



Baby Wu, 2005. Digital print. Edition of 25.
11 1/2 x 7 1/2 inches. | Photo: Courtesy of Jamel Shabazz.

The group exhibition at "NAILED" is inspired by the book *Nailed: The History of Nail Culture and Dzine* published in 2011, with most of the photographs and sculptural works featured at the Echo Park gallery also appearing in the book. The idea of producing the publication, which traces nail embellishing to Ancient Egypt and the Ming Dynasty, mentions Degas's impressionist sketches of subjects clipping their nails and catalogs nail art around the world through high resolution images, began out of a desire to relive a vivid childhood memory that exists within Rolon.

Known for exploring the practice of customization and its relationship to art, using materials like metals and jewels, and incorporating intricate detail in his sculptures, the Puerto Rican-American artist recalls arriving home from elementary school to a living room that had been transformed into a temporary hair and nail salon. While Rolon's mother provided the family with an additional income, he witnessed the gathering of women from different cultures who at times engaged in gossip. "In Puerto Rico they call them *bochinchera*. [At] home, soap operas were on and all the ladies in the house were talking shit and hanging out and having fun. Just getting to know each other," he says. "[This book] wasn't so much about either hair or nails. It was more about the community that was developed out of this whole thing. I wanted to recreate that same energy and I wanted to recreate that same feeling that I experienced as a child."



Imperial Nails (Mr. Dapper Dan) by DZINE. 2011. Wood, Cast Iron and Neon. 86 x 46 inches. | Photo: Courtesy of the artist.



Custom Middle Finger Ring for Ex-Lovers by DZINE. 2011. Wood, velvet, metal, 24 kt gold leaf, Swarovski crystals, mirror and customized vintage jewelry. 11 x 6 x 5 1/2 inches. | Photo: Courtesy of Alan Shaffer.

In September 2011, Rolon had double exhibitions in New York. *Imperial Nail Salon* presented paintings and sculptures at Salon 94 while *Get Nailed at the New Museum* presented a performance and window installation on weekends, as a nail artist manicured the hands of visitors to the New Museum.

Today, the works on display at "NAILED" are representative of the distinguishing subcultures that comprise the nail community. This overall message of the exhibition is one that Alonzo found important to illustrate.



Manicured nails at Nailympics by Simone Lueck for Vice Magazine. | Photo: Courtesy of the artist.

The welcoming art piece at SUBLIME PROJECTS is "Imperial Nails," a wood and cast iron sign created by DZINE that illuminates in multi neon colors. Other pieces by the artist include "Custom Middle Finger Rings for Ex-Lovers" a series of flashy, customized accessories constructed in 24-karat gold and Swarovski crystals placed in purple velvet boxes.

New York-based artist Mickalene Thomas' self-portrait "Negress With Green Nails" and Chris Mosier's documentation of nail technicians working on the hands of customers and the resulting nail art are representative of the fashionable aspects of nail culture. Street portraits by Jamel Shabazz, Liz Baca's nail sets created to correspond to a black pair of Chanel shoes, and Gabriella Davi-Khorasaneework's photographs of matching nails to sneakers are all indicative of urban styling. Catherine Wong's extravagant nail creations and the images of a fantasy garden and a creature-filled sea world on the body of a model, photographed during the annual **Nailympics** event in Long Beach, by Simone Lueck, demonstrate highly elaborate work.



Negress With Green Nails by Mickalene Thomas. 2005. C-Print 31 x 48 inches.
From an Edition of 3 | Photo: Courtesy of the artist.



Dia de los Muertos-themed nails at Naillympics by Simone Lueck for Vice Magazine. | Photo: Courtesy of the artist.

"This [nail art] tradition, is very much alive and it coerces its way through various strata of contemporary culture, from fine art, to the street, to just everyday commerce and then in these kind of crazy festivals, as well," Alonzo says. "I wanted to show a panorama."

Lueck, the Los Angeles-based photographer who documented the two-day, intense, nail competition for *Vice Magazine* this summer, wasn't aware of the magnitude of the nail art community until completing the assignment. At the event, she recognized a large number of Day of the Dead-themed nails. "It just made me realize that pretty much any culture could adopt nails as an art form and make it their own," she says.



Liz Baca nail set. | Photo: Courtesy of Alan Shaffer.



Guests attend opening night of 'NAILED' at SUBLIMINAL PROJECTS. | Photo: Courtesy of Alan Shaffer.

