

Where there is power



Oolite Arts

Este documento es una muestra de un informe sobre la situación política en Venezuela. El mismo indica que Hugo Chávez, recién elegido como presidente, ha comenzado a implementar cambios significativos en el país, incluyendo la creación de la Guardia Nacional Bolivariana y la reforma agraria. Se menciona la presencia de Estados Unidos y otros países en el conflicto, así como las tensiones entre el gobierno y la oposición. El informe también destaca la importancia de la economía venezolana y las perspectivas para el futuro.

July 21 - September 19, 2021

Organized by Amanda Bradley and René Morales

It is a disorienting moment in our national history. We have survived disasters and near-disasters, yet the future feels tenuous. Many of the teleological narratives that guided state power throughout the 20th century have crumbled in the 21st, leaving behind ideological vacuums of monstrous proportions. The game has been disrupted, but we have yet to understand whether or how its rules have changed, or if any rules remain at all.

If the price of liberty is eternal vigilance, then art, which is fundamentally rooted in the observation of our world, has a special role to play. *Where there is power* provides a sampling of approaches by which artists expose and occasionally trouble the machinations of the social institutions and forces that structure our lives. Featuring the work of 13 locally based artists, the exhibition touches on an array of urgent, overlapping topics ranging from racial conflict and the suppression of peaceful protest to mass incarceration, law enforcement, diminishing natural resources, immigration, cults of

personality, the military industrial complex, and resistance in the digital sphere. Recurring themes vary from the resilience of both individuals and groups in the face of discipline and oppression to the question of our own complicity within the dynamics of social power; from the inherent value of shedding light into dark places to the insight that systems of control may be more flawed and vulnerable than what they appear to be.

The title of the exhibition refers to the famous quote, "Where there is power, there is resistance," by the philosopher Michel Foucault. If the turbulence of our current world is due at least in part to shifts in this equation between the forces of power and those who resist it, it suggests the emergence of new means by which to both achieve subjugation and defy authority. The stakes involved in the proper appraisal of these emergences, so key to understanding our own recent history, could not be higher, for as George Orwell wrote, "Who controls the past controls the future, and who controls the present controls the past."

José Álvarez (D.O.P.A.)

b. 1961, Caracas;
lives in Fort Lauderdale

The Visitor, 2007

Single-channel video, sound

Running time: 12 min., 26 sec.

Courtesy of the artist and GAVLAK,
Los Angeles and Palm Beach

Between 1988 and 2003, José Álvarez (D.O.P.A.) traveled the world playing the role of a medium, ostensibly channeling a 2,000-year-old spirit named "Carlos." Brandishing crystals, vials of holy tears, and other talismans, Álvarez/Carlos sermonized about future events, alien civilizations, and the origins of the world's major religions, occasionally speaking in tongues consisting of strange, guttural noises. Álvarez performed at numerous international venues, including the Sydney Opera House in Australia, where he attracted an enormous audience. He also appeared on widely broadcast television shows such as *The Today Show*, *60 minutes*, and one-off programs that aired all over China, Latin America, and the United States. Álvarez, who never accepted payment for these presentations, ended each performance with the admission that he was in fact a

conceptual artist whose true purpose was, in his words, "to use deception to reveal the truth" about the grave potential for spiritual belief to be exploited and abused. In a broader sense, the work attests to the frightening power of cults of personality, especially when combined with complicit mass media.







Asif Farooq

b. 1979, Miami;

d. 2020, Miami

Balalaika, 2012–Ongoing

Paper, glue

18½×28½×52 feet

Courtesy of the Asif Farooq estate and studio

Over the course of more than eight years, Asif Farooq labored tenaciously to recreate an entire Soviet-era MiG-21 jet fighter in true scale (1.0588:1, to be exact), wholly out of paper. Farooq was uncompromising in this endeavor. From the plane's distinctive delta-shaped wings and pencil-like nose cone to the elaborate assortment of gauges, levers, consoles, and switches of its cockpit panel, he crafted every aspect, down to the smallest detail, with meticulous

authenticity. The artist paid equal attention to many components that remain hidden within the jet's skin, including the individual fan blades of its turbine engine and the hoses, hydraulic pumps, and electrical wires that run through the interior of the fuselage. As the project progressed, Farooq continuously had to invent new ways of deploying his material in order to achieve certain ends, evolving from direct applications of paper to the mixing, molding, casting, and carving of paper pulp. The plane's tires, for example, consist of laminated sheets of cardboard infused with phenolic resin to produce a hard, wood-like material, which Farooq milled into form using woodworking tools. Measuring 52 feet long, 28 ½ feet wide, and 18 ½ feet high, the plane came to weigh over 3,200 pounds, posing a massive engineering challenge.

