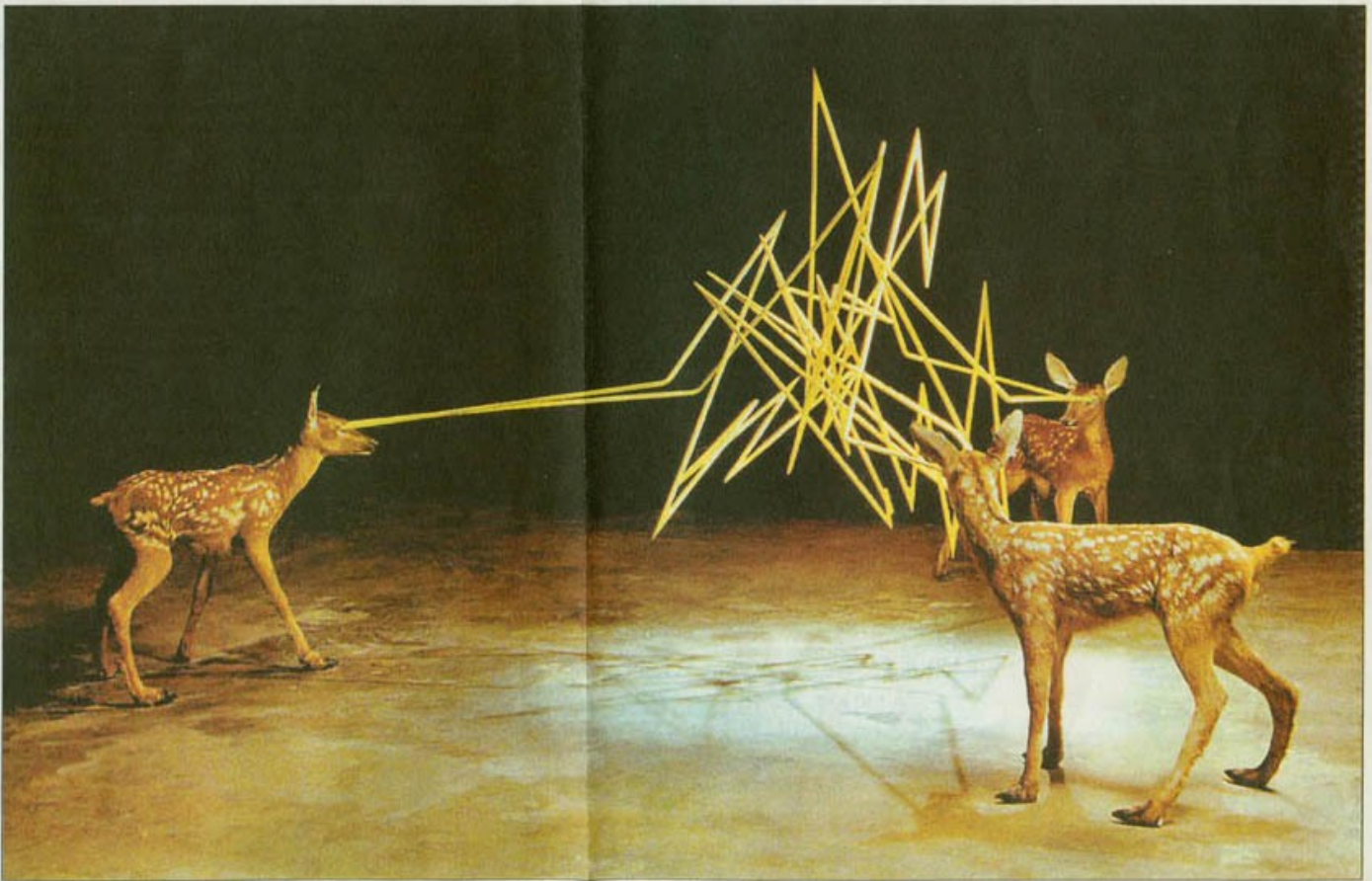


John Espinosa: *A Crowd in a Field of Grass (detail)*, 1998, 175 HO-scale figurines, artificial grass, wooden cube, 5 by 5 by 5 feet.



Above right, John Espinosa: *Forever and Ever*, 1999
Duratrans in light box, 6 by 8 feet.
Photo courtesy Fredric Snitzer Gallery, Miami.

Likewise amusing and social-critical are Espinosa's color photographs from his "Fantastic Adventures" exhibition. The artist, who was raised in Orlando, donned a Spiderman costume and "invaded" Disneyland's Magic Kingdom (Spiderman is not a Disney character). A shot of Spiderman dramatically leaping and "poised for action" in front of Cinderella's fairy-tale castle represents the collision of two very different fantasy worlds: male versus female, perhaps, but, even more pointedly, cheap and shoddy comic-book/TV-cartoon images versus Disneyesque money, power and polish.



OH, DEER: John Espinosa's 'Frozen Upon Entry' will be part of Interplay, a show at the Design District's Moore Building, 4040 NE Second Ave., Miami.

The Miami Herald

Posted on Fri, Feb. 21, 2003

ART SEEN / The whole world in their hands

Interplay artists cast a wide (and contemporary) net

BY DAMARYS OCAÑA

Globalization, multiculturalism, multi-tasking, the worldwide web.

Our lives, our morals, our points of reference are ever more flexible, our mental image and information bank ever more stacked with variety, and it shows in art. More than ever, artists appropriate, mash and mesh images, ideas and disciplines. It's a very contemporary condition, which allows shows like *Interplay* -- curated by **Silvia Karman Cubiñá** and **Patrick Charpenel** -- to cast a broad net of a theme into which a lot of artists can fit, though they may not necessarily fit with each other.