As "NAILED" continues at SUBLIMINAL PROJECTS, a pop-up nail salon that will be operated by nail artist **Madeline Poole** is scheduled to take place as a live performance piece during closing weekend. As far as having his mother experience the "Imperial Nail Salon," Rolon has plans to present a related nail art project in Chicago next year for her to attend.

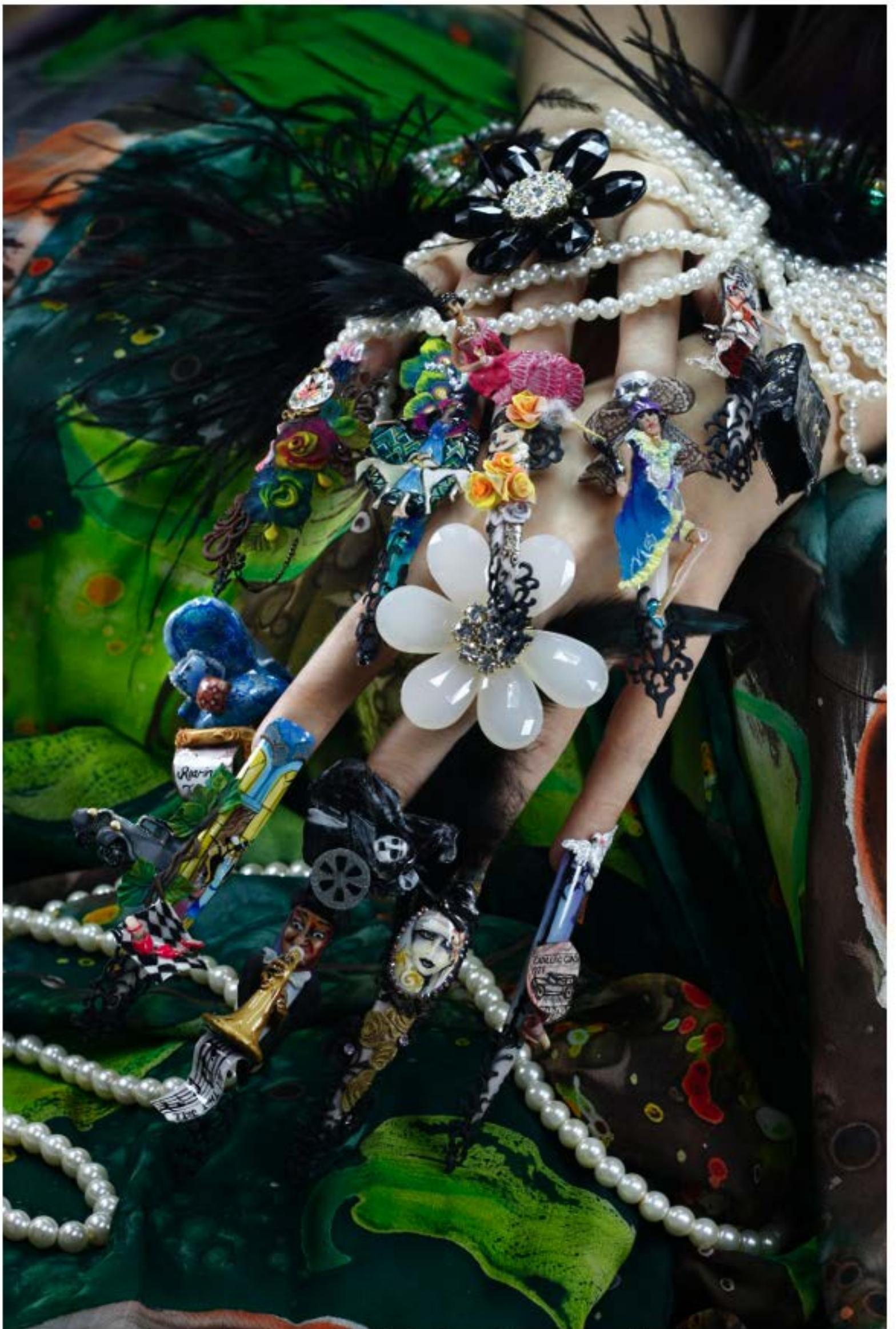
"It's hard for her to grasp the concept of how big it's become but I think we're going to do the project at the **Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago**. I think then she'll really grasp the idea," he says.



Manicured nails at Nailympics by Simone Lueck for Vice Magazine. | Photo: Courtesy of the artist.



Manicured nails at Naillympics by Simone Lueck for Vice Magazine. | Photo: Courtesy of the artist.



Roaring 20's Green by Catherine Wong | Photo: Courtesy of the artist.