Farooq avidly studied not just the form but the history and significance of his chosen subject. Nicknamed "balalaika" for its

resemblance to the elegant Russian folkloric musical instrument of the same name, the MiG-21 served for a time as an icon of the potency of the Soviet military industrial complex. But for all its sleek design and famously deadly speed, the plane is severely restricted with respect to the distances it could





travel. This limitation would ultimately undercut its usefulness. Like Farooq's flightless magnum opus, it testifies to the futility of endless war.

Upon the artist's death in 2020, the plane was approximately 85% completed. It sits today in a warehouse space in unincorporated west Dade, where Farooq's studio team continues the project while working to preserve his artistic legacy.



Renato Bertelli
b. 1900, Lastra a Signa; d. 1974, Florence

Profilo continuo del Duce
(Continuous Profile of Il Duce), 1933
Bronzed terracotta
11 x 9 inches
Collection of The Wolfsonian, Miami Beach

Edny Jean Joseph

b. 1997, Miami;
lives in Miami

Jwet Ameriken (American Game), 2021

Cast resin chess pieces
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Close inspection of the chess pieces that comprise Edny Jean Joseph's *Jwet Ameriken* ("American Game," in Haitian Creole) reveals a face in profile bearing African features in the black pieces and an analogous face bearing European features in the white pieces. The artist was inspired by a 1933 portrait bust of Benito Mussolini rendered in 360 degrees by the Italian Futurist sculptor Renato Bertelli. Here, Joseph conflates the abstracted violence of chess with the historical reality of generations of racial conflict.

