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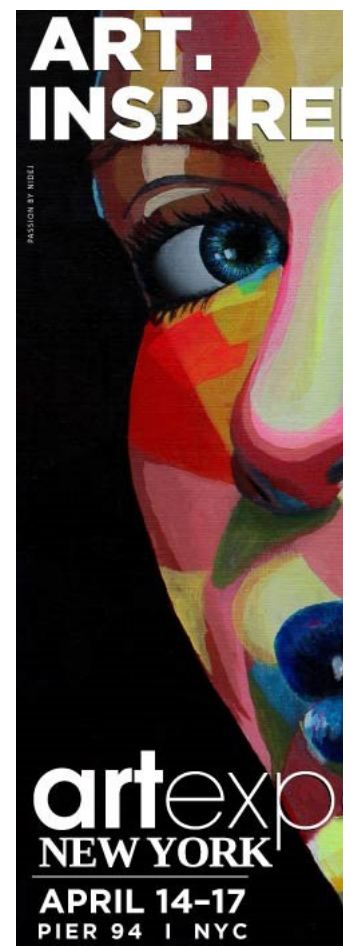


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ARTISTIC VISION

ART | MAR 2016 | BY DANIELLE GARCIA



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Portrait by Ryan Stone

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In Carlos Betancourt's new book, "Imperfect Utopia," the Puerto Rican-born artist reflects on his earliest experiences in his adopted home of Miami. The book also serves as a retrospective of his work and captures the then burgeoning art scene of Miami in the 1980s. A thoughtful foreword by Presidential Inaugural poet Richard Blanco—also based in Miami—complements Betancourt's vibrant "collections of memories and objects."

Recently, Betancourt and Blanco held court at Books & Books, where they shared a dialogue—moderated by the newly appointed Andy Warhol Museum curator Jose Carlos Diaz—about their journeys together over the course of their creative collaborations. Both men being influenced by each other through their creative collaborations and distinctive craft kept an open dialogue of their shared journey about friendship, memory and culture.

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(http://www.culturedmag.com/wp-content/uploads/CarlosBetancourt_cover.jpg)

"I think our generation is the generation that thinks in collages and in images. We were the generation before the internet and social media, before being bombarded with information we didn't know was headed," explains Betancourt. The aforementioned themes resonate in the visual

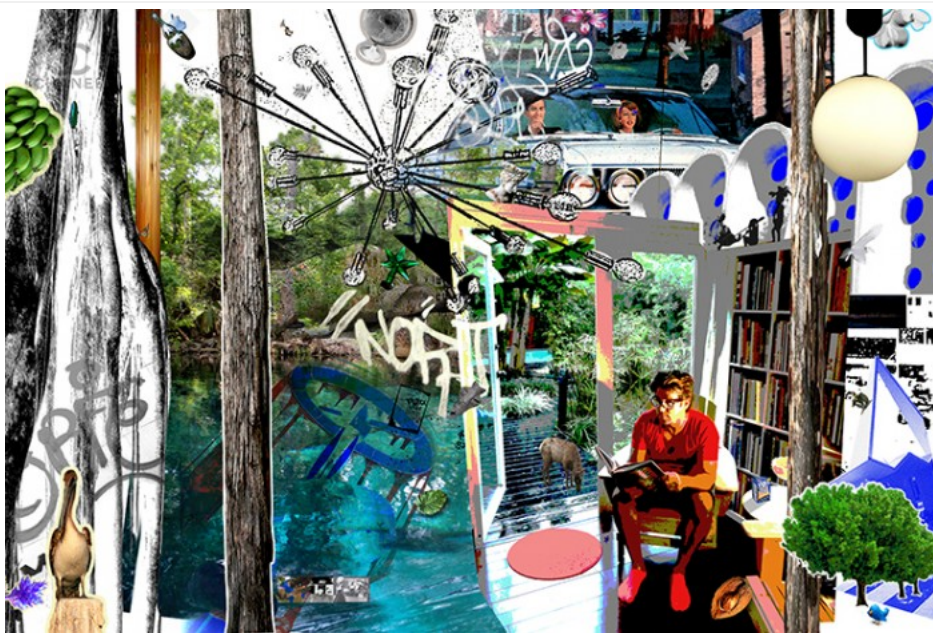
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dialogue of the book through conceptual work, collages and photographs of the past and piecing together the fractured identity he felt as a young man in America. “Acknowledging my own reality and the times, that hopefully I’m trying to represent, bring nothing less than the moment that was given,” says Betancourt.

Mirroring this fractured theme is poet Richard Blanco whose strong and skillful poems reflect his decades-long friendship with Betancourt that are endemic to both of their native roots. Having been raised by Cuban-exiled parents in Spain and then migrated to America, his nostalgic poem “América” shares the cultural contrast of his Cuban background while celebrating an American thanksgiving. As he reads the poem, it is clear to see how both Blanco and Betancourt come together through their similar experiences which helped shape them.



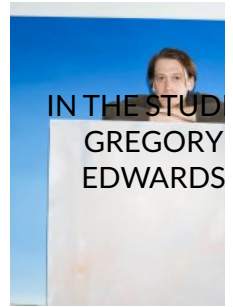
(<http://www.culturedmag.com/wp-content/uploads/BETANCOURT-El-Portal-I-2011-72-x-107-cprint-.jpg>).

Betancourt's *El Portal* 1, 2011

“Imperfect Utopia,” recognizes that there is no one single narrative with the ever changing world, Cuba and the City of Miami. With Cuban and American relations in effect, “the most important part one can hope for Cuba is for those changes to be by them. What I think will help is a strong sense of art and a strong sense of identity,” says Blanco.

The expansive development they have witnessed through the years in Miami Beach reflects the one happening today. Notably around the areas of Wynwood and Little River as galleries have been shoved out due to high leases and competitive retail stores who can afford it. Essentially losing its original purpose. For Betancourt, he misses the feeling of a village, which he’s not sure if it’s a good thing. He escapes to his little bungalow in El Portal, “that’s the Florida that I cherish.”

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