Some highlights from the show, which is on view for another week at the Moore Building:

- **John Espinosa's** striking sculpture, *Frozen Upon Entry*, which borrows from taxidermy. Three stuffed fawns stand in a circle, doppelgangers or clones joined by a complex bolt of electric green lightning (it echoes heavy metal design and you half hear the raw energy of an electric guitar riff in your head), as if transfixed by each other, or caught in a defining moment or an instance of spiritual or physical transcendence. Or perhaps it is a triple image of the same creature in a moment of self-discovery or trauma.

L.A. CONFIDENTIAL

by Emma Gray



"The Aleph," a show curated by **Nu Nguyen** at **Sandroni Rey Gallery**, May 20-June 24, 2006, borrows its name from **Jorge Luis Borges'** fictional account of his confrontation with the so-called "aleph," a window onto everything. Two sculptures steal the show: **John Espinosa's** *Infinite Collapse*, which holds 50 gallons of hermetically sealed saltwater from the Bermuda Triangle, is entirely transporting, while *Zeta*, consisting of three wigs attached to a marked triangle with attached TV screens transmitting fuzz spliced with images of the piece itself, is spooky and Roswell-esque, as intended.

EMMA GRAY is West Coast editor of *ArtReview*.

HOT
SPOTS



John Espinosa knows well that Disneyland's glitter is paradoxically similar to the aesthetic of paradise of the Jehovah's Witnesses, a paradise seen televisually as scenery, as banality made artificially beautiful. His *Blue Bambi* series of 14 x 20' Duraflex prints displays a universally familiar object a figurine of Bambi—the fake serenity of which is overexposed by the fact that the plastic Bambi is blue and by the settings in which it is placed. The photographs show the blue Bambi juxtaposed with objects culled from either the contemporary art world or everyday life, all with an end-of-the-world feel to them: a microwave oven, a bubble chair, plastic bottles from Jose Bedia's *Naufragious*, earth from Paul McCarthy's *American Gothic*, to mention a few.

A Crowd in the Field of Grass poses an alienated and cataclysm-driven crowd of 175 miniature figurines on an artificial field of grass embedded on a 5 x 5 x 5' cube. This piece emphasizes a constant presence of parallel micronarratives in John's work. Here the feeling of despair and tragedy might just as well be the feeling of happiness and ecstasy.

LOS ANGELES

HOUSTON

MIAMI

ARTslant

The Glass Delusion
Charest-Weinberg Gallery
250 nw 23rd st, Miami 33127



John Espinosa's past work has included a work made of memory foam stained prism colors by Kool-Aid flowing through a water pump. He once made a sculpture that contained fifty gallons of saltwater captured from the Bermuda Triangle. A cast shape of David Bowie's face shedding paint tears, reminiscent of religious icons, was the subject of another piece. Espinosa is an artist that deftly translates his concepts with whatever material he commits to for the particular project.



His solo show recently opened at Charest Weinberg. In the center of the gallery sits a structure made up of wooden beams on which photographs hang. The photographs are of drawings that Espinosa found behind walls in his studio, part pictograph, part scribble, and their origins a mystery. This element of the unknown and belief are ongoing themes in Espinosa's work. In the older work *L'Inconnue de la Seine* he ruminated on the visage of an unidentified young girl whose death mask was sold in Europe throughout the '20s and '30s and eventually became the face of CPR mannequins, therefore immortalizing the anonymous girl as the "most kissed face" in history.

The most compelling works are the six unique sculptures made up of clear Plexiglas and displayed on mirrored pedestals. The transparent clear colored acrylic is very thin and collaged to recreate three-dimensional versions of the found drawings. Overhead spotlights then light the sculptures and the edges are transformed to bright sharp lines grounding the work. The mirrored pedestals add depth and

layers like that of finding lost drawings behind layers of walls. Ghost-like, amorphous shapes made of fractured light patterns dance on the walls and ceiling, creating an environment of shadows. As with Espinosa's past work, it is this kind of aesthetic beauty that draws the viewer in but then leaves her to wonder...where did these drawings come from in the first place? Will we ever know? Does it really matter?

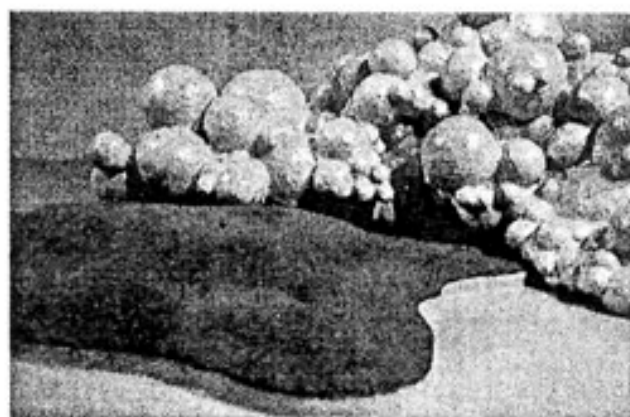
~Gretchen Wagoner

NAVIGATING THE HYPERREAL

BY BONNIE CLEARWATER

John Espinosa's recent work has much in common with Fernandez's installations and Eco's "Travels in Hyperreality". Having grown up in Orlando, Espinosa was already sensitive to the fantastic landscapes of Disney World, Epcot Center, and Universal Studios. His childhood environment created a frame of reference that vacillated between the physical and psychological, the surreal and the spiritual. He balances his family's belief system as Jehovah's Witnesses, in which the "miraculous is truth," with a world in which fairy tales can come true.

In his tableau *If you lived here you'd be home already*, Espinosa constructs a fantasy miniature landscape of green pastures, lakes and puffy clouds situated on the floor, below the viewer (ill. 4). The landscape's space is cinematically compressed, and the viewer, striding like a



ill.4 John Espinosa . *If you lived here you'd be home already*. 2000, detail mixed media installation.

giant, experiences the disorienting effect of floating above the clouds. The landscape remains frozen (like Fernandez's ice cubes) while the viewer navigates around the construction. The title plays on the real estate signs that tease commuters about the utopian benefits of living at the point at which they are currently stuck in traffic and daydreaming about a better existence. The title also reflects on a desire that is shaped by both the tenets of Jehovah's Witness and Disney to achieve a perfect state of mind.