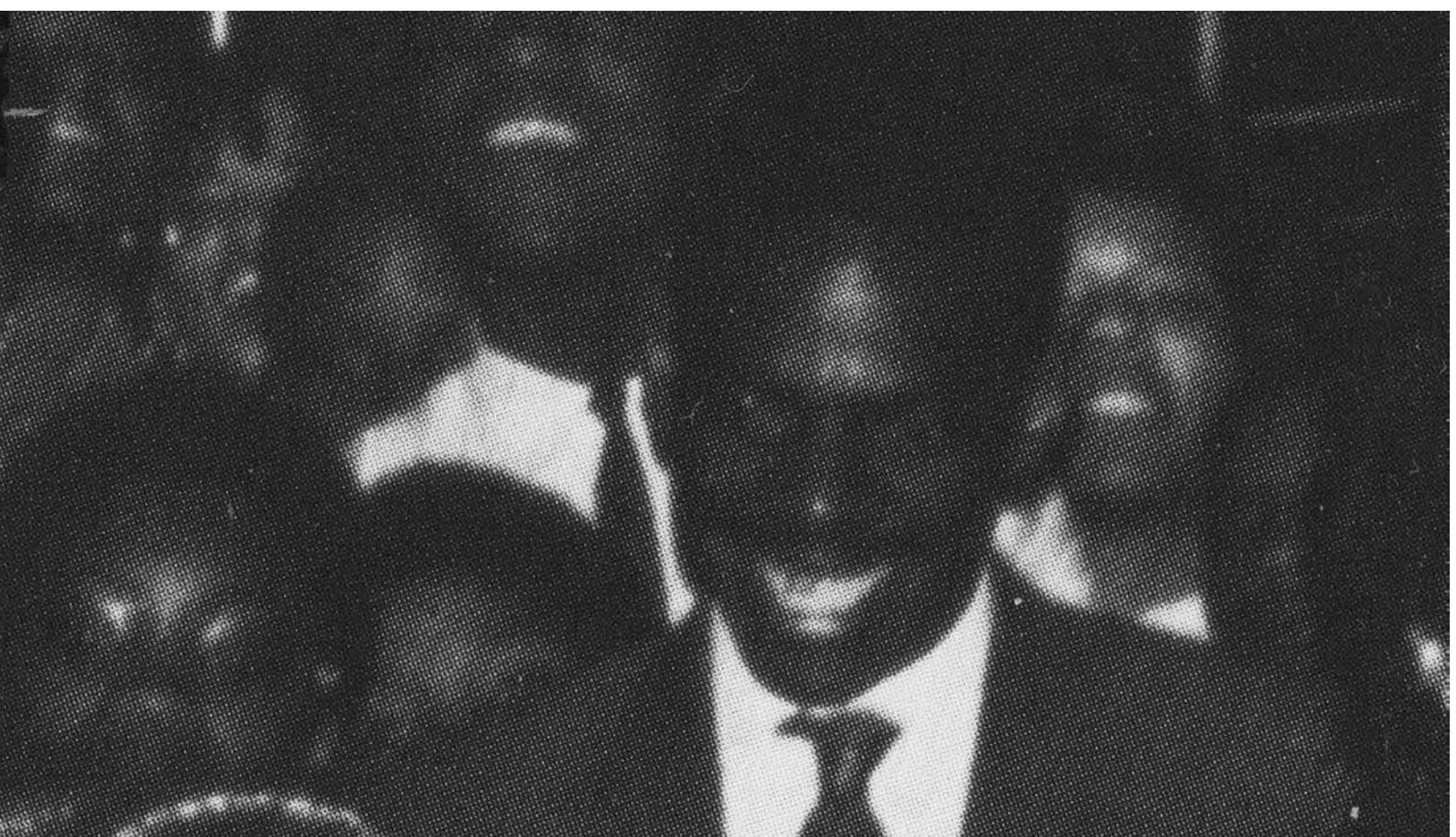
The Spectacle, 2020

Digital print on paper
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Quarrie & Void Projects, Miami

Edny Jean Joseph's site-specific photomural

The Spectacle is based on a pair of small collages the artist created in the wake of the 2020 protests in defense of Black lives. On one side, Joseph reimagines a white police officer armed with a long club as a ferocious bull charging a young Black matador. With wicked efficiency, the image encapsulates our nation's history of violent attacks on Black bodies by law enforcement. To create the other panel, the artist zoomed in closely on the face of a Black man who appears among a dense crowd of people in the background of an archival photograph, transforming the figure's smiling visage into an ominous presence that looms over the gallery space. This eerie effect underscores how perceptions of race are mediated by decontextualized projections and biases.







Francisco Masó

b. 1988, Havana;
lives in Miami

The Architecture of Power, N° 7, 2019

Acrylic on wood panel

96×48 inches

Courtesy of the artist and
Archivo Art Studio, Miami

This painting is part of a series of abstract-geometric compositions by Francisco Masó based on the colors and patterns that appear in the polo shirts frequently donned by secret police in Cuba. Masó works from found photographs in which agents are seen accosting political opponents of the Cuban government, carefully researching the backstories behind each pictured incident. Here, the colors relate to the shirt worn by Lieutenant Colonel Douglas Torres Pupo as he harassed the family members of Orlando Zapata Tamayo, a political activist who died during a hunger strike in 2010. In this way, the artist employs the seemingly neutral genre of abstract art to reveal specific episodes of oppression. Masó arranges the stripes such that they recall the decorative tiles that adorn the floors of many Cuban homes, suggesting the incursion of state power into the inner sanctum of the domestic setting.



Banes, Holguín, ca. 2010. Courtesy Idolidia Darias.

Yucef Merhi

b.1977, Caracas;
lives in Miami

Maximum Security, 1998–2004

Digital prints on laser paper

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist and

The Bonnier Gallery, Miami

It was in 1998 that the pioneering digital artist Yucef Merhi first began hacking the emails of Hugo Chávez. With the help of Trojan spyware, Merhi would continue to download data from both the personal and official accounts of the Venezuelan president for the subsequent six years. The project came to an abrupt end in 2004 with a server migration that enhanced the encryption level of the populist leader's accounts. By then, however, the artist had amassed a stockpile of messages, attachments, and metadata. When the breach was finally discovered, officials in the ministry of culture were reportedly so distraught and afraid of repercussions that they tried to keep word from reaching Chávez's ear.

Maximum Security consists of thousands of printouts of these records presented in the form of a site-specific wallpaper installation. Immersed amid the visual

equivalent of a cacophony of voices, the visitor comes across innumerable communications to and from Chávez and a host of military officers, corporate CEOs, diplomats, cabinet secretaries, and so forth. There are emails from family members and childhood friends sharing intimate memories and congratulating him on his electoral victories. Most of all, there are messages from people who need favors, among them an impassioned plea for assistance from Carlos el Chacal (Carlos the Jackal), the notorious leftist radical currently serving a life term in France for orchestrating a string of deadly attacks, including the raid of OPEC headquarters in Vienna in 1975.

