

orlando museum of art
FLORENCE PRIZE
in contemporary art



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Published in conjunction with the exhibition

2018 FLORIDA PRIZE IN
CONTEMPORARY ART

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Catalogue designed by Connor Bouchard
Catalogue edited by Jordana Weiss
ISBN-10: 1-880699-19-2
ISBN-13: 978-1-880699-19-5
Library of Congress Number: 2018949158

Printed by Sundance USA, Orlando, Florida

PREVIOUS

Carla Bernasconi, *Lines of Illumination (Dust in piece of sky)*
(detail), 2017, mixed media (wood, collected objects, paint,
color pencil, markers, oil stick), 105 x 105 x 4 in.

2018

Florida Prize in Contemporary Art
award is generously underwritten
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GENEROUS SUPPORT FOR THE 2018 FLORIDA PRIZE IN CONTEMPORARY ART
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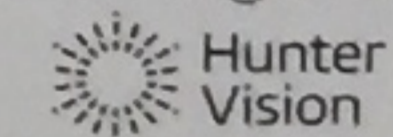
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ARTISTS

C A R L O S B E T A N C O U R T
B R O O K S D I E R D O R F F
R A F A E L D O M E N E C H
G O N Z A L O F U E N M A Y O R
J A S O N L A Z A R U S
Y A L E V Y - L A ' F O R D
G L E X I S N O V O A
K E R R Y P H I L L I P S
M R . K E N Y A (R O B I N S O N)
J A C K S T E N N E R

LEFT:
Gonzalo Fuenmayor, *Tropicalypse*
(detail), 2017, charcoal on paper,
84 x 180 in.

The Florida Prize in Contemporary Art is organized by the Orlando Museum of Art (OMA) and brings new recognition to the State's most progressive artists. Now in its fifth year, the OMA has surveyed artists working throughout the State before selecting the ten to be represented in the exhibition. Artists range from emerging to mid-career, but each is engaged in exploring significant issues of contemporary art and society in original and visually exciting ways. In all cases, they are artists whose achievements are marked by a distinguished record of exhibitions, awards and other recognition. *The Florida Prize in Contemporary Art* underscores the Orlando Museum of Art's commitment to the art of our time, and to supporting artists who live and work in our State.

This year's artists are exceptionally diverse, working in practices and media that are as widely varied as the ideas they express. One characteristic that visitors will find particularly exciting is the ambitious scale of much of the work in the exhibition. Included are mural-sized drawings, paintings and photographs, such as Gonzalo Fuenmayor's charcoal drawings of apocalyptic landscapes, Jason Lazarus's heroically scaled portrait of a young boy redrawn with LED lights, Glexis Nova's politically charged billboard-sized text paintings and Brooks Dierdorff's photo blowups of popular visions of Edens. Monumental sculptures include Carlos Betancourt's 26-foot long dining table heaped with objects in celebration of abundance, Mr. Kenya (Robinson)'s critique of white male privilege comprised of 8,900 plastic figures of white men, and Kerry Phillips' evocative assemblages of discarded treasures. Several artists have created room-sized immersive works, including Rafael Domenech's exactly arranged installation of books and sculptures that reveal his deep study of the meaning of place, Jack Stenner's exploration of possible futures for humanity that is crowned by

a golden VW camper bus suspended from the ceiling, and Ya Levy-La'ford's immersive room that takes visitors on a journey through light, dark, symbol and language.

A common thread through the work presented by the selected artists this year seems to be addressing our relationship to places and objects. Objects - monumental or minute, new or repurposed, on pedestals or dethroned, the discarded, the mythical - objects indeed, and our relationship to them, are a vector to creating situations, reawakening our sense of place and offering visions of places wished for, in response or in contrast to our current state of affairs. These objects and their materiality - or immateriality - are "fragments" that help us make sense of the whole "picture," and, through them, we are called to envisage a new utopian landscape. Whether this utopia is presented as a physical locus per se, a conceptual one, or actually being overturned and operating as a dystopia, it is often sublimated in the prophetic presence of an oracle-like element, through which these artists are encouraging us to look at things from another angle, a different point of view, envisaging new possibilities and even, at times, offering a glimpse of a new world order.

