

ARTPULSE

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CONTEMPORARY PAINTING**

DYSTOPIAN ABSTRACTION

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CONS: PETER PLAGÉNS IN
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PALIMPSEST

Carol Jazzar Contemporary Art – Miami
Curated by William Córdova

By Heike Dempster

Sometimes really good things do take time to germinate. Such is the case with “Palimpsest.”

Two years of conversations between artists organically evolved into this exhibition curated by artist and writer William Córdova at Carol Jazzar Contemporary Art. Certain themes kept recurring as new thoughts entered the conversation, and the importance of the roles and contributions of older artists became clear. How is the Miami landscape evolving? Is there a place for last generation artists in Miami? What is the current focal point of the Miami art scene?

“Palimpsest”—literally, a manuscript or piece of writing material on which the original writing has been effaced to make room for later writing, but of which traces remain—discusses those questions in a continuation of the initially private conversation.

Says Córdova, “South Florida’s landscape is certainly built upon layers of coral, corruption and castles made of sand in a city where many people struggle but rarely is it collectively.” “Palimpsest” reflects upon these common struggles and investigates our human experience through the works of Dona Altemus, Yanira Collado, Purvis Young, Gary Moore, Rick Ulysse, Salvatore LaRosa, Regina Agu, Lou Anne Colodny, Leslie Hewitt and Gean Moreno.

Whether from a conceptual, abstract, performative, sculptural or realistic angle, each work chosen by Córdova is part of a fragmented narrative connecting past to future. Through the written word, collage, drawing, unconventional painting and reclaimed materials, the artists play with erasure and explore alternative stories.

The story of Miami is a new tale with a plot that moves at a rapid pace. The art scene especially has changed tremendously over the past 10 years alongside the faces of many neighborhoods. As historic buildings are replaced by high-rises and real estate developers are following the artists to create the next trendy hot spot, landscapes are altered forever. The cycle of movement and creation continues as young artists begin to take the reins.

“The past is more infinite than the future,” writes Toni Morrison. Tomorrow, today will be the past, and as we move forward the last generation of then young, now old artists are slowly being excluded. Or are they? Artists of the past leave a mark, and the traces of their work inspire and influence the next generation. The past is the foundation upon which we construct our identity, and each brushstroke or word tells us the story of who we are.

The works in “Palimpsest” are an attempt to bridge a growing gap between the last generation of artists and the current focal points of the Miami art scene. The young artists and their audiences are invited to reconnect with their roots, acknowledge their inspirations and reference a relevant and fundamental catalog of works. We need those works to discover the missing fragments, reassemble them and reclaim them in order to keep them from disappearing. Anyone looking at the almost invisible traces of Purvis Young’s disappearing drawings behind glass can see himself more clearly in the reflection, overpowering the lines drawn long ago. Yet they remain, and they remain relevant, right there, behind the glass, for everyone to see who is willing to look.

As an exhibition, “Palimpsest” makes the invisible visible, whether through deliberate erasure or through time. The works expose layers of what has gone before, exposing bits and pieces of narratives. Some may not be fully legible anymore—or yet. ■

(October 4 – November 17, 2013)

Heike Dempster is a writer and radio host based in Miami and actively involved in the local art scene.



“Palimpsest,” installation view. Photo: Mark Diamond. Courtesy of Carol Jazzar Contemporary Art.