



Art Miami Focus - Five Artworks Commanding Attention

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MIAMI BEACH, FL

For its 24th edition, Art Miami presented around 125 galleries. Installation, sculpture and mixed media works were strong. There were a few, however, that seemed to jump across the fair and grab my attention. This phenomena began at the art fair entrance and continued throughout the fair.

The first artwork to grab my eye was ***Accumulation of Disorder*** by [Lionel Smit](#). Positioned to the immediate left of the entrance, I began eyeing the floor installation through the glass window while still outside on the sidewalk so my feet immediately knew where to take me.

Accumulation of Disorder was a floor installation of 40 hand-painted cast resin busts that visitors couldn't stop photographing. The installation was inherently compelling with its gathering of oversize human heads painted in bright colors that overtook a large patch of concrete floor near the Art Miami entrance.

The installation attracted, repelled and then quietly commanded contemplation. It beckoned viewers to come closer to witness the beauty of face and quiet dignity manifested on each piece yet the repelled with the dual realization that each face was identical except for the unique "war paint" that fully encompassed each head. Ultimately, *Accumulation of Disorder* commanded attention and a long look while searching for the meaning of it all.

The installation by the South African artist was presented by [Cynthia-Reeves](#) (New York City). Large-scale paintings by Smit were exhibited inside the gallery's booth.



"Accumulation of Disorder" by Lionel Smit, 2012. Installation of 40 heads in cast resin hand-painted with automotive paint. Exhibiting with Cynthia-Reeves Gallery (New York City). Photo by Kathy Zeiger.

Contemplation of the implied conflicts found in a world dominated by cultural discord, politics and disorder were abruptly broken by the gurgling sound of nearby babble and the visual call of a wall of video screens screaming

with color and visual chaos.

Welcome to the installation with the longest title ever: ***I Have a Feeling I Shall Go Mad. I Cannot Go On Longer in These Terrible Times. I Shan't Recover This Time. I Hear Voices and Cannot Concentrate on My Work. I Have Fought Against It But Cannot Fight Any Longer...Naww, Fuck It, I'm Good.*** by Cameron Gray.

The artwork itself is made up of 27 HD monitors and 27 video players projecting quivering images. With all the implied motion and chaos, I kept waiting for the screens to change. They didn't seem to but I kept waiting anyhow (the images are actually projected on a seven-minute loop but my eye didn't pick up the changing motion).

There were plenty of intriguing details to keep me mesmerized—every inch of each separate video screen is filled with collaged and layered object imagery. The visual chaos drew me and thoughts began to bubble if I could find meaning if I stood there and gazed long enough.

In case I was inclined to try, a chair and end table chocked with crumbled snack packages and discarded newspaper pages lay in wait a few feet away. The chair was positioned as if the installation was, in fact, a flat screen and long-term TV watching was enviable. When the art fair had its Opening a few days before, the installation sprung to life with the addition of a person seated in the chair—blindly staring—to drive the point home.

Gray's work was exhibited by [Mike Weiss Gallery](#).



"I Have a Feeling I Shall Go Mad. I Cannot Go On Longer in These Terrible Times. I Shan't Recover This Time. I Hear Voices and Cannot Concentrate on My Work. I Have Fought Against It But Cannot Fight Any Longer...Naww, Fuck It, I'm Good." by Cameron Gray, 2011. 27 HD Monitors, 27 media players, 7 minute video, loops infinitely. Exhibiting with Mike Weiss Gallery. Photo by Kathy Zeiger.



Detail of "I Have a Feeling I Shall Go Mad. I Cannot Go On Longer in These Terrible Times. I Shan't Recover This Time. I Hear Voices and Cannot Concentrate on My Work. I Have Fought Against It But Cannot Fight Any Longer...Naww, Fuck It, I'm Good." by Cameron Gray, 2011. 27 HD Monitors, 27 media players, 7 minute video, loops infinitely. Exhibiting with Mike Weiss Gallery. Photo by Kathy Zeiger.

I did manage to tear myself away from the video installation and rejoined Art Miami. It wasn't long before more art stopped in my tracks. This time, it was a life-size figurative sculpture that screamed suicide by sex game followed by confusion and a question. It was the lightbulb that did it: 'Why would anyone lick a live light bulb?,' I wondered.



"Hanging Practices to Suck the Light" by Bernardi Roig.
Cast aluminum and mixed media sculpture, 72 x 60 inches. Exhibited by Claire Oliver (New York City). Photo by Kathy Zeiger.

