

sculpture

December 2017
Vol. 36 No. 10

A publication of the
International Sculpture Center
www.sculpture.org



**Line
Between
Object
and
Shadow**

**Chiharu Shiota
Tim Noble & Sue Webster**





Left: Mario Petrirena, *the inaudible voice of it all*, 2017. Clay, plastic flowers, and found objects, installation view. Below: Mario Petrirena, *daddy come ride with me*, 1987. Clay and found objects, 31 x 60 x 36 in.



Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* in the distance. And on and on, each collage more entertaining than the last. *many among the many* (2017), a dazzling miscellany of crocheted doilies juxtaposed with collages bearing Moorish patterns, covered a wall in the third space, the extravagant designs meant to affirm the redemptive quality of beauty. The doilies (many crafted by Petrirena's mother) represent an art largely practiced by women and, though admirable in its creativity, now sidelined in favor of more sophisticated media. The Islamic designs recall not only Petrirena's time in Spain, but also the seductive allure of geometric perfection, an ideal divorced from the world of appearances.

Tapping into Petrirena's Catholic heritage, *the inaudible voice of it all* (2017), in the last room, evoked mortality with a sizable glass "coffin," suggestive of the transparent reliquaries that hold the uncorrupted bodies of saints. Underscoring the reference to death, he filled the container with brightly hued plastic flowers—those formerly placed by graves—and surrounded the "coffin" with "altars." Though each bears a personal association, collectively they bring to mind the food-laden Saint Joseph altars set up by pious women in Latin American countries—and parts of Catholic America—on the saint's feast day. One such "altar" is a knotted length of wood, suggestive of a garden, set in a metal "cage," an emblem for Petrirena of time's passage. Even as he offers fragmentary, fleeting glimpses of himself, Petrirena touches universal truths—family ties, beauty, and final demise.

—Dorothy Joiner

MIKE MCKENNEY, COURTESY THE ARTIST

Largely autobiographical, the first room "introduced" Petrirena as a Cuban-American who came to the U.S. during the '60s in the aftermath of Castro's takeover, followed almost a year later by his parents. A battered tricycle next to a ceramic hand, *daddy come ride with me* (1987) is a poignant appeal to his hard-working but

undemonstrative father, who lost several fingers in a sugar mill accident in Belle Glade, Florida.

Caustically humorous collages in the second room, tellingly titled *laughing to keep from crying* (1997–2016), revealed Petrirena's political bias—a decidedly liberal defense of the hard-earned freedoms that his family came to America to find.

In a simple blue shirt, Sarah Palin smiles broadly, holding the head of Glenn Beck in a flower pot, with the Mona Lisa in the background. Mitch McConnell, wearing a child's red dress, cuddles a teddy bear as he gazes sanctimoniously upward, flames erupting behind him. In self-righteous clerical garb, Rick Santorum stands erect in the Sistine Chapel,



Left: Carlos Rolón, *Trophy Room*, 2017. Chair, TV, TV console, poster, personal objects, Roberto Duran painting, and trophies, installation view. Below: Carlos Rolón, *My Father's Wishes (No. 3)*, 2014. Wallpaper, wood, mirror, 24-kt. gold leaf, quartz crystals, sunglasses, and bronzed boxing gloves, 50 x 64 in.