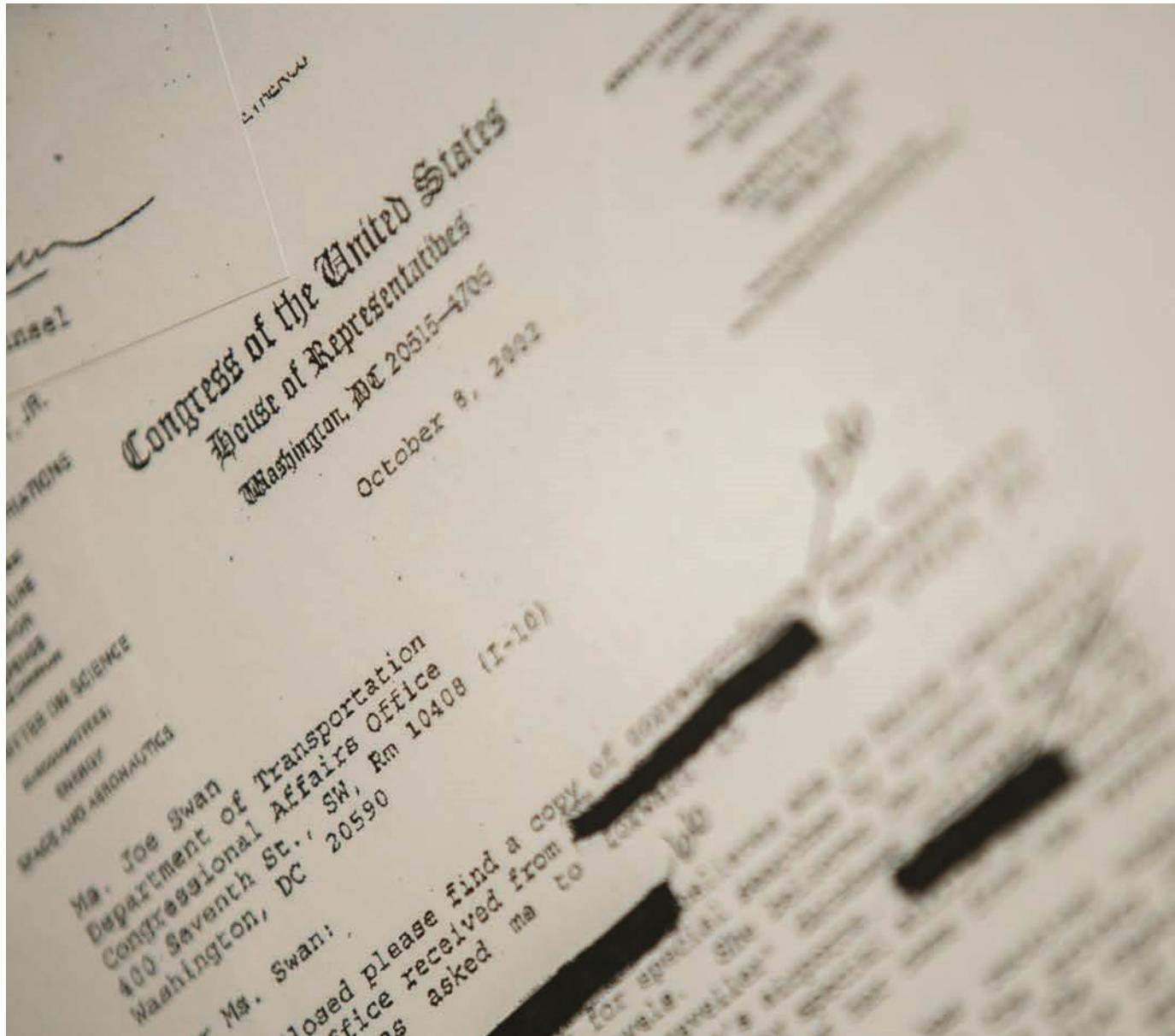
No Fly Security, 2018–2019

Digital prints on laser paper

Dimensions variable

The CIFO Collection, Miami

In another wallpaper titled *No Fly Security*, Merhi turns his attention to the government of his adopted country. The work constitutes the world's largest compilation of records related to the infamous "no fly list," a non-public roster of individuals prohibited from flying into or out of the United States on suspicion of terrorist ties. The list exemplifies the under-regulated intensification of state control that began almost exactly 20 years ago in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attack.