Galleries & Museums

The Dark Arts

Now Showing

"The museum was always lorded over you as an inner-city kid, especially if you're from a public school in Baltimore," says **Hamza Walker**, associate curator and director of education at the Renaissance Society. Looking at objects from distant cultures as a child, he says, he'd often find himself wondering what to think. "What am I supposed to learn from this goddamn spoon, or this marble bust, or this Brueghel painting? What is it trying to say? Maybe I wasn't getting anything, but even an antagonistic stance can be healthy." He didn't know about Chinese culture or African culture in these periods. "But I wondered, can I unlock what is held within this carved spoon? Maybe not, and that's OK."

Walker joined the Renaissance Society staff in 1994, after working at Urban Gateways and Chicago's Public Art Program and co-curate exhibits at Randolph Street Gallery. His current curatorial effort, **"All the Pretty Corpses,"** juxtaposes eight artists whose work reflects goth culture; Walker writes in his catalog essay "that the dark side may well be upon us, and that ours is an era of Good versus Evil." He calls Kacy Maddux's elegant, bizarre drawings—showing humanlike shapes with organs but no heads—posthuman, suggesting that they question the head as the seat of consciousness. John

All the Pretty Corpses

WHEN Through Fri 12/23

WHERE Renaissance Society, 5811 S. Ellis, 4th fl.

INFO 773-702-8670

MORE Eileen Luhr gives a lecture on Christian metal and punk subcultures Sun 12/11, 2 PM.

rearrange for his *Poems*, two ten-foot-high all-text wall paintings. Walker says that Shearer's "incredibly crude phrases, like 'suck my unholy vomit,' are 'inversions of positivist spiritual values, a response to the idea that the Christian right has a monopoly over moral values.'" Two of Sterling Ruby's three large faux-agitprop panels, installed at the show's entrance, include texts mysteriously advocating for "the amorphous law" while the third includes images of genitalia.

The son of a jazz drummer, Walker hung out in clubs when his dad played, and he did some drumming himself. Going to punk clubs as a teenager, he became aware of punk's relationship to "the bloated youth culture of the 60s. I've always had an interest in youth counter- and subcultures." He moved to Chicago in 1984 to attend the University of Chicago, spending one quarter in his sophomore year in France and Ireland. "It was total cultural saturation in my first experience of a place more than 400 years old. Everything was so overwhelming, from the Bayeux tapestries to the apple-and-almond tart I had when I first got there. In Dublin I saw the Book of Kells—the mack daddy of illuminated manuscripts." Back at the U. of C., he discovered that the art-history sequence ended in the 1920s. But the school did bring German contemporary-art historian Benjamin



150 % by John Espinosa, curator Hamza Walker in front of *Poems* by Steven Shearer

Buchloh in to teach during Walker's third year. "His lectures were painfully dense—and brilliant. One on negational strategy that included things like Rauschenberg's erased de Kooning drawing was mind-blowing. I understood that avant-garde art was questioning the museum's authority."

Two key exhibits also helped get Walker interested in contemporary art. In college he saw a Mike Kelley show at the Renaissance Society that included one of John Wayne Gacy's clown paintings, and much before that, the Baltimore Museum of Art installed a Bruce Nauman neon sculpture on its facade. "'Silence,' 'violins,' and 'violence' flashed in succession. It was the coolest. I didn't know it was a work of art, but you see this in middle school, you don't forget it—the ideas of

silence being broken by violence, or of the violin as an instrument of torture." Walker says he doesn't think of his own exhibits as confrontational. But reminded of how important these shows were to him, he replies, "You got me."

Working with artists is the "high" of curating, Walker says—"discussing the larger world with them, and art as a place where we might try to make meaning and sense of the present. I have a deep belief in museums as a place where we reflect on what and who we are. The present may or may not achieve legibility through its art, but even a failure would be saying something—that the present is incredibly heterogeneous and may not make sense to us."

—Fred Camper

More appropriate than an invitation to "Fantastic Adventures," **John Espinosa's** first one-person show (*Fredric Snitzer Gallery, May 14–June 19*), would have been a one-night courtesy pass, because one shouldn't go see this show as much as go "live" it. One has to check into its reality the way one checks into Disney's—swallowing the improbable narratives that serve as foundation, buying into its pseudo-utopia as if it were the real thing, enthralled by the manner in which it slips into the real seamlessly. In fact, the theme park metaphor is acutely insinuated everywhere through scale. *Forever and Ever* (all works 1999) is a six by eight-foot lightbox that depicts a massive explosion. Bereft of depth, it is like an oversized poster that glows the way we've always wanted them to. We find ourselves engulfed in its cool inferno, unscathed. Before *CRG-003*, a five by five foot surface on which a crowd of 170 ceramic figurines (the sort used in architectural maquettes) have been gathered, and *Garden LC.367*, a miniature orange grove, we are spectators overlooking what could be the climax scene of those odd UFO-encounter films. As one moves through the show, one's role continually shifts between spectator and "participant," between being tiny (belittled?) before the immense images and larger-than-life as we look down on the sculptures. The perspectives take advantage of that strange cognitive dimension theme parks and movies have given us.