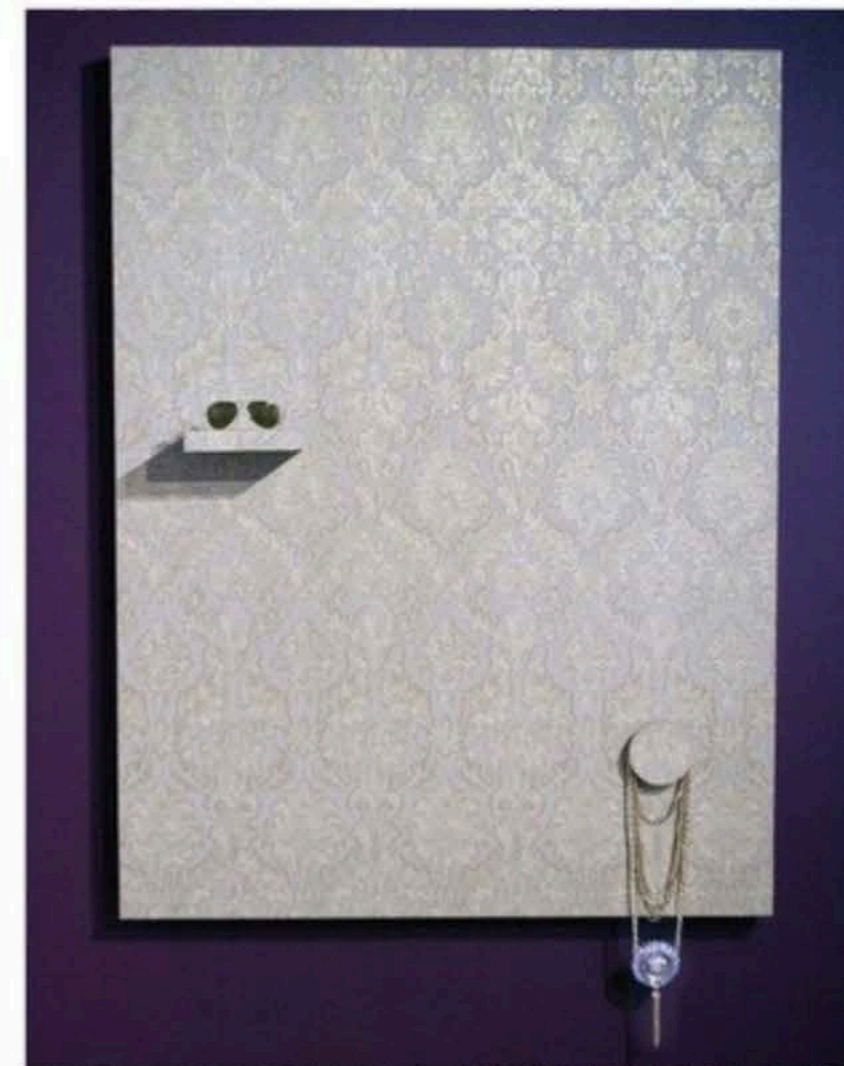
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

Carlos Rolón

Big Car Collaborative—Tube Factory artspace

With the seasonal spectacles of the Indianapolis 500, NFL football, and NBA and NCAA basketball ingrained into the cityscape, Indianapolis often identifies as a "sports town," perhaps to the exclusion of other aspects of culture. Given Big Car Collaborative's mission regarding place-making and cultural inclusion, Carlos Rolón's recent exhibition, "50 Grand," was calculated not only to introduce quality work by a rising artist, but also to attract a widely diverse audience, including sports aficionados and Latino viewers. Big Car went well beyond cultural representation by offering unusual programming, such as live boxing in one of Rolón's installations.

Rolón (who sometimes identifies as Dzine) creates custom lowrider cycles, cars, and boats, as well as visually rich, populist baroque installations. Much like Luis Jiménez and Pepón Osorio, Rolón deals with expressions of Latino culture as well as its stereotypes, often calculatedly embellishing his objects in simulta-



neously sincere and hyperbolic statements of his Puerto Rican heritage. *Trophy Room* (2017), for instance, features a trophy-filled, wood-paneled TV room, drawing viewers into a bio-

graphical scenario—boxing was critically important to Rolón's relationship with his father—that opens into a larger question of whether, and to what extent, fighters such as Roberto

Durán and Héctor Camacho, Latinos who broke into popular U.S. culture, should serve as role models.

