

HYPERALLERGIC

ARTICLES

Three Art Professionals share their “Developing” Art Experience



Claire Breukel October 12, 2011



Ruben Ochoa and Marco Rios, *Rigor Motors*, 2004-2008, Wood, speaker box fabric, car jack, coffin handles, Courtesy of the artists, © Ruben Ochoa & Marco Rios. Photo © Kristine Thompson.

Miami — Artists from “developing” parts of the world are becoming integrated in to mainstream global art dialogue and more readily come in to contact with art professionals working in the rest of the world. In fact, the creative diaspora of many “developing” regions is often larger than within the region itself — Jamaica being a case in point. As a result many exhibitions attempt tackle regions head on in an

attempt to somehow survey these demographics and its diaspora — *“Snap Judgments: New Positions in Contemporary African Photography”* collated “individual responses” of photographers throughout Africa, whilst the [Latin American pavilion](#) at the 2011 Venice biennale exhibited one artist from each country in Latin America under an open title *Between Forever and Never*. These kinds of exhibitions are precarious as they often fall prey to stereotyping artistic practice solely according to its geography instead of finding common thematics. Some exhibitions have however succeeded to address regions in

interesting and relevant ways.

I asked three art professionals I deeply respect, who live in three culturally different cities, to share an artist or an exhibition they feel provided interesting insight in to contemporary artistic practice within “developing” parts of the world.

Deborah-Jean (DJ) Harmon, New York



Deborah-Jean (DJ)
Harmon, New York
(Photo by the
author)

Phantom Sightings: Art after the Chicano Movement, LA

In September of 2008, I had the pleasure of attending *Phantom Sightings: Art after the Chicano Movement*, a group exhibition curated by Rita Gonzalez, Howard N. Fox and Chon A. Noriega. The new wing of the [LACMA](#) had just opened. It was a fine day in LA.

Exhibiting some 100 plus multi-media artworks from mainly conceptual Mexican-American artists, this show showed — but not in a showy way — how redefining cultural traditions and art historical traditions is possible, even if it was inadvertent. [The Chicano Movement](#) carved for many a socially empowerment of culture and allowed artists to freely recapitulate false pop-culture stereotypes into highly esteemed works of art. This show embraced a part of that — only a part, and I liked that.

Coupled with a sincere reaction to these artists’ worlds was a sliver of rebellion. Ken Gonzales-Day’s *Erased Lynchings, 2006-7* manipulated vintage postcards of early 20th-century California lynchings where the victims were digitally removed. The dark work by Ruben Ochoa and Marco Rios, titled *Rigor Motors*, featured large coffins with car seats and speaker-lined walls inside. It wasn’t until I saw a five-year old make a futile attempt to climb into one of them did I catch the irony, intent and overall depth.

I have seen many works since this show, both in public and art house, which seem to rip off this exhibition. Few shows have held the same defiance and sophistication surrounding a conceptual take on the Chicano Movement, not to mention the departure from it. It was a subtle defiance, but there. It was a not-

so-subtle sophistication and definitely there.

Deborah-Jean (DJ) Harmon is an independent curator and writer of both contemporary art and Interactive New Media. Most notably, her exhibition management history includes Surface Tension, Josh Keyes (SF), the NTT InterCommunication Center ICC (Tokyo), The Israel Museum (Jerusalem), the 4th Seoul International New Media Art Biennale (Seoul), Mills College (Oakland), London Institute of Contemporary Art (London), and Telic Arts Exchange (Los Angeles). Harmon lives in Brooklyn and is currently working on Nails & Dollars, opening February 2012.

María Arlette de la Serna, Puerto Rico



María Arlette de la Serna, Puerto Rico. (Photo by the author)

Not just palms, not only paradise (It's complicated...)

On March 17, I attended a talk at the Contemporary Art Museum of Puerto Rico (MAC by its abbreviations in Spanish) about Caribbean art and culture based on the exhibition *Global Caribbean*, curated by the renowned Haitian artist Edouard Duval Carrié. The exhibition aimed to break the stereotype of Caribbean art as folkloric and as separate from the developments in the art world internationally.

Duval Carrié was joined on the panel by curator Lilliana Ramos Collado and Puerto Rican artists Vanessa Hernández Gracia, Nora Rodríguez Vallés and Daniel Lind Ramos. Carrié opened the panel stating: “during the last five years the art world has started to view the Caribbean as a distinct region.” He continued, “the things that happen here others cannot fully understand,” implying that the area is complicated due to so many differences, recognizing the Caribbean as a “the new world” and as inherently complex. Vanessa Hernández Gracia talked about the first time she felt “Caribbean” and part of a region. While studying in Spain she was called “sudaca,” an offensive connotation describing a South American (even though she is from Puerto Rico, a different part of the Americas). She described how this brush with segregation changed her insular vision of the world.



Edouard Duval Carrié talks to a group at the Global Caribbean exhibition, Miami. (Photo by the author)

The *Global Caribbean* exhibition highlighted the contemporaneous nature of the subjects, approaches and concepts within Caribbean art, an international art more referent to human condition than regionalism. The panel recognized the intricacy of the region, and more importantly, they recognized themselves as part of something bigger and more complex: to avoid viewing the world

exclusively through a Puerto Rican lens and see Puerto Rico as part of the world.

María Arlette de la Serna is the Assistant Curator at Museo de Arte de Ponce in Puerto Rico. Her area of research is contemporary art of Latin America and the Caribbean and this year she organized 11 in 2011: Online Video Art from Museo de Arte de Ponce the first online exhibition for the museum. She is also currently working on a new exhibition initiative called Arte en respuesta / Art in Response.

Federico Nessi, Paris

‘Most people won’t know where Mali or Oman is’

The artist [Neil Beloufa](#) and his current exhibit at [Balice Hertling](#) gallery features videos shot in Vancouver, Canada that addresses the duality (positive and negative side) of any “utopic” western society.

Federico Nessi, Paris.
Photo by the author

In his previous work he dealt specifically with developing areas and investigated the challenges of discussing an ideal future in the present tense with a group of Malians. The interviews resulted in an exceptional video titled “Kempinski.”

This being said, I am currently on vacation in [Oman](#) and I too have been doing a great deal of meditating on the paradoxes of the Western/Eastern, developed/developing diaspora. It has been an intense week of humbly shedding pre-imposed notions.



Neil Beloufa, “Kempinski” (2007), Video,
14 min, Still, © Galerie LHK

Federico Nessi is an interdisciplinary artist, blogger, DJ, cultural analyst and works at Balice Hertling gallery in Paris, France. He is convinced the manifestation of the predictions of 2012 will involve extraterrestrials in some way, shape or form.