

CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

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ON THE COVER A photo of On Golden Pond Wides, an installation by artist Carlos Betancourt and architect Alberto Latorre unveiled during their Art Basel Miami Studio visit 2013-2014. The installation consists of several hundred gold painted objects inside their pool, in constant motion, moved by the wind. Betancourt asked close friends to bring him small, responsive objects that were meaningful, but were easy to part with. “When I work with objects like this, I have a sense that the embodied emotional energy of the object may transcend and the artwork almost becomes a living thing,” he says. “Alberto and I both enjoy to intervene on already existing environments. In this case, it’s our own pool and its general environment, as well as Alberto’s pool design that inspired us. There are also childhood memories about my own idea of the absence of pools. The status pools represent is reflected in the gold color of the objects. There is also a battery operated goldfish that swims under and around the objects.”

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Cuba Atlantic, 2011 (left) and collaboration between Carlos Betancourt and Alberto Herrero. The specific design is a representation of Andy Warhol's Pink and Blue Flowers, 1964. The sculpture is by artist Sandra Abarca. River rocks surround the window, which was created to frame one of the old trees on the property.

area and cocktails are usually served there under swaying palm trees. "Because of how we entertain there had to be an easy flow from the moment guests come in," explains Latore. The exterior was just as important as the interior. Surrounded by century-old, massive oaks, different layers of vegetation were added, with ferns at ground level, then bushes and tall hedges. "Not manicured, we wanted that wild, natural feeling," he emphasizes. A variety of palms, Kapoka and Gumbo Limbo trees were mixed in along the perimeter of the property, along with Ficus, Papaya, Bamboo and Banana trees to border the pool.

The front gate, which was designed and painted by Latore, forebodes the radiating stripes of the pool terrace. It's flanked by hedges punctuated with flowers chosen for their fragrance, which Latore describes as "aromatherapy for our guests." Jasmine and ylang-ylang perfume the night air, while gardenias enhance the day. Others flowers were planted not just for their beauty and color, but to attract butterflies and humming birds. There's also an herb garden, which is a must for Latore. Adds Betancourt, "we celebrate life with food and dancing and Albert is extremely talented in the kitchen. We are grateful to have traveled extensively, so we usually serve a fusion of Latin and world flavors, especially Mediterranean."

Central to their entertaining is the piece de résistance which at first glance seems relatively simple. "It had to be multi-purpose," Latore explains, pointing out the angled, sleek, white tables in the dining room. "They had to work for three different functions. End-to-end we can seat up to 18 people for dinner parties. We use one as our everyday dining table and the other drops down to coffee table height. But they're also our drafting tables. The tops can be set at an angle and storage underneath holds supplies." The dining room buffet is topped with gleaming, white quartz as are the kitchen counters and living room cabinets, which reflect light and expand the space



New custom furniture designed by Latore creates a cozy outdoor lounge at the front of the home. Artwork is Shipping Cart Atomic, 2011 by Betancourt; overlife photographic print on vinyl is After September, 2002 by Betancourt

explorations of the Re-Collections series," he says of Betancourt's work. "It's also an evolution of what happens at the front gate."

To achieve the pattern on the pool deck, the center point of the pool was marked off with a string and the two O'Neils drew lines with chalk and long pieces of wood, then painted the entire design themselves.

"That controlled the geometry, but there's a studied randomness, since some lines are wider than others," says Latore. "Carlos and I also built the bridge across the pool in time for his mom Teresa's 70th birthday costume party. It was built as a photo-op for her!" That is one of many legendary tales the two are known for. Says Betancourt, "her party was Fellini-inspired, mixed with a Celia Cruz Cuban theme. An event loaded with syncretism; it was a very memorable affair! Dancing is endemic to

most cultures and playing dress-up is also very liberating and musical. Music is a powerful engine to memories and like that."

The idyllic setting is everything they imagined and is still a compelling work in progress. "The house itself and life events guided many of our design decisions," states Latore. As Betancourt adds, "we are very fortunate to be a team, as we are inspired by similar interests and our work ethic is the same. When we collaborate, it is effortless, and we both dedicate long hours for creativity and work. Yet we are both aware of the importance of being independent in many ways, especially creatively, and that allows for projects to evolve organically and successfully. Albert is an immeasurable source of talent and I am extremely fortunate, as it is a relationship full of joy and celebration." ■

Carlos Betancourt "Imperfect Utopia"

Mixed-media artist Carlos Betancourt and his influential studio, Insectes (bees), helped to launch the Miami art scene in the 1980s. Betancourt's oeuvre is a lush explosion of color, economic codes in which he explores the landscape (rural, social, multi-layered), neo-cultural of Caribbean and American culture. He works alludes to issues of memory, identity, history, and communication. He blends the lines between art, photography, and nature in his photographs, collages, paintings, installations, and conceptual pieces. Betancourt's imagery juxtaposes the past and present and offers it in a fresh context. He is inspired by Puerto Rico, Miami, his extensive travels and various artists. This exhibition volume explores Betancourt's body of work, with more than 250 images and texts by art critic Phil Labrecq, art history professor Robert Paris Thompson and United States Inaugural Poet, Richard Blanco. Betancourt's artwork is included in the permanent collections of various museums including The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The National Portrait Gallery.

Book release October 2015. Pre-order at Amazon.com; Rabbitlake.com or [Betancourt's exhibit, Re-Collections, opens November 18, 2015 at Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico. The mid-century, solo exhibit includes some of the artist's most iconic artworks and site-specific installations. Betancourt's artwork is represented by Walter Chavo Contemporary Art.](http://BetancourtArt.com</p>
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Colorful medallions by the Miami tribes from Kenya hang next to Miami warrior spears. Inside the cabinet various indigenous Taino, Aztec and Puebloan artifacts along with vintage objects and portraits from these tribes.

visually. The fireplace mantel is also angled and deceptively shallow wall shelves add dimension without bulk. They were carried into the kitchen and other rooms as an ever-evolving gallery. Crisp, white walls were de rigueur since Betancourt's colorful art, as well as other artists' work they collect, is displayed throughout. The built-in sofas are covered in a nubby linen and the streamlined bases provide even more storage. "Elements I've used are informed by neo-futuristic architects of the 1950s, Eero Saarinen and Morris Lapidus," explains Latore. "Their architecture was joyful and optimistic." Polished black floors add depth and sophistication. "The glossy, dark floors in the house bring to mind the shimmering surface of ponds and rain," he says.

When it came to the pool terrace, an unconventional, or some would say, outrageous, design decision was put into play. Latore wanted a smooth, imperceptible flow to the exterior, so black mastic paint was the choice for the wood deck surrounding the pool, the small bridge, the pavers and benches. River rocks the color of charcoal were added for texture. "It allows for the transition so the colors of nature stand out, since the greenery is so strong," he states. The slowstopper, unveiled during the Miami Beach Art Basel Studio Visit program, was the next phase; the black and white explosion of radiating stripes surrounding the pool. The way the light penetrated throughout the house provided inspiration says Latore. "I was also inspired by the