Introduction

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Coralie Claeysen-Gleyzon
Associate Curator

Betancourt

Carlos

Carlos Betancourt is a multi-disciplinary artist whose work arises from such sources as his personal history, a deep connection to his Caribbean heritage and a celebratory impulse that embraces beauty and a joy of life. Born in Puerto Rico, where his parents had immigrated from Cuba, Betancourt developed a passionate interest in the island's tropical environment and the syncretic spiritual practices common throughout the region that are a mixture of beliefs from Native American, African and European cultures. His use of the body to convey symbolic messages through paint, script and costume, and his use of objects as repositories of power, memory and meaning, are some of the ways his art explores these underlying ideas.

Betancourt moved with his family to Miami where, as a teen, he joined volunteers who assisted the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude with the 1983 installation *Surrounded Islands*. Betancourt was inspired by Miami's diverse urban cultures, exotic tropical architecture and particularly Miami Beach's growing bohemian art community. In the 1980s and 90s his Miami Beach studio, *Imperfect Utopia*, became a gathering place for an international array of artists, poets, writers, musicians, designers and architects, all who were beginning to discover the South Beach neighborhood. In later years, Betancourt, along with partner and collaborator and architect Alberto Latorre, was a pioneer in Miami's Wynwood Arts District and is now part of the burgeoning artistic community of Miami's Little River neighborhood.

It is difficult to imagine an artist without such a long and rewarding relationship to Miami conceiving a work like *Let Them Feel Pink*. The centerpiece of Betancourt's installation is a 26-foot banquet table on which is amassed an astonishing assemblage of sculptural objects. Reigning over all is a magnificent pelican which, like everything, is drenched and dripping in a

deep crimson pink. It is the color of sunsets on Biscayne Bay, art deco resorts and plastic flamingos on suburban lawns. The work appears to be the remnants of a great celebration, a grand still life in the tradition of a bacchanalia, but in a tropical baroque style.

"My work is so personal," Betancourt says, "everything is informed by my own experiences, my own memory...my obsession to honor things that are personal to me...and people also find traces of their own memories in my work." *Disposable Memories II* began with old jewelry, embedded with such memories collected from friends and family as well as pieces from thrift stores and jewelry shops. These were then compressed into a shallow relief wall sculpture. Betancourt was interested in seeing if the disposable memories attached to this jewelry could enable the work to transcend its physicality, even though the jewelry is no longer worn by its owners.

Times of Illuminations is inspired by memories as a child in Puerto Rico going around his neighborhood and being enchanted by the many different tree decorations in people's homes. For 15 years Betancourt collected illuminated Christmas tree toppers and shows them in a new context, no longer on a tree but on a flat field, they become a piece of sky. In this work, he once again uses personal memories experienced through objects, saying "art should be informed by one's personal experiences, not the other way around."

With photography, Betancourt continues to explore the power that objects hold for us. Using innovative digital and hand-worked processes, he collects thousands of images of objects that are then composed in mesmerizing, explosive and kaleidoscopic compositions or arranged as columns that appear to be ritual forms like totems or amulets. Other photographs take

the viewer into the rain forests of Puerto Rico or beaches of Florida where the elemental beauty of nature is omnipresent. In some photographs figures appear with their skin adorned in pigment and writing, in others they appear costumed with tropical flora. There is in many of these works a playful spirit, but they also reflect Betancourt's deeply felt connection to the indigenous and African cultures of the Caribbean, and spiritual practices that celebrate natural invocations, such as *Anaforuana* and *Candomblé*. Betancourt continues to use visual references to these and other ancient beliefs and practices in his artworks not only as a way of honoring these traditions, but as a way of activating the artworks, bringing them to life.

The artist has said that, "like nature, my identity is a source of energy that renews and I can always return to it for more." By embracing and exploring his own experiences and memories through his enthusiastic artworks, Betancourt challenges his relatable past by presenting it in a new context, one that is loaded with syncretic and artistic relevance and, simultaneously, beautifully poetic.