As in *Maximum Security*, Merhi determines the placement of each printout according to a preordained mathematical system. The algorithm produces a swirling pattern, creating nodes of density from which pages emanate outward until they crash into the next node, like an ocean wave wrapping around a buoy. The fractal-like geometry that results is not just aesthetic; it yields an accurate spatial representation of network patches being disassembled and reassembled as they trek across cyberspace — a “datagram,” to use a term coined by the artist.

While the two works address regimes at opposite ends of the political spectrum, they share in common the implication that the walls of power are riddled with hairline cracks, containing weak points soft enough, in the case of *Maximum Security*, to be infiltrated by a 20-year-old hacker with a dial-up modem.

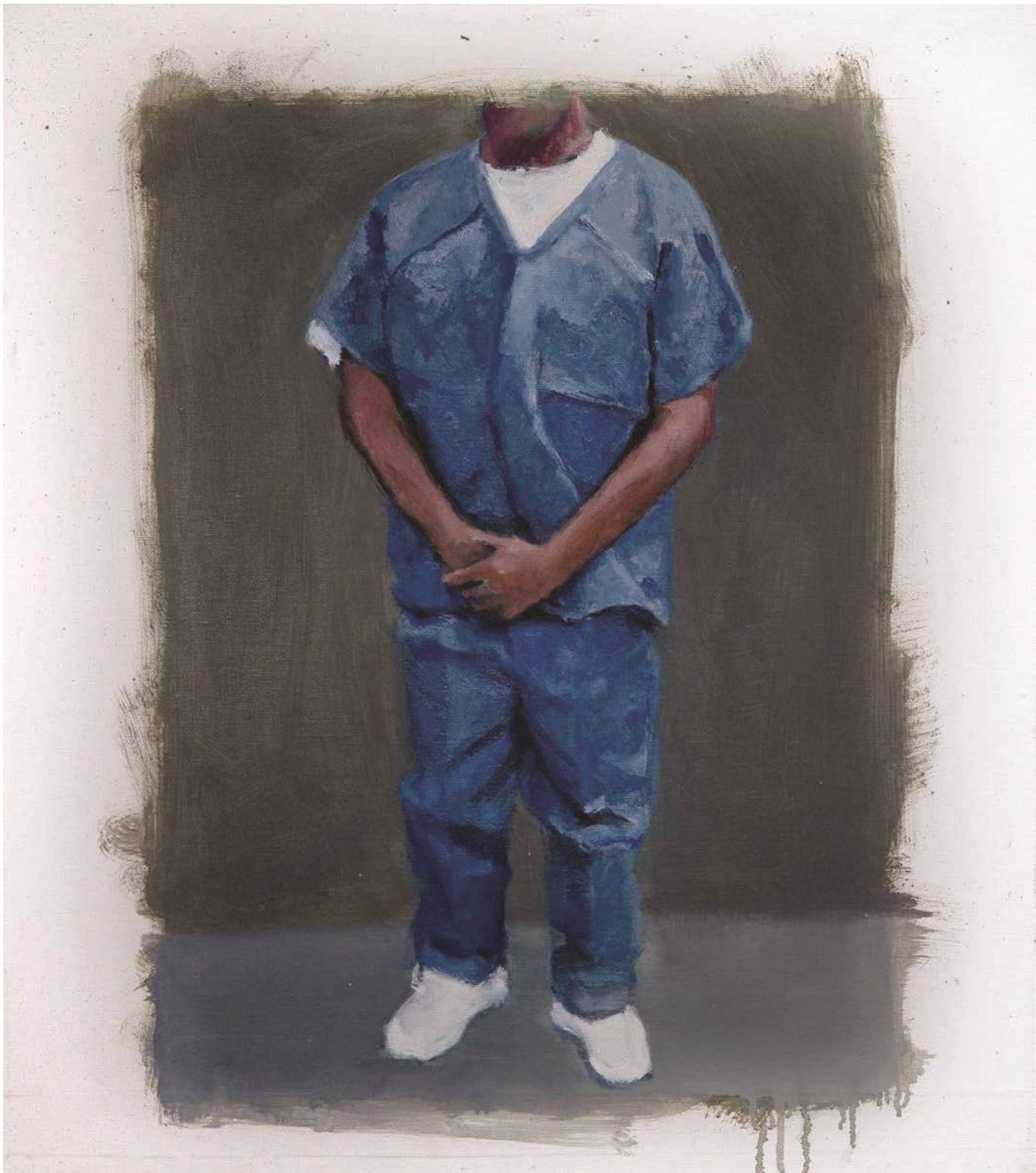
Reginald O'Neal

b. 1992, Miami;
lives in Miami

My Father, 2018

Oil on canvas, sound
25×22 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Reginald O'Neal creates moving portrayals of personal subjects — close family members, formative memories from his childhood, and fleeting glimpses of everyday life. This work was O'Neal's first depiction of his father, who has been detained in state prison since the artist was nine years old. The painting is based on a picture taken by the prison's staff photographer during one of O'Neal's in-person visits to the correctional facility. By cropping out his father's face, O'Neal focuses the viewer's attention on his subject's neatly pressed blue uniform and confident body language, evoking a sense of centeredness and strength. The painting is accompanied by an audio recording that captures one of the countless phone conversations the two have shared over the years. Here again, his father remains unseen, his disembodied voice redoubling his physical absence while emphasizing the intimacy and intensity of the connection that he and his son have managed to preserve in spite of their protracted separation.



Rodolfo Peraza

b. 1980, Camagüey, Cuba;
lives in Miami

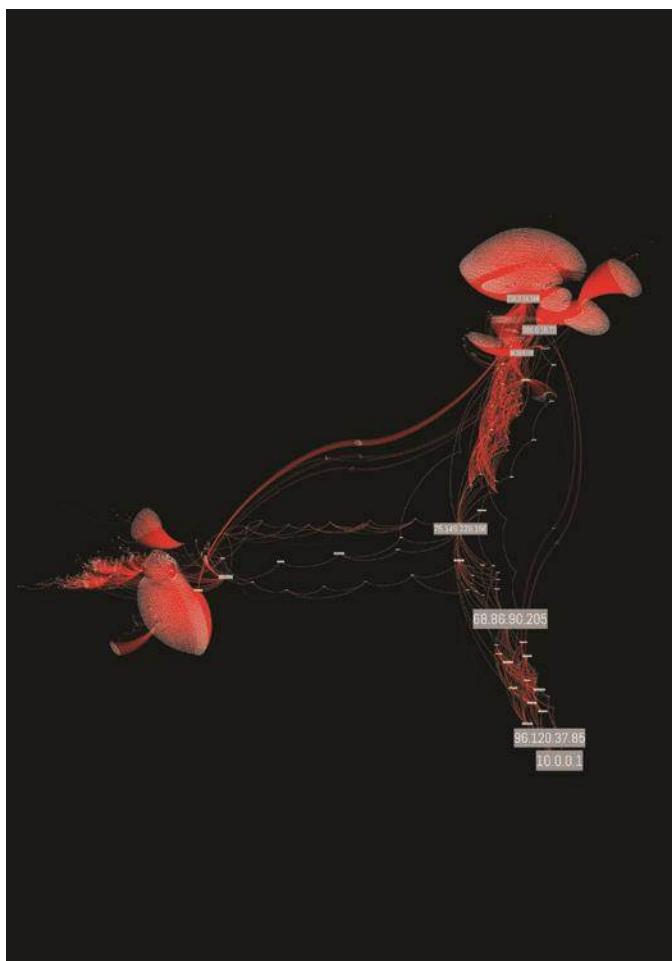
Pilgram: Naked link 3.0, 2021

Software

Courtesy of the artist

Rodolfo Peraza's *Pilgram: Naked Link 3.0* gives visual form, in real time, to the digital expanse that stretches between Oolite, where the software currently "lives," and a specific IP address in Havana from which a Cuban institution attempted to hack the artist's servers in 2020. Like a remora affixed to a shark, the software follows the continuous flow of information that moves between the two sites, catching random bits of data. From these scattered bits, it constructs images of this flow, which Peraza uses, in turn, to extrapolate inferences about Cuba's physical communication infrastructure, from the satellites and undersea cables through which data passes to the murky patchwork of foreign companies that lay claim to it. For Peraza, this expanse is a contested space, an arena in which control hinges on the ability to envision that which cannot be discerned with the naked eye. In this sense, the project puts a new spin on the argument elaborated by many 20th-century continental

philosophers (especially Michel Foucault) that vision (the gaze) and power are inextricably linked. Like other conceptual digital artists, Peraza extends this corollary from the material world to an abstract realm where any hopes of agency and resistance depend on our ability to devise new ways of seeing.