Rolón's controlled gaudiness took center stage in a gallery of 10 dazzling, reflective wall works. An echo of colonial Spanish Baroque appears in the scroll patterns, mirrored escutcheons mounted to wood panels, and the intensity of the visual effects. While these works reference painting, some, such as *Untitled (Trophy Jacket No. 2)* (2014), are decidedly sculptural, with their sequins, quartz-crystal rhinestones, glass beads, and massings of fabric. Mimicking aspirational diamonds and precious metals, Rolón's materials are nothing more than faux bling until he transmutes them into rich compositions. These elements have an optical explosiveness—like the flashes of thousands of cameras at a prizefight—and possess a queer aspect. Sequins and beads are gendered not only in terms of ornamentation, but also in terms of labor: sewing and beading are not male work. But as part of the spectacle of boxing, such embellishments paradoxically seem to heighten the boxer's hyper-masculinity—the razzle-dazzle sets the sport's Spartan brutality in high relief.

In another gallery, Rolón assembled a full boxing ring. While *50 GRAND* (2017) served as the stage for real boxing matches during the run of the exhibition, most of the time, the installation was occupied only by an empty costume. It was as if Nick Cave had created a Soundsuit for a pugilist—a black robe made spectacular with silver,



Left: Judy Pfaff, *Turtle*, 2016. Digital print, resin, expanded foam, binding wire, and pressed fauna. Below: Judy Pfaff, *Untitled*, 2016. Melted plastic, paper, expanded foam, acrylic, resin, and artificial flowers, 75 x 75 x 10 in. Both from "Hearts and Bones."

exhibition with a certain poetic resonance that connected the two artists. Pfaff's commanding *Turtle* (2016), a major floor-to-ceiling installation, revolves around a large circular digital print, borrowed from a painting by Henri Rousseau but utterly transformed, covered in resin with hardened lumps of expanded foam creating a landscape of pressed fauna, all held together with binding wires attached to the ceiling. One might call this the centerpiece of the exhibition given its theatricality—the relation of whole and detail unfolded across the space in an effect not unlike that of pointillism. The fantastic beauty of *Turtle* emerged in the process of walking around it from a distance and seeing the

majestic evanescent forms slowly passing through one another.

Pfaff also contributed several collaged wall pieces to the show, three encased in large Plexiglas frames, as well as an ensemble of concise wiry drawings, each framed under glass and mounted over another large digitized print. *Untitled* (2016) was difficult to miss, with its gyrating circular gestures in bright reds and yellows. Pfaff's mixes of materials are hard to imagine without seeing the physical work. In this wall relief, the unlikely array ranges from melted plastic to pigmented, expanded foam, to artificial flowers. As in *Turtle*, these elements are woven together, but not according to a grid or any other predetermined plan. They are put into place during the course of making a highly imaginative construct, one that needs few words to explain.

Kennedy's figuratively energetic paintings impress me as having another mode of eccentric thought behind them. Following her small



gold, yellow, and magenta sequins and beads.

"50 Grand" took its title from a Hemingway short story about boxing in which the protagonist can win only by betting against himself. He saves the situation with a cheap shot after his opponent attempts to throw the fight. A cynical edge seems to undercut Rolón's celebratory bling—and perhaps therein lies a message about boxers as anti-heroes forged in glitz and violence.

—William V. Ganis

NEW YORK "Hearts and Bones"

ART100 New York

Sometimes the intentions of artists do not fit the categories assigned to their mediums. There can be cross-overs between sculpture and painting, for instance, in which the connecting link is about content rather than form. Such was the case with "Hearts and Bones," a show that featured installations and drawings by Judy Pfaff and paintings by Kharis Kennedy.

Curated by Michelle Loh, "Hearts and Bones" was a curiously intense

Entang Wiharso, *Double Protection*, 2015. Graphite, resin, color pigment, thread, and steel, 167 x 108 x 107 cm.



ently judging while making it clear that American-style insatiability deserves censure. His integrity is fierce and clear.