RIGHT
Carlos Betancourt, Installation view
from *Florida Prize in Contemporary Art*,
2018



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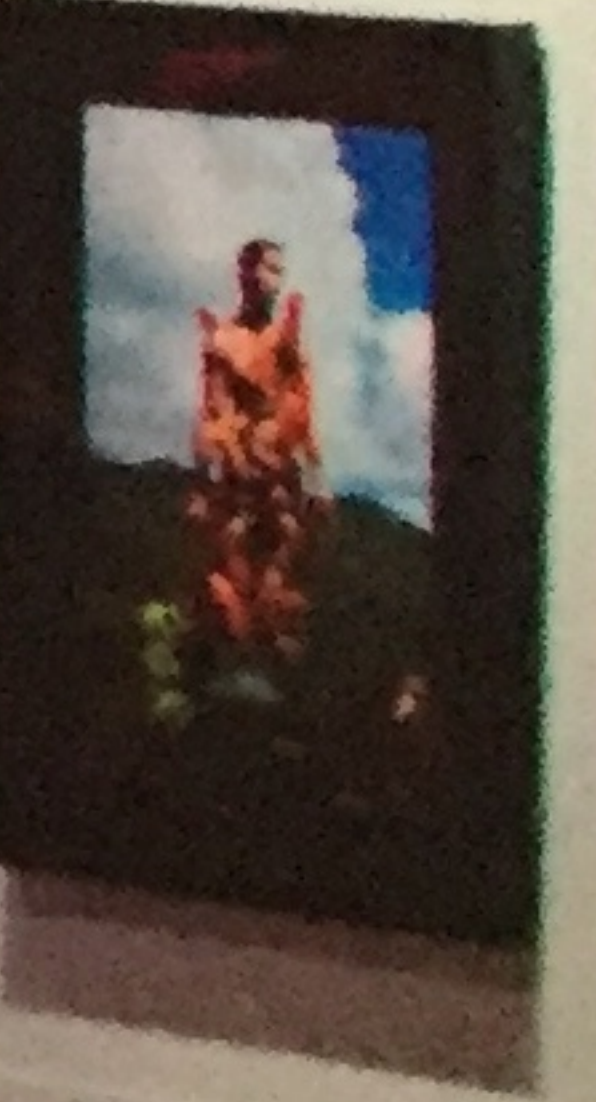
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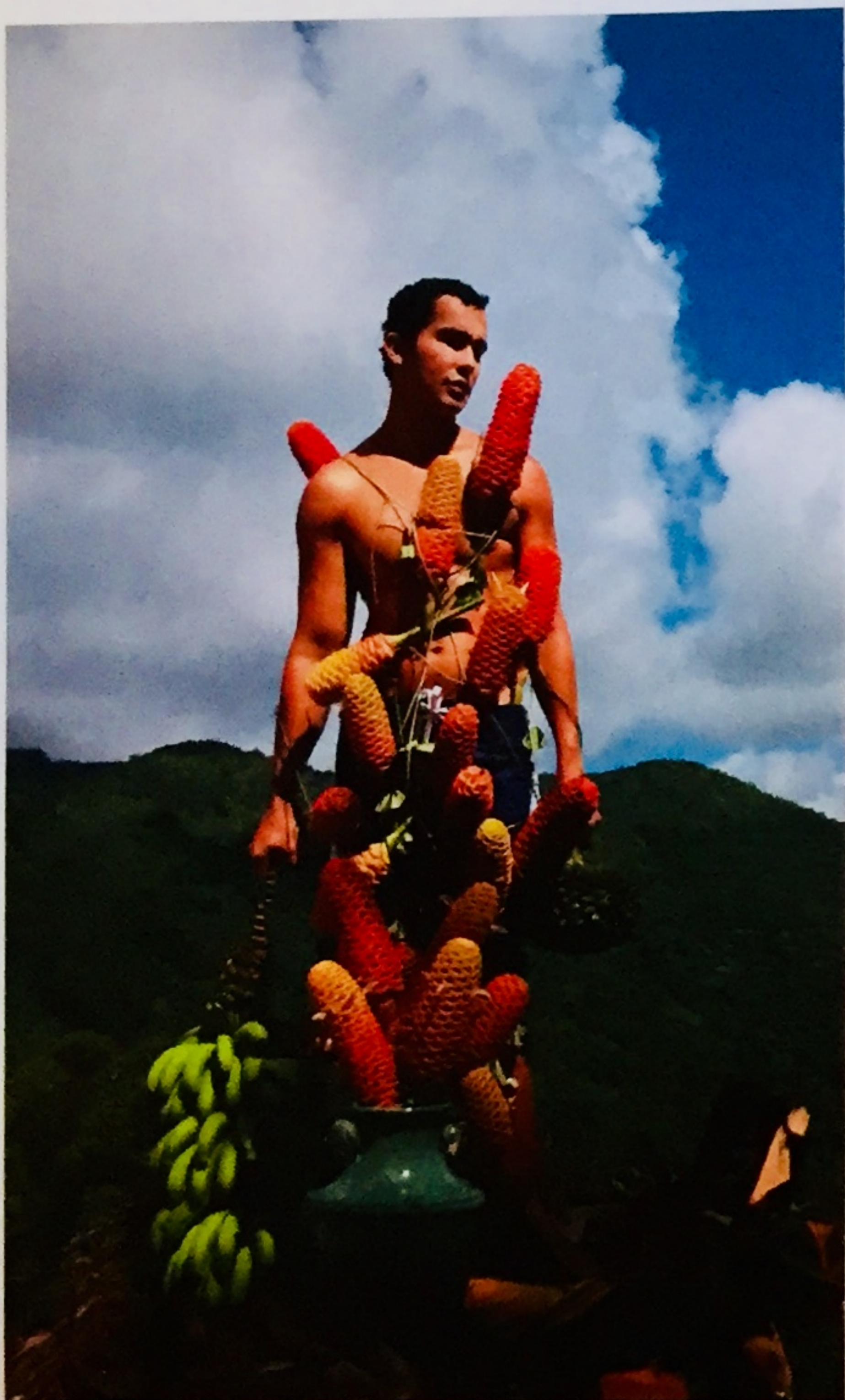
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RIGHT:

