There is No Looking Glass Here: Wide Sargasso Sea Re-Imagined
13 September 2010 – 7 January 2011

Derrick Adams, Eric Alugas, Kimberly Becoat, Andrea Chung, Elizabeth Colomba, Charl Landvreugd, William Mwazi, Kenya (Robinson), Bayetè Ross Smith, Elizabeth Sturges, and Justin Randolph Thompson

Andrea Chung (*1978, USA)
Residue, 2010
Satin dress, sugar and clothesline
Courtesy of the Artist

“Is there another side?’ I said. ‘There is always the other side, always.”’ [1]

CSR Americas has partnered with the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts (MoCADA) to present an exhibition of works by eleven contemporary artists based on two well-loved books re-imagined. There is No Looking Glass Here takes inspiration from Jean Rhys’ 1966 novel, Wide Sargasso Sea, a book which in turn gives voice and reason to a minor but enigmatic figure from the 19th Century epic, Jane Eyre, by Charlotte Bronte. Referred to as the “bad, mad, and emruted partner”[2] of Mr. Rochester in Jane Eyre, this unknown woman’s early life leading to her fate is explored in Wide Sargasso Sea. Subsequently, the book has become a theoretical touchstone for examining inter-racial life in the Caribbean islands post-Emancipation. For the exhibition, each participating artist was asked by the curator to read Wide Sargasso Sea and select characters or themes to explore visually in a range of mediums, including painting, photography, installation, sculpture and performance.

The narrative of Wide Sargasso Sea centers on Antoinette Cosway, a character more famously known as Bertha Mason, the first wife of Edward Rochester in Jane Eyre. The novel takes place in Jamaica, immediately following Emancipation where Antoinette, a Creole, grows up isolated between two cultures on the Coulibri plantation, struggling to find her own identity. Antoinette’s distant stepfather marries her off to Edward Rochester, the son of a wealthy Englishman. Antoinette’s love for Mr. Rochester grows, yet it is unrequited, and confusion, fear and isolation ensues, feelings that echo in the post-colonial society they inhabit. Eventually Mr. Rochester becomes poisoned alternately with hatred and lust. He returns to England, locking away his first wife in the attic of his estate.

There is No Looking Glass Here is not a reflexive comparison of both novels. Rather, the artists use characterizations in Wide Sargasso Sea as a metaphor for examining themes of the African Diaspora in many of its deviant forms. Several works were created specifically for the show, while others continue artistic explorations already in motion. Some offer literal interpretations, while the majority are highly abstract and symbolic. The title references mirrors, a recurring motif in the novel, as well as a symbol of duality, symmetry, perspective and reflection.

The exhibition was curated by Kimberli Gant

[1] Wide Sargasso Sea
Then & Now: Abstraction in Latin American Art from 1950 to Present
27 April 2010 – 3 September 2010

Waldo Díaz-Balart, Alessandro Balteo Yazbeck, Tony Bechara, Marcelo Bonevardi, Waltercio Caldas, William Cordova, Alejandro Corujeria, Antonio Dias, Iran do Espírito Santo, Eugenio Espinoza, Leon Ferrari, María Freire, Manuel Hernandez, Carmen Herrera, Arturo Herrera, Ana Mercedes Hoyos, Juan Iribarren, Guillermo Kuitca, Judith Lauand, Julio Le Parc, Gerd Leufert, Antonio Llorens, Raul Lozza, Anna Maria Maiolino, Alejandro Otero, Claudio Perna, Alejandro Puente, Luis Fernando Roldán, Fanny Sanín, Mira Schendel

![Antonio Llorens](image)

In the post-World War II era, artists in Latin America broke away from the creation of national artistic styles and socially concerned figurative art and began developing abstract languages that reflected a broader international context. "Then & Now" explores the various modes of abstraction that arose in Latin America, ranging from geometric to gestural, kinetic, neo-concrete art and more. The exhibition features works by thirty artists including drawings, prints, paintings, video, photography and sculpture. It unites pioneers of Latin American modernism with contemporary artists and offers a rare opportunity to view these cross generational works together. Beginning in the 50s geometric abstraction boomed throughout the region and many artists pioneered innovations, such as shaped canvases and viewer participation. During this period abstraction was strongly linked to a Utopian modernist view and artists focused on formal investigations and concerns for expression, truth in representation, illusions of space, and the materiality of a painting's support. Works by Maria Freire and Antonio Llorens feature dynamically asymmetrical compositions in vibrant colors, while Raul Lozza and Marcelo Bonevardi play with structure, wedding painting and sculpture.