More questions arose after a few steps when another life-size figurative sculpture seem to lie in wait around the corner of Claire Oliver's exhibition booth. This time the man (who looked exactly like the light-bulb licker) was affixed against a framework of rectangular bars. He also had his top pants button undone.

I moved back-and-forth so I could see both works in a single gaze and then waffled between them to take a closer look. Each sculpture was porcelain white that enhanced the opposition between heavenly light and hellish intent. I couldn't tear my eyes away (even though I wanted to).

The distinctive figurative art is the work of [Bernardi Roig](#) (Spanish, born 1965) and was exhibited by [Claire Oliver](#) (New York City). Roig's sculptures and installations typically makes use of fluorescent lighting as a direct symbolize of "blinding light" that...well, blinds us. Concerned with death, mortality, eroticism, the overstimulation of living in contemporary society and the isolation and severing of intimacy among humans, Roig's Artist Statement describes his work as conceptual minimalism that explores "...man's desire to get along."

The gallery describes Roig's work this way in a written statement:

"Roig is obsessed with death and immortality, aesthetics and eroticism, and the "idée fixe" that the thinking man must reclaim his forfeited ability to relate to others on an intimate level....Roig speaks to the viewer through his solitary man by forcing us to confront our desires, the human concepts of progress, and social change - all of which remain unfulfilled.

"With these elusive, undefined objectives the Artist invites a dialogue on the multiple identities of the contemporary man, seen in the light of art and philosophy. It is this, the Artist's realm of unwritten poetry, which lingers in our mind's eye long after the works are out of view.

"For Roig, desire is the only thing that keeps death at arm's length. It is this tangible proof that we are here, struggling to achieve higher consciousness that defies the vacuum of meaning that exists in a large part of present day art..."



"The Invisibility of Memory" by Bernardi Roig. Polyester resin, marble dust, iron, TV, 14 x 67 inches. Photo by Kathy Zeiger.

While Roig's sculptures riveted me to the floor, it was the drawings that caught my heart. Delicate and revealing, a series of drawings for his larger works were exhibited inside the gallery's booth.

Roig's art will be the subject of a solo show at Claire Oliver in New York City. "Bernardi Roig: The Mirror (exercises to be another)" will be exhibited from Dec. 13, 2013 to Jan. 11, 2014. A reception with the artist will be held on Dec. 13 from 6 to 8 p.m.



"El Bebedor de Aguardiente (i)" by Bernardi Roig, 2013. Exhibited Claire Oliver (New York City).

Mixed media sculptures by **Li Hongbo's "Tools of Study"** moved me to the lighter side. At first glance, the works seemed like classic busts that were easy to walk past while on the lookout for contemporary art. The crowds that gathered made me immediately reconsider. In short order, I discovered why.

A gallery assistant lifted the top of one of the "busts" to reveal an unfurling of an accordion of paper. Swaying easily, the paper took on a honeycomb appearance and swung into a slinky-toy motion-curving this way and that way-before the gallery assistant restored the surprising center to its majestic figurative home.



Examining the mixed media sculptures from Li Hongbo's "Tools of Study" series exhibited at the Eli Klein Gallery booth at Art Miami 2013. Photo by Kathy Zeiger.



Demonstrating a surprise element with one of the sculptures from Li Hongbo's "Tools of Study" series at the Eli Klein Gallery booth at Art Miami 2013.

Li Hongbo's work was presented by [Eli Klein Gallery](#), which also had art fair attendees talking about the realistic sculpture of an ancient reclining naked woman whose "privates" were fully exposed and gaping. The work was installed in a separate booth elsewhere at Art Miami.

Li's work goes beyond clever. The contemporary Chinese artist (Beijing, China, b. 1974) channels "a paper gourd" process used in China to make paper decorations to explore the material of paper, Li explained in a YouTube video created by Crane.tv. By selecting the shapes of objects that are ordinary and typically stationary (statues, tree trunk, skulls, gourds, toy guns, etc.), the element of surprise is that much stronger. So is the impact on viewers.

Li's fascination with paper began in the course of being a book publisher, he said in the video. The process of matching paper type and style with text content to marry the design struck a chord and he began to wonder about the possibility of paper in building sculpture. Li's works are laboriously built, sheet-by-sheet, until a form is constructed and sculpted with art making philosophies and engineering principles in mind so the work becomes art that can move without crumbling the sculpture's integrity.