Carlos Betancourt, Installation view from *Florida Prize in Contemporary Art*, 2018





LEFT TO RIGHT
Carlos Betancourt, *Sandy Afternoon in el Yunque*, 2008, metallic lambda print, 24 x 15 in.
Carlos Betancourt, *Bejuques en el Rio Blanco* from the *Veques and Rincon Series*, 2004, Metallic Lambda print, 40 x 29 in.
Carlos Betancourt, *Disposable Memories II (I)*, 2017, mixed media, collected jewelry, epoxy, wood, 36 x 36 in.

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RIGHT:
Mr. Kenya (Robinson), *Eight Days a
Week (Corporate Karma / Deal or No
Deal)* (detail), 2017-18, aluminum
briefcases, Lazy Susan, various materials,
dimensions variable

LEFT

Rafael Domenech, (stacked (with book)
(detail) book sculpture, 10 1/2 x 17 x 8 1/2
in. (variable)

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Carlos Betancourt

About the Temporal and Universal (20), 2014-15
Pigmented inkjet on fine art paper
21 x 14 in.
Courtesy of the artist

Alberto con la tuna de la trastornada sexual entregada a Cristo from the *Rincon Flamboyant Series*, 2005
Metallic Lambda print
56 x 45 in.
Courtesy of the artist

Amulet for Light VI (aqua), 2012
Pigmented inkjet on fine art paper
21 ½ x 30 in.
Courtesy of the artist

Apito y Cenizas with Letter to Alberto from the *Worshipping of My Ancestors Series*, 2001
C-print
43 ½ x 41 ½ in.
Courtesy of the artist

Back Stories at Hobe Sound from the *Polaroids Back Stories at Hobe sound Series*, 3-2004, 2004
Large format polaroid
Edition 5/5
28 x 23 in.
Courtesy of the artist

Bejigante en el Rio Blanco from the *Vieques and Rincon Series*, 2004
Metallic Lambda print
40 x 29 in.
Courtesy of the artist

Castro in Triumphant Advance to Havana from the *Interventions in Nature Series*, IV, 2001
Print on vinyl, (13) 1V or V-525
132 x 156 in.
Courtesy of the artist

Disposable Memories II (1), 2017
Mixed media, collected jewelry, epoxy, wood
36 x 36 in.
Courtesy of the artist

En la Arena Sabrosa, 2004
Performance photo
39 x 51 in.
Courtesy of the artist

Family Portrait: Mami, Papi and Alberto from the *Rincon Flamboyant Series*, 2005
Metallic Lambda print
48 x 48 in.
Courtesy of the artist