***Jailhead.com*, 2009–2021**

Software

Courtesy of the artist

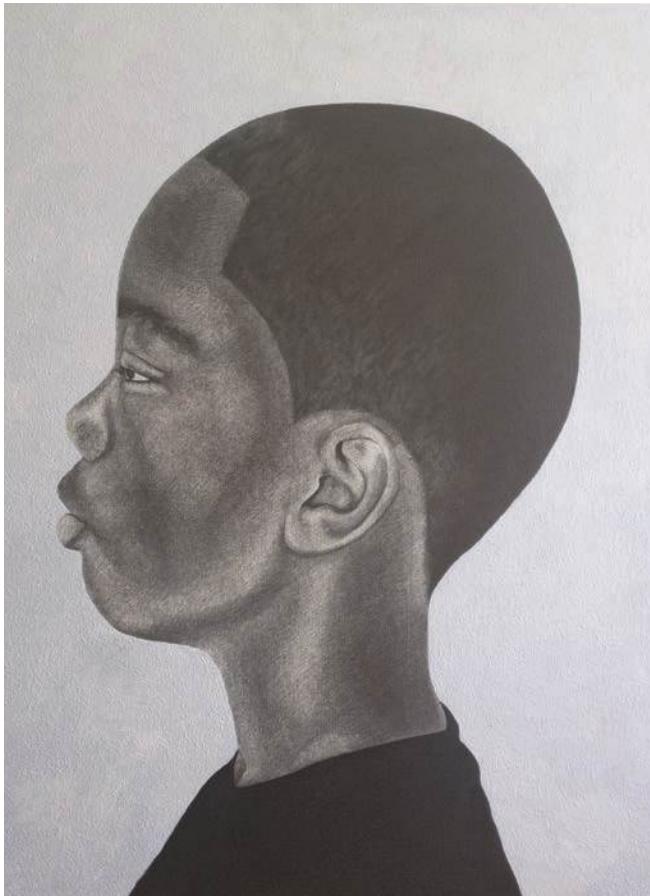
Peraza explores the intersection of vision, power, and digital space even more directly in *Jailhead.com*, an immersive, 3D interactive game in which participants navigate the decayed ruins of the notorious Presidio Modelo. The project pertains to an ongoing series of works titled *Lo que contiene el vacío* (That Which the Emptiness Contains), in which Peraza reconstructs historically loaded abandoned spaces in the virtual world. Located on Isla de Pinos, an otherwise paradisiacal island off the southern coast of Cuba, the prison is best remembered as the place where Inmate #3859 (detained between 1953 and 1954) recruited the cohort of fellow prisoners with whom he would plan and eventually carry out the revolution that would bring him to power less than five years later. Less known is the function that the prison played between Fidel Castro's ascendance in 1959 and its closure in 1967, as the site where thousands of counterrevolutionaries and political dissidents endured "reeducation" in the form of sub-human living conditions, physical and psychological torture, hard labor, starvation, and execution.

Built between 1926 and 1928, this "model" prison consists of five distinctively circular buildings, each with

cells constructed in tiers that surround a central guard tower from which the inmates can be watched furtively, never knowing for certain whether or not they are being monitored. To this day it remains the most paradigmatic example ever built of the "panopticon" design conceived in the 18th century by the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham. Foucault famously mined this architectural reference to develop a far-reaching metaphor for how post-monarchic societies compel their subjects to fall in line, policing themselves in response to the ever-present sense that they are being surveilled. Players of *Jailhead* can choose to adopt either inmates or prison personnel (administrators, guards, visiting clergy, etc.) as their avatars. For those who opt to play inmates, their IP addresses serve as their prisoner numbers. Participants wearing Oculus headsets in the exhibition space can interact with each other, as well as with players logging in from their individual web browsers. As users navigate this haunted setting, they experience the nightmare of totalitarianism for themselves.







Chire Regans (VantaBlack)

b. 1979, St. Louis;
lives in Miami

***When They Ask Me What I Did,
I'll Say Everything I Could, 2021***

Charcoal, pencil, acrylic paint
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Chire Regans has dedicated her life and practice to commemorating those who no longer have a voice. Shortly after the death of King Carter, a six-year-old boy, Regans began creating portraits depicting the young people who have fallen victim to the surge in gun violence that has plagued Miami in recent years. To date, she has created over 250 of these renderings, comprising a monumental series for which, lamentably, there is no end in sight.

As a mother herself, Regans saw her own children in those who had tragically lost their lives. Arranging the drawings in a grid, she positions her children at either end of the installation, recalling how the ends of a bookcase support what lies between them. They face away from the center, as if looking toward another possible reality, one that doesn't end in violence or death. The title of the work encapsulates an imagined moment in the future when Regans' children stand before her and ask, "What did you do?" — to which she hopes she can respond, "Everything I could." The work is both a record of the accumulation of loss and a living memorial intended to serve as a catalyst for change.