Espinosa's enthusiasm for contemporary American fantasy is candidly earnest. This is not a critique of spectacular culture. On the contrary, it is an unconditional embrace of it; it is what we have left after we realize we have no place to stand outside the culture industry, after all the roads out have been barricaded. Nowhere do we catch a whiff of the melancholy and longing that drives an antagonistic approach; nowhere do we find signs of that secret yearning to subvert everything. In fact, every work in this show proposes that everything is fantastically fine, better than perfect. The "Blue Bambi" series is an effort to collapse even art into this exciting wonderland. A tiny plastic fawn has been placed next to well-known art pieces—on Judd's plexiglass-topped boxes, in Paul McCarthy's installations, on Beverly Semmes'

translucent fabrics, next to the Nikes the Chapman brothers fit their cunt-face girls with—and documented like the most stringent of conceptual works. This is soft conceptualism, however—Pop conceptualism. It trades the pedantic academicism of conceptual art with the vagaries of a children's story. *Empire*, like its Warhol namesake, is the interminable presence of a single image—in this case, the Cinderella Castle at Disney. Looking to out-pop Pop, the banality is all there but improbably bigger, made somehow impure by the delight we come to feel from the benign building depicted, from the memories it conjures up.

For the heavy burden of deadly-serious conceptual art that Espinosa gets beyond, he deprives us of something else—the idiosyncrasies of a subjectivity that we always come looking for in a work of art. He merely plugs into pop culture, Warhol-like, and flows with its fluctuations. What we miss, despite decades of trumpeting the death of the author, is an authorial presence that is not an absence, the mark of someone who, unlike the rest of us, is more than just carried by the tide of images and stories that have, unresisted, become our shared narrative. Espinosa's "absence" leaves the images he appropriates—Bambi, Spiderman, Magic Kingdom architecture, Hollywood explosions—feeling as anonymous, as soulless, as they are outside the gallery. We can say of the theme park Espinosa has turned his show into what Gertrude Stein said of Oakland: "there is no there there." It is impalpable spectacle. He has left us nowhere and feeling as selfless, as effaced collectively, as he poses. The work registers the opposite of crisis—a stone-hard platitude, the suspect peace of meadows by other means. It gives us the real as a never-never land that is, at once, ours and not ours, just there and forever beyond us. As we do everyday watching television, except in a more poignant way, before Espinosa's work we continually oscillate roles: we are simultaneously conscious agents with critical faculties and inert image consumers. "Fantastic Adventures" poses coyly as an allegory of our Disneyfied contemporary world—and we cannot help but feel the only imperfections burdening its precise landscape.



Hatched from a religious Colombian family in the o' distant land of Orlando, John Espinosa, knew immediately that fakery is a valid as the truth. In his McLuhan-esque world, Spider Man appears to be equally as important as, say, Donald Judd. Manifesting in sculpture, installation, photography and video, Espinosa's work at times pays a fine homage to American conceptual and performance art of the 1960s and 70s.

Fredric Snitzer Gallery presents

YOUNG MIAMI

May 5 - June 16, 2000

Hernan Bas
John Espinosa
Luis Gispert
William Cordova
Naomi Fisher
Gean Moreno

Text by Amy Cappellazzo



B12

Jerusalem Post, Friday, April 28, 2000

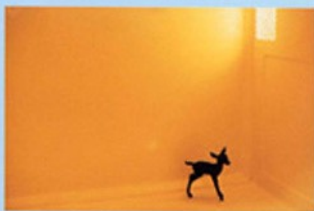
Frida
Art

New art in Miamiland

By **ANGELA LEVINE**

In the work of John Espinosa, who was raised in Orlando, the borders between reality and fantasy appear irrevocably blurred. One set of his color photographs features a blue plastic Bambi, a pathetic figure wandering alone in abstract landscapes (which are in fact details isolated from the paintings of well-known American artists); another features stills of explosions and disasters taken from Hollywood movies.

Top: photographs from the series *Blue Bands*
Bottom: photographs from the series *BPM (Beats per minute)*



ג'ון אספינוזה

המחיר: 100 ש"ח (כולל מע"מ)
המחיר: 100 ש"ח (כולל מע"מ)

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**catalogue excerpt from Mount Miami: American Artists in Tel Aviv
curated by Tami Katz-Freiman at The Tel Aviv Artist Studio
April 5 - May 27, 2000*

The Miami Herald

www.herald.com

Posted on Fri, Sep. 26, 2003

street

ART SEEN / Graphic images

BY DAMARYS OCAÑA

******In the back room, Miami-bred L.A. artist John Espinosa, whose work is not seen often enough here, comes roaring back into town with seven drawings, most of them new. Espinosa's drawings are graceful, haiku-like creations -- usually a single appropriated image, subtly tweaked and pasted onto colored paper. ZZZP is one such drawing -- in the middle of a blue background is a graphic image of a man being zapped by lightning, caught in a moment of transformation, or revelation, themes prevalent in Espinosa's work.

Best of the group is the monochromatic diptych *Heavy at Both Ends* (prismatic mass reconstitution in black and white). A grayscale paper rainbow starts on one paper and ends on the other. At either end are identical pictures of a house destroyed by an earthquake. It's a rigorous, beautiful composition. You can't quite decide whether it's pessimistic or not. **

FEATURES

Exquisite Corpses

Shedding light on the dark side

Britini Rios

"The dark side is not dark at all," says the promotional sign in front of the Renaissance Society's gallery, a sentiment backed up by the artists as they speak to the crowd. The Society's new show, "All the Pretty Corpses," has just opened up on the University of Chicago campus and the neo-gothic theme ensures a full night of death and sex. John Espinosa talks about how his piece "150%" displays the "different levels of composition vs. decomposition" with life-size reindeer models with rhinestone eyes. Raised a Jehovah's Witness, Espinosa is familiar with the delicate line between enthrallment and delusion that his piece embodies, two bucks caught in the battle of their lives, seemingly led to that point by the act of being mesmerized by art.

Tony Tasset wants the audience to explore the sexy gothic nature of religion and the altar with his piece "Grotto," a small manmade cave that could have housed a statue of the Virgin Mother adorned with rosaries just as easily as it holds its dozens of burning and snubbed-out red candles. Tasset jokes about his fondness for black metal as juxtaposition to growing up Catholic, declaring "Marilyn Manson has the best style since probably Ziggy Stardust."