GUABANCEX by Rio Blanco from the *Casa Cubuy Series La Gran Piedra*, 2003
C-print surfaced mounted on plexiglass
20 x 32 in.
Courtesy of the artist

Hood on the Hood and Tennis Shoes I from the *Interventions in Wynwood Series*, 2003
Installation photo
9 ½ x 13 ½ in.
Courtesy of the artist

Let Them Feel Pink, 2011-12
Mixed Media (wood, paint, epoxy, resin, collected objects)
82 x 324 x 36 in.
Courtesy of the artist

Portrait of a Dream VII from the *Rincon Flamboyant Series*, 2005
Metallic Lambda print
8 x 6 in.
Courtesy of the artist

Re-Collections, Fuchsia, 2009
Lambda print
48 x 48 in.
Courtesy of the artist

Self Portrait from the *Untitled 1000 with Souvenirs Series*, 2005
C-print
19 x 18 in.
Courtesy of the artist

Sunday Afternoon in el Yunque, 2008
Metallic Lambda print
24 x 15 in.
Courtesy of the artist

The Enchanted Garden II from the *Casa Flamboyant Series*, 2010
Metallic Lambda print
26 x 36 in.
Courtesy of the artist

The Mockingbird from the *Interventions in Wynwood Series*, 2003
c-print surfaced mounted on plexiglass
33 x 35 in.
Courtesy of the artist

Three Pointer in Rio Blanco from the *Vieques and Rincon Series*, 2003-04
Metallic Lambda print
19 ½ x 29 in.
Courtesy of the artist

Times of Illuminations I (Just a piece of sky), 2017
Mixed media (wood, collected objects, paint, color pencils, markers, oil stick)
105 x 105 x 4 in.
Courtesy of the artist

Una Ceiba en el Rio from the *Interventions in Nature II Series*, 2001
Metallic Lambda print
8 x 10 in.
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled with self portrait (large sketches) I, 2012
Mixed media collage on paper
26 x 30 in.
Courtesy of the artist

Vieques from the Black Background Series, 2007
Lambda print on fine art paper
28 x 28 in.
Courtesy of the artist

Brooks Dierdorff

Edens (From Shutterstock), 2018
Inkjet on perforated vinyl, wood
Dimensions variable (8 individual pieces)
Courtesy of the artist

Failed American Utopian Communities (1776-present), 2018
Laser Cut Inkjet prints
36 x 24 in. (each)
Courtesy of the artist

Paradise #1, Paradise #2, Paradise #3, 2018
Found automotive windshield sun shade
10 x 10 in. (each)
Courtesy of the artist

Rafael Domenech

Biblioteca, 2017
Installation
Variable Dimensions
Courtesy of the artist and Fredric Snitzer Gallery

Cambolo (object of social derive), 2018
Sculpture
24 x 16 x 21 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Fredric Snitzer Gallery

Post Archeology (process object/ coincidental object), 2015-17
Repurposed CNC MDF cutting boards, black bone oil based ink
96 x 240 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Fredric Snitzer Gallery

Resaca, 2017
Plexiglass, wire, aluminum, variable repurposed media, polyurethane, plastic zipties
42 x 32 x 30 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Fredric Snitzer Gallery

Untitled, 2017-18
Artist books
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist and Fredric Snitzer Gallery

Untitled (79th), 2017
Sculpture
24 x 20 x 6 in.
Courtesy of Peter Menéndez

Untitled (abstract formation of generic box), 2018
Collage
35 ½ x 14 x ¼ in.
Courtesy of the artist and Fredric Snitzer Gallery

Untitled (wall book), 2018
Book sculpture
10 ½ x 17 x 8 ½ in. (installed)
Courtesy of the artist and Fredric Snitzer Gallery

Vermont drawing (political drawing, chance, complexity, and contradiction after robert venturi), 2017
Collage: ink, tape, mixed media on paper
77 ½ x 64 ½ in.
Courtesy of the artist and Fredric Snitzer Gallery

Gonzalo Fuenmayor

Apocalypse Magnus, 2014
Charcoal on paper
116 x 58 in.
Jorge M. Pérez Collection, Miami