Tony Vázquez- Figueroa

b. 1970, Caracas;
lives in Miami

Ourglass, 2019

Crude oil in hand-blown glass
13×5 inches

Courtesy of the artist and
LnS Gallery, Miami

In *Ourglass*, Tony Vázquez-Figueroa replaces the sands of an hourglass with approximately three minutes worth of slowly dripping crude oil. Each time the object is turned over, the viscous substance within it leaves behind an amber-colored residue along its interior. Eventually, the residue will turn the glass opaque, rendering the hourglass useless as an instrument for tracking time. The work readily takes on symbolic dimensions, suggesting the inevitable conclusion of extractive capitalism in the face of global warming, depleting natural resources, and geopolitical conflict. For how much longer, it seems to ask, can economies based on nonrenewable fuels continue to treat nature as a machine that will never break? The audio component that accompanies the work captures the sound of its own dripping, which the artist likens to the sound of a fading heartbeat.

Judi Werthein

b. 1967, Buenos Aires;
lives in Miami

Brinco (Jump), 2005

Sneakers, vinyl lettering,
offset poster, and video
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Brinco (Jump) centers on custom-made sneakers Judi Werthein designed for the purpose of facilitating the treacherous passage across the border that separates Mexico and the United States. Each pair contains a map, a flashlight, a compass, and pockets to hide money, documents, and medicine. On the heels, the artist included an image of Santo Toribio Romo, the official patron saint of Mexican immigration, who has reportedly made miraculous appearances to migrants along their journeys. Werthein gave the sneakers out for free to individuals about to “make the leap” in Tijuana. Simultaneously, in a high-end sneaker store in San Diego, she sold them as limited edition art objects for \$200 a pop (donating the proceeds to a shelter for asylum seekers in need). By means of this bifurcated distribution channel, *Brinco* makes vivid the inequities that drive countless people from Central America and other regions to the U.S. in search of low-paying jobs, while implicating consumers as key participants in exploitative corporate practices. To manufacture the sneakers, Werthein turned to a factory in China that employs cheap labor, underscoring the global reach and consistent tactics of the neoliberal economic order.

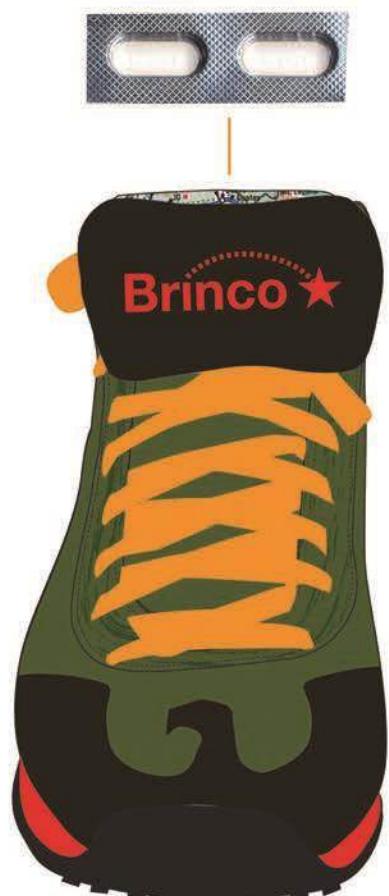




Around 1970, strange things happened at the border dividing the United States and Mexico. Hundreds of illegal aliens began reporting that whenever they found themselves in trouble, a strange Mexican priest named Toribio Romo would suddenly appear and help them cross the border, giving them food, water, money and information on how to get jobs in the United States. Sometimes, he came upon illegals suffering from heat exhaustion, snakebite, and other infirmities. He healed them as well. The immigrants thought he was a real life human being; not a guardian angel.

Brinco

b
Judi W



Pocket to hide money



American eagle engraved on the quartered dollar coin

Label inside the
revealing the man-
facturing conditio

Brinco ★

y
erthein



Map of the area printed
on the inner sole



Compass and mini flash light



Symbol of the
Mexican eagle



Brinco ★

JUDI WERTHEIN
2005 ©

This product was
manufactured in China
under a minimum wage
of 42 \$ us. a month
working 12hour days.

shoe
anu-
ons.



Agustina Woodgate

b. 1981, Buenos Aires;
lives in Amsterdam and Miami