Li's work will be included as one of the exhibitions opening Eli Klein Gallery's new Chelsea location (New York City) in January. The gallery was formerly in SoHo. "Li Hongbo: Tools of Study" opens Jan. 9, 2014 and continues through Mar. 2, 2014).

To see the process, watch this video from Crane.tv:

Growing quieter even still, the installation *Collateral Project* by Angel Marcos beckoned me across the art fair. Standing before it, the work seemed to urge me to stop and examine the wooden structure and the series of suspended images with time to sneak in a wonder about the carpets placed on the cement floor beneath the work.

Each image bore the same dimensions and hung loose suspended from a single bar. It felt like the presentation could have been symbols for unfamiliar flags, crisp yet strange laundry hung out to dry, or slim tapestries revealing something of import in a code that needed to be deciphered.

The label on the wall explained much but said little. "*Collateral Project* by Angel Marcos- 55th Venice Biennale 2013". The installation was exhibited by [Galerie Ernst Hilger](#) (Vienna). A nearby brochure provided more.

Collateral Project was part of the larger exhibition "[Intimate Subversion](#)" that was one of the official collateral events of the recent [55th Venice Biennale](#). It was presented from June 1 to Sept. 30, 2013 at cuola di San Pasquale, Castello 2786 (San Francesco della Vigna) courtesy of MUSAC (Castile and

Leon Museum of Contemporary Art) and curated by Luca Massimo Barbero.

"Intimate Subversion" was an experiential exhibition that used multiple media for forms to "...examine the ways and means whereby the power of the economy and the market, as well as politics, are reflected in society," according to the exhibition brochure.

The concept plays upon the Latin phrase *pecunia non olet* (money does not smell), a comment made by Emperor Vespasian to his son Titan when questioned if the Emperor felt shame about charging for the use of public toilets in Rome, the brochure recounted.

"A metaphor for an aesthetic and odourless world, this anecdote points to society's increasing remoteness from the organic matter that disgusts it, a society bent upon putting a shiny gloss on reality by giving it an agreeable look, since every image, product and realm of life is conceived as being unblemished and 'deodorised,'" according to the exhibition statement.

Marcos provided a personal view by describing where and how his interest in "Intimate Subversion" began. He traced the origins to his roots growing up in a remote farming community in Spain that was removed from urban centers. Isolation from major cities gave rise to the forging of close personal relationships among neighbors which gave rise to a social dynamic and a result coined 'Intimate Subversion'.

"Moreover, they are neighborhoods where the decisions made by a single resident are immediately noticed by everyone else, as a result of which the order of the community is simultaneously altered. By virtue of the very fact that these alterations are immediately discerned, they are not unidentified but a *scent*. That is 'intimate subversion', that part of our thinking, our affectivity and our activities that we recognize in others."

While the installation at Art Miami was only a single part of exhibition, it was a powerful one that allowed a voyeuristic view into images that invoked closely-held values, unstaged family homes, personal items and snapshots made it difficult to look upon and not feel that privacy was being invaded.

The rugs installed below strengthen the sensation of being privy to an intimate view of numerous families who remain unseen but can be introduced through glimpses of household objects, furniture, family photographs and religious items. There was a uncomfortableness in being able to look upon these personal touches. It was accompanied by the wondering that if I crossed beyond the wooden frame to surround myself with strangers whether they would embrace or rebuke and if a connection and understanding would come or would distance prevail.



A partial installation from the exhibition "The Intimate Subversion", an official Collateral Event of the 55th Venice Biennale 2013 by Angel Marcos. The installation was exhibited by Galerie Ernst Hilger (Vienna).
Photo by Kathy Zeiger



Detail of a partial installation from the exhibition “The Intimate Subversion”, an official Collateral Event of the 55th Venice Biennale 2013 by Angel Marcos. The installation was exhibited by Galerie Ernst Hilger (Vienna). Photo by Kathy Zeiger



Detail of a partial installation from the exhibition “The Intimate Subversion”, an official Collateral Event of the 55th Venice Biennale 2013 by Angel Marcos. The installation was exhibited by Galerie Ernst Hilger (Vienna). Photo by Kathy Zeiger

Words by Pat Rogers and photographs by Kathy Zeiger.

BASIC FACTS: Art Miami presented its 24th edition from Dec 3 to 8, 2013 at Miami’s Midtown Wynwood Arts District. www.art-miami.com.

RELATED: “[Art Miami 2013: Art on the Wild Side Part I](#)” and “[Art Miami: Art on the Wild Side Part II](#)”.

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