Jay Heikes's piece is a chunk of ceiling from an office building that had been splattered with beet juice and coffee, so as to look like a horrific accident had occurred on the floor above. The project was actually left on the ceiling tiles in an office building being used by non-artists. "The evolution is curious," admits Heikes, "seeing it go through different forms, from social space to gallery-- watching it become an object, become art."

ART REVIEW

Watching out for the world's watchers

By ELISA TURNER
Special to the Herald

Sliding from the alphabet soup of personal ads to urine specimens, from corny *Dragnet* spy scenarios to cross-dressing, dress-for-success mug shots, the art in *Invasion of Privacy* casts a wide, insidious and seamy net. Drug testing, job interviews, deer hunting, hotel check-ins: such events add to the raw material reeled into art.

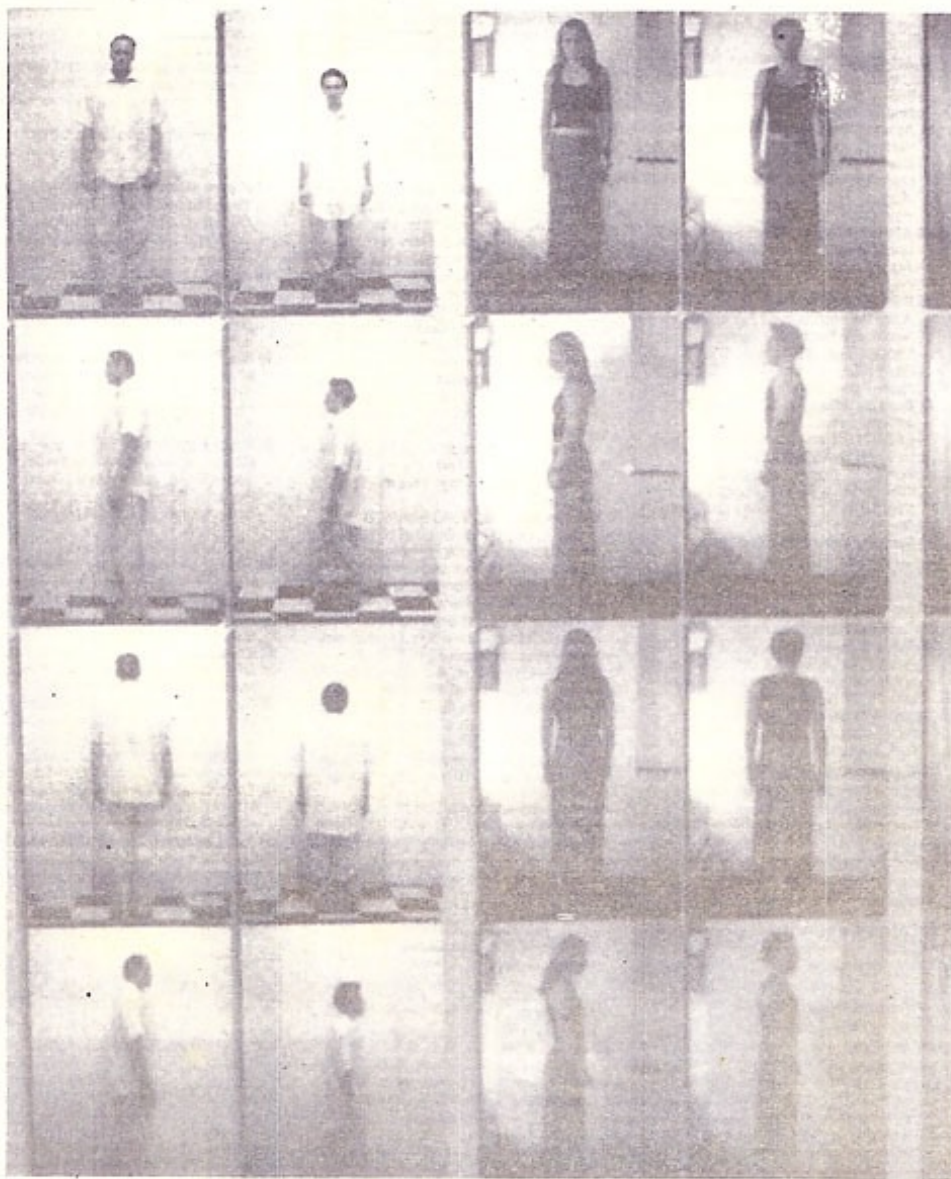
This sharply focused show, the current exhibit at Art1035 of ArtCenter-South Florida, brings together conceptual work by young South Florida artists Norberto Rodriguez, John Espinosa and Emilio Perez. Rodriguez and Espinosa are college students at the New World School of the Arts, and Perez is a recent NWSA graduate.

Curated by the artists themselves, *Invasion of Privacy* is accompanied by a thoughtful essay by Caren Rabbino, Miami Light Project executive director. There's a cynical yet nervy mood to the show, both bemused and down-to-earth about our society's prolific opportunities for turning personal data into public information.

With their installations, photography and mixed-media constructions, the artists don't bore us with familiar tales of mass marketers clicking into our buying habits. Instead, they've made art that recreates the process of privacy invaded. Their work cajoles us into entering the sly, surreptitious relationship between observer and observed.

Wry humor is Rodriguez's style. His *Private Eye* features a desk scattered with photographs of the artist himself, taken by a local detective agency that was hired by Espinosa at Rodriguez's request.

It's a strange parody of privacy stripped bare, revealing little but the dehumanizing mechanics of watching, a central theme of the show. Espinosa also takes the parody approach in his *Hiring a Human*, with a slew of notebooks, answering machine tapes and photos documenting his effort to hire someone to spend eight hours of one day looking at the art in this exhibit.



PARODY: Detail of John Espinosa's *Wearing Other People's Clothes*.