Works from the 60s, 70s and 80s by a later generation of artists whose involvement with abstraction was informed by developments in pop, conceptual, minimalism and performance art, reveal how the possibilities of meaning attached to abstraction were expanded during these decades. Influenced by social change and the burning political issues of the day, artists such as Ana Maria Maiolino, Leon Ferrari and Claudio Perna, challenged conventional concepts associated with abstraction. They explored radical new directions incorporating a diversity of disciplines and mediums including ink, clay, film and performance. Hoping to reproduce those moments of discovery in the viewer, this exhibition presents works like Alejandro Otero’s Hoy en TV (1965), which daringly combines formalism and content demonstrating that political and critical content can be conveyed through formally reduced, nonobjective art forms.

The exhibition’s contemporary artists simultaneously celebrate and question the legacy of their predecessors. Juan Iribarren’s paintings of luminous traces, are a meditation on light and color that hints at the symbolic remains of modernity. Luis Fernando Roldán and Arturo Herrera carefully construct their abstractions through the fragmentation and combination of elements, resulting in complex spatial relationships that are formally rigorous, yet feel very casual.
“Then & Now” encompasses a period of great transformation and embodies the spirit of freedom and possibility that abstraction has generated from the start, highlighting the vitality of its force as an authentic expression of every artist’s individuality. Emerging from the posture of presenting an installation generated by the works themselves without following a chronological or geographical order, the exhibition embraces each individual’s aesthetic through aggregation and visual analogies. This allows for juxtapositions that reveal the innovation and originality achieved by the artist, enabling viewers to witness the transculturalism and international cross-fertilization that has contributed to Latin American abstraction. In doing so, the exhibition permits challenging the perception of Latin American art as a single phenomenon, by revealing important differences and tensions emanating from the various artistic proposals articulated around abstraction from 1950 through today.

“The Then & Now: Abstraction in Latin American Art from 1950 to Present” is organized by Monica Espinel, a New York based independent curator.

The exhibition was curated by Monica Espinel
Although Imi Knoebel has enjoyed a successful career with worldwide museum and collector recognition, his work has generally flown under the radar here in the US. Deutsche Bank Art has been collecting Knoebel’s work for almost 30 years, and today the Bank proudly owns over 1000 works. On view at the 60 Wall Gallery is “IMI KNOEBEL - Selections from the Deutsche Bank Collection,” an exhibition featuring seven series of works on paper that were part of his recent show at the Deutsche Guggenheim in summer 2009. The exhibition illustrates how Imi Knoebel has consistently created engaging work by building up an abstract, personal vocabulary and experimenting with his own rules.

Since he was a student at the Dusseldorf Academy in the late 1960s, Knoebel has been exploring pictorial possibilities with an economy of means expressed in a variety of ways: on paper, with “Fiberboard”, with special “red lead” paint, in printmaking, sculpture and photography. Seen clearly in this exhibition is the artist’s preferred production method of working in series, or using groups of sequential images. This principle provides him with endless possibilities for combining and changing compositions. By using multiple variations, he negates the idea of a fixed composition in favor of one that elicits flux and interactivity.

His interest in multiple visual readings is also echoed in his material use of layering techniques. In his “Drachenzeichnung” (Dragon drawing) series, Knoebel layers paper, paint, collage, acetate, and paint on glass within a single frame. Interest in exploring different ways to express his ideas is conveyed through his investigations with various materials, including ink, graphite pencil, spray paint, cut paper and projected light.

In 1976 Knoebel created a large complex of 2,147 cut-out shapes for his Mennigebilder (or Red lead pictures). Many of these shapes and their mutations can be seen throughout his work. The “Messerschnitt” or “knife cuts,” are another recurring technique he employs, along with his regular use of the primary colors, red, yellow and blue.

Beginning in 1968, Knoebel was one of the first to use photography as an independent artistic medium. He started using empty slide projections, creating empty squares of light, projected on a wall or in a darkened room. Focusing on corners or windows across furniture that cast shadows and shapes, his practice soon took on another dimension of exploring the de-materialization of objects through light. In this way, Knoebel's work can be said to encompass two opposing pursuits simultaneously: an experience of the material world, of the physical and the perceptual, as well as that which is ephemeral, conceptual and fleeting.

Liz Christensen, Deutsche Bank Art