—Jonathan Goodman

BRATTLEBORO, VERMONT

Carolyn Enz Hack

Brattleboro Museum & Art Center

Entering the Brattleboro Museum's Mary Sommer Room project space and encountering Carolyn Enz Hack's *Change Your Mind* was an experience that clearly called for opening one's perception. The enormous spiral form, suspended on filament, filled the room like a magical life unfurling before one's eyes, somewhat akin to a fiddlehead fern in spring. The form was so continuous that it seemed as if it would go on traveling through space. On closer inspection, the complex interweaving of circles and squares cut out of wire mesh became apparent, though there was a plentiful sense of mystery, which led the viewer on a journey of exploration to try to figure out just how, exactly, Enz Hack accomplished this marvelous over-all effect.

Enz Hack says that her work with translucent media relates to an earlier fascination with attempting to paint the ever-mutable flow of water—an apt description of *Change Your Mind* as it vibrated in space.

The 16-foot-long piece was lit from within by LED lights, which cast a subtle inner glow through the myriad layers of mesh. The cuts in the mesh created a sense of torn fabric and indefinite edges. Suspended chips of glittering, reflective silver and blue Mylar cast glints of light in every direction, bringing to mind a certain kind of snowfall in which large, crystalline flakes cause multiple light refractions.

Enz Hack is a consummate colorist, using iridescent tones of analogous

paintings dealing with the exact scientific weight and measurement of light (a rather sculptural idea). Kennedy's figurations, such as *Vag Cig* (2016) and the series "White Collar Goes Black" (2014), give us a striking awareness of the human condition in the Virgin Islands (where she has resided for six years). If there were ever a good argument that you do not need to live in a big city to find inspiration, it is here. Kennedy's paintings are ruthless, sexy, and tender, filled with groping energy and quirky nonsense that altogether makes visual sense. Pfaff's bristling forms could not find a more incisive or more accurate complementary response.

—Robert C. Morgan

NEW YORK

Entang Wiharso
Marc Straus Gallery

Entang Wiharso, based in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and Rhode Island, titled his recent show "Promising Land." It's not clear if this referenced terrain is American or Indonesian, but most likely Wiharso is referring to the dream of affluence and ease identi-

fied with the U.S. and now emulated around the world. His recent work has increasingly turned toward a critique of the Americanization of global culture, looking askance at the heightened materialism that threatens to overwhelm the spiritual insight associated with Asian tradition. His low reliefs often incorporate brightly colored cars from the past, when the American dream seemed innocent, but they are also dense with trepidation and confusion, crowded with randomly distributed figures, whose skewed positions feel like a declaration of moral anarchy. Wiharso may not be setting himself up as a prophet condemning materialism, but his gaudy, busy treatments of contemporary life look like judgments on our obsession with goods and our indifference to suffering.

The dark tableau *Nowhere to Go* (2016) centers on a yellow Volkswagen van, the vehicle of choice for 1960s hippies. Inside, the driver (perhaps Wiharso himself), who is accompanied by three skeletons dressed in suits and two women, communicates with one of the skeletons by means of a metal tube. The top of

the bus carries a woman in a pink dress, her hands bound behind her, a shirtless boy holding a lead tube, and the head of a bald man licking the heel of the boy's boot. Underneath the bus are two young men with dreadlocks in dark-green shirts and several silver figures, two of them dressed in Superman suits. Other figures add to the turbulent scene. A panorama of contemporary life, *Nowhere to Go* is also a modern allegory of hell.

In *Double Protection* (2015), life-size figures of Wiharso and his wife sit on the floor, embracing each other. Both hold weapons: Wiharso, a knife; his wife, a sword. Though it might appear that they are about to engage in combat, they are literally watching each other's backs. The image is meant as a warning—our times require a sharp defense against unseen enemies intending to destroy intimacy and trust. In *Double Protection*, personal allegory doubles as social concern. Wiharso describes the doubtful pleasures of a life devoted to entertainment and thoughtless ease, intimating his criticisms rather than transpar-