EXPOSIÇÕES



Tudo em seu lugar

DENISE SCHITTINE

John Espinosa arriscou. Escolheu 12 estranhos por anúncio de classificados e fotografou-os com a roupa que estavam. Depois, vestiu suas roupas, ficou no mesmo lugar e foi retratado por elas. Daí surgiu a instalação *Wearing other people's clothes*, com as fotografias semelhantes uma ao lado da outra. A primeira reação do espectador é de estranhamento ao ver John, por exemplo, de meias e salto alto; a segunda sensação é a noção de presença e ausência, que permeia todas as obras da exposição *The present absent: eight artists from Miami to Paço Imperial*.

"Esse mal-estar de usar a roupa do outro e se imaginar na sua identidade foi essencial para pensar a mostra", conta o curador, Lauro Cavalcanti. A exposição, em cartaz no Paço, é parte do projeto Flórida/Brasil, que leva artistas nacionais

aos Estados Unidos e vice-versa. O objetivo é apresentar as obras de uns aos outros. O primeiro intercâmbio, no ano passado, foi daqui para lá, com os cariocas Efrain Almeida, Eduardo Coimbra, Fernanda Gomes, Rosana Palazyan e Maurício Ruiz.

Para fazer a seleção, Lauro buscou obras recentes, principalmente desta década, que trabalhassem a noção de presença e ausência. O curador passou 10 dias na Flórida, visitando seis ateliês por dia. O resultado é esta exposição, com obras de Eugenia Vargas, Rubén Torres-Llorca, Karen Rifas, William Cordova, Luis Gisbert, John Espinosa, Jorge Pantoja e Tom Downs. Pelos nomes pode-se perceber que a maioria tem origem latina – mas Miami é pouco disso também.

□ *The present absent: eight artists from Miami to Paço Imperial* – Paço Imperial, Praça 15, 48, Centro (533-4407). 3ª a dom., do meio-dia às 18h30. Grátis.



John Espinosa fotografou estranhos e depois trocou de lugar com eles

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EMMA GRAY'S TOP 10 SHOWS IN LOS ANGELES THIS MONTH

John Espinosa: Odd Sympathy
Until 13 October
Sandroni Rey Gallery
2762 S. La Cienega Blvd,
Los Angeles, CA 90034
T: +1 310.280.0111

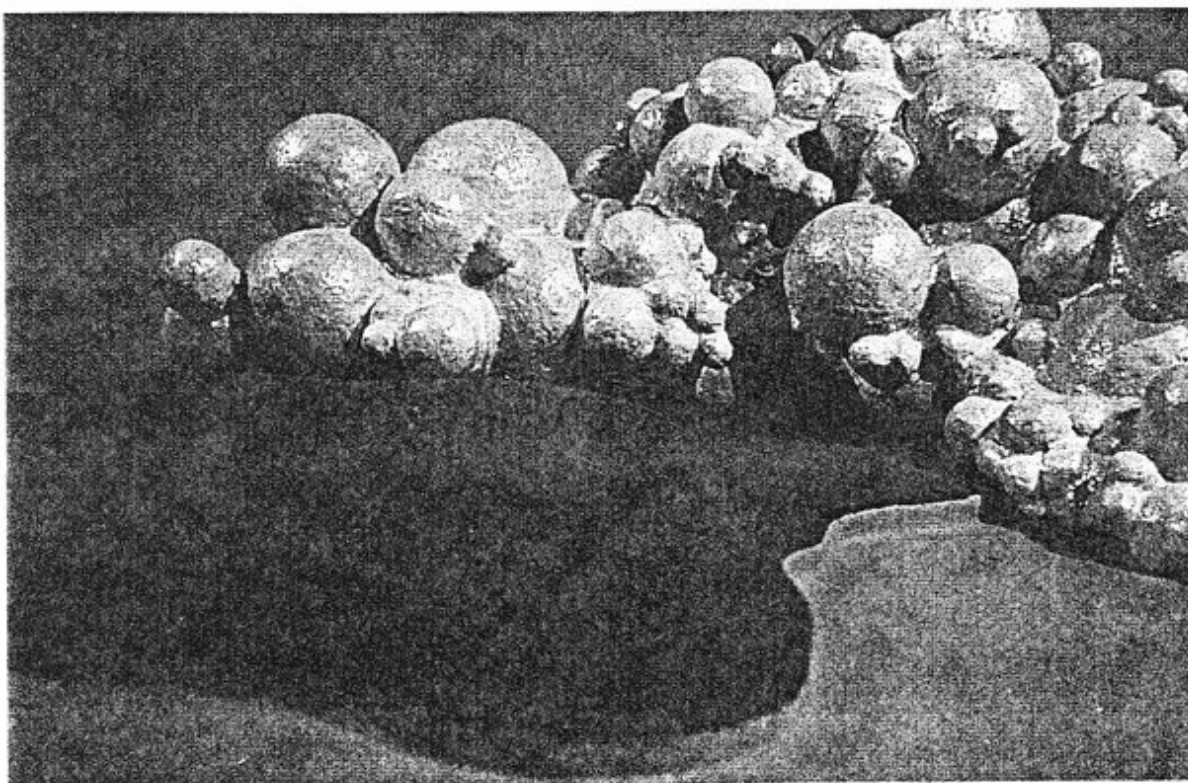


John Espinosa is an artist who traverses the supernatural highways and delves into weird phenomena to find inspiration for his work. For his efforts, he has been rewarded with his first solo show at Sandroni Rey Gallery this month. With an exhibition titled 'Odd sympathy', a term coined by 17th-century physicist Christiaan Huygens for inexplicable natural synchronicity, the last great piece I saw by Espinoza entitled 'Infinite Collapse' held 50 gallons of water from the Bermuda Triangle. 'Odd Sympathy' features two new sculptures, maintaining the artist's fascination with the paranormal. Espinoza's debut has plenty of Eastern promise and a bucket load of his trademark juju.

JANUARY 2001

ART & AUCTION

Miami area museums offer considerable choices this month. Through January 28, the Museum of Contemporary Art hosts "Travels in Hyper-Reality: Making Art in Miami," a look at emerging artists curated by the museum's director, Bonnie Clearwater. Shown below is one highlight from the exhibition, *If you lived here you'd be home already*, a 13-foot-long installation constructed of various synthetic materials, such as athletic turf and plastifoam.



Game in Lights

FRI 11/26

The Museum of Contemporary Art (770 NE 125th St., North Miami) continues to mesmerize Miami with a multimedia exhibition by sculptor John Espinosa. A former Jehovah's Witness from Central Florida, Espinosa creates vibrant, diorama-like structures which seem to hover in midair. Using odd combinations of geometric shapes, UV lights, phosphorescent pigments, mechanical devices, and a recurring presence of animals, Espinosa reveals the teetering balance between revelation and delusion.

-- Chris DeAngelis



invasion of privacy



a group show that was up at the Art Center South Florida Gallery on Lincoln Road for a few months, was the kind of conceptual art-happening that is sorely lacking in our fair city, and it attacked (and humorously entertained) all sorts of notors about personal matters.

Bert Rodriguez's pieces featured stuff like "Refrigerator Magnets" where the owner of the work agrees to a contract where he will receive one magnet a year for the rest of the artist's life, and the terms include requiring the buyer to display them on his refrigerator door. Rodriguez also had a private investigator follow him around and take surveillance photos of him, which you can see while rummaging through the PI's desk, which is part of an installation. He also contributed his own huge, backlit "Playmate Data Sheet", complete with turn-ons and turn-offs.



John Espinosa's work was most quietly daring as he advertised a want ad for a personal assistant and after engaging almost 400 "job candidates", allowed the viewer to look at their job applications, questionnaires, resumes, even listen to them answering the want ads on a message tape. His piece chronicles the levels of dehumanization that are sometimes necessary for even the most rudimentary employment opportunities. Plus he's included hundreds of jars of his urine samples, and a piece called "Clothing Exchanges" that deals with identity and sameness.

Emilio Perez's "Corn Piece" is a wild juxtaposition of different found objects, including corn, a photo and a deer head from some forgotten hunting expedition. This and his "Green Drawing" dealt dramatically and effectively with the private world of memories and the unconscious, as well as with the ravaging of personal history.



As Caren Rabbino, wrote in the essay which accompanies the catalog: "They have emptied a personal invasion by plundering our collective memories." The entire show was one of the better attempted and executed conceptual shows in our area in a long time, and for the three artists, a personal (no pun intended) & public triumph. ☺

TOP LEFT TO RIGHT: CLOTHING EXCHANGES JOHN ESPINOSA, CORN PIECE EMILIO PEREZ, PLAYMATE DATA SHEET BERT RODRIGUEZ, REFRIGERATOR MAGNETS JOHN ESPINOSA



Editor Picks

Art: Sculpture

John Espinosa

“Feel like going on an archaeological dig? John Espinosa never anticipated one when he tore down one of the walls in his studio. There, he found rather puzzling hieroglyphs, doodles and writings. Thus, for his new solo exhibition at Charest-Weinberg Gallery in Wynwood, he relives this discovery through a centerpiece called “The Glass delusion”. Using the uncovered imagery as source material, Espinosa creates an environment that blurs the lines between a believable, “invested” structure and a contrived visual playground. The artist's impressive exhibition history (Miami Art Museum, Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago Contemporary Art Museum, The New Museum in New York, for starters) is sure to provide art aficionados with sufficient intellectual nourishment, and it's doubly sure to offer baffling wonderment to newcomers.

Shana Beth Mason, Flavorpill

artillery

KILLER TEXT ON ART

(March/April 2010)

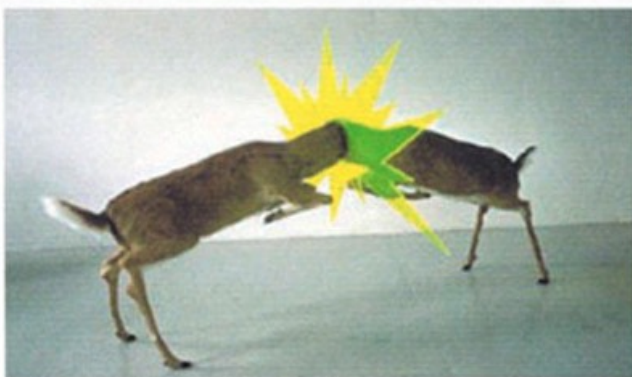
You Can Heal Your Life: artists include: Sister Corita, John Espinosa, Gustavo Godoy, Dawn Kasper, Jason Meadows, Aleksandra Mir, Jen Liu, Josh Podoll, Jeni Spota, Jose Alvarez and Thomas Lanigan Schmidt @ Circus Gallery

Contemporary visual art would most likely never ascribe to any New Age constituencies, or herald the coming of the Golden Age of spirituality. Great art ascribes to nothing but itself, and its own making, taking no sides and no prisoners. Emma Gray knows this, and has put together an exhibition that seeks not so much to delineate any one particular belief system, or debunk another, but rather to create an alliance between the impulse to ask vital questions through visual means as a visual artist and the "visions" that constitute and inform any religious or spiritual practice.

Each of the artists included here address spirituality as an endlessly suggestive and shifting terrain wherein the impulse to worship becomes far more interesting and engaging than any specific "answers" that might be found, or not, on the other end. John Espinosa's "Paranoia Paradise" casts the ever-changing and elusive David Bowie as the grief-stricken Mary, and crying blue and green tears into the bargain. Bowie, like Christ, himself has long been a figure of mythic proportions, sensual and enigmatic, and the pairing of Bowie with Mary, their bodies merged together in this low-tech laser print on shaped wood, only serves to mythologize them all the more. Thomas Lanigan Schmidt's "Purple Box Chapel ca 1970- 1973" incorporates materials such as tinsel, foil, cellophane, saran wrap and glitter into a quiet mélange of wistful longing for the ultimate religious reliquary. The objects that symbolize any religious practice from Christianity to Judaism to Islamic faith, are often more compelling and seductive than the dictates they have come to symbolize, and Schmidt's wonderfully playful and strangely zealous object of false antiquity, is oddly sentimental and reflects a purposefully "crafty" sensibility.

Only Sister Mary Corita's brilliantly colored serigraphs seem out of place here in the studied mishmash of voices and visions. Her words of wisdom, while inspiring, seem out of place paired alongside the more contemporary and youthful visions of artists like Dawn Casper, Josh Podell, Jeni Spota and Jose Alvarez. Her intentions seem more specific and pure, which is valid and affecting, albeit lost among the other voices here.

Making work about a "theme" can be challenging and sometimes difficult, but all in all, the artists in this exhibition have "delivered" themselves forward into the 21st century, and as 2012 is around the corner, we might all do well to heed our own internal tolling of the bell and get with some program, any program, of personal truth and healing wisdom. After all, hell fire might not feel so good after all.



Things You Can and Cannot Learn From TV," at the 'Fourth Annual Altoids Curiously Strong Collection' at the Clifford Smith and OH+T Galleries in Boston.

Out of the box

'The Fourth Annual Altoids Curiously Strong Collection,' Jesse Bransford, Trisha Donnelly, Sam Easterson, John Espinosa, Barnaby Furnas, Luis Gisbert, Erik Hanson, Yun-Fel Ji, Brad Kahlhamer, Katrina Moorhead, Dave Muller, Shane O'Cadja Nash, Dread Scott, Ben Snead, Shirley Tse, Torbjorn Vejvi, Courtney Walker, Dan Webb, John Williams and Amir Zaki.

At the Clifford Smith and OH+T Galleries in Boston.

John Espinosa's "Things You Can Or Cannot Learn From TV (pictured above)," arguably the centerpiece of the Altoids exhibit, places two stuffed deer in what appears to be a head-on collision. A sheet of transparent yellow plastic, cut into a jagged-edged pattern is stationed at the point of violent impact. The plastic, with its pointy edges, looks like an explosion drawn in a comic book. But wait, is it an explosion, or could there be another explanation? Perhaps one deer has met its doppelganger at a passageway to another dimension. This writer prefers the latter, although former is equally plausible.

ARTSCENE™

The Guide to Art Galleries and Museums in Southern California

CONTINUING AND RECOMMENDED EXHIBITIONS

October, 2007



Fantasy collides with an advanced sort of science fair aesthetic in John Espinosa's pair of striking sculptures. Brilliant yellow beams zigzag like cartoon lighting from the eyes of three lavender fawns in "Seconds After, Years Later," which actually advances a related work, "Frozen Upon Entry," done five years ago a few seconds forward in narrative time. Now we are braced to see where this one goes come 2012. "This Wreckage (The Long Count)" presents giant mammoth tusks inside which is sheltered a hidden universe of galactic space. Espinosa is surely a fan of old fashioned space opera and comic books, but wins us over here by the sheer commitment to images that are utterly disparate, yet relate quite clearly to one another (Sandroni.Rey, Culver City).

Sculpture

December 2001 Vol. 20 No. 10 \$6 \$8CAN INTERNATIONAL SCULPTURE CENTER www.sculpture.org

Below: Installation view of John Espinosa's work in the exhibition "Making Art in Miami: Travels in Hyperreality," at the Museum of Contemporary Art.



THE NEW YORKER

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

ART

AUGUST 11, 2008

"ZERO ZONE"

The curator David Hunt borrowed his epigrammatic title from Robert Smithson, who wrote that time is "a zero-zone, wherein the spaceman meets the brontosaurus in a Jurassic swamp on Mars." Demetrius Oliver's celestial photographs feel appropriate to the tripped-out context, as does Jane Benson's creepy tar-and-ostrich-feathers sculpture. Time is certainly a zero zone for the face that appears in John Espinosa's pneumatic sphere: it's a portrait of the beautiful, anonymous Frenchwoman known as "L'Inconnue de la Seine," who drowned in the eighteen-eighties and whose death mask was reportedly used as a model for C.P.R. training mannequins. With works by Ian Cooper, Rashid Johnson, Rosy Keyser, and Siebren Versteeg. Through Aug. 8. (Williams, 313 W. 4th St. 212-229-2757.)



Smoke Signals: Portals y Paisajes

21 May 2012

written by Eddie Arroyo

"... nothing stays permanent" -Hiroshi Sugimoto (interview with Giampaolo Penco: 2007)

A quote which resonates in Smoke Signals: Portals y Paisajes exhibition at Under the Bridge.



John Espinosa

Untitled (1998)

Haunting silhouettes of John Espinosa's "Untitled (1998)", essentially a tiny plastic translucent pillbox. In it there are two black and white photos of a man's back turned towards the viewer. The very nature of using the pill box as a medium reinforces an active effort to change perception and the medical means to do so.

” Its presentation is ever so lovely, intimacy is augmented by scale.

Art

EastSider, January 4, 2001

Interaction at the M.O.A.

The most exciting is "Wish You Were Here," by John and Mauricio Espinosa. This is a video loop of a skywriting plane writing "wish you were here." Watching the carefully edited strip, the viewer will see many art opportunities. At some point, each section of film depicts clouds, blue sky and the plane that writes. Each frame of the loop shows line and design as many modern art pieces do. Each frame is its own art piece. Along with the strip are audio sounds of this plane. Watching this, one's emotions are caught and pulled up and around that blue sky.

Sometimes this loop makes you feel alone and sad at the quiet times. Sometimes it does not. Other times and other sounds, one feels free and easy. This is a wonderful art piece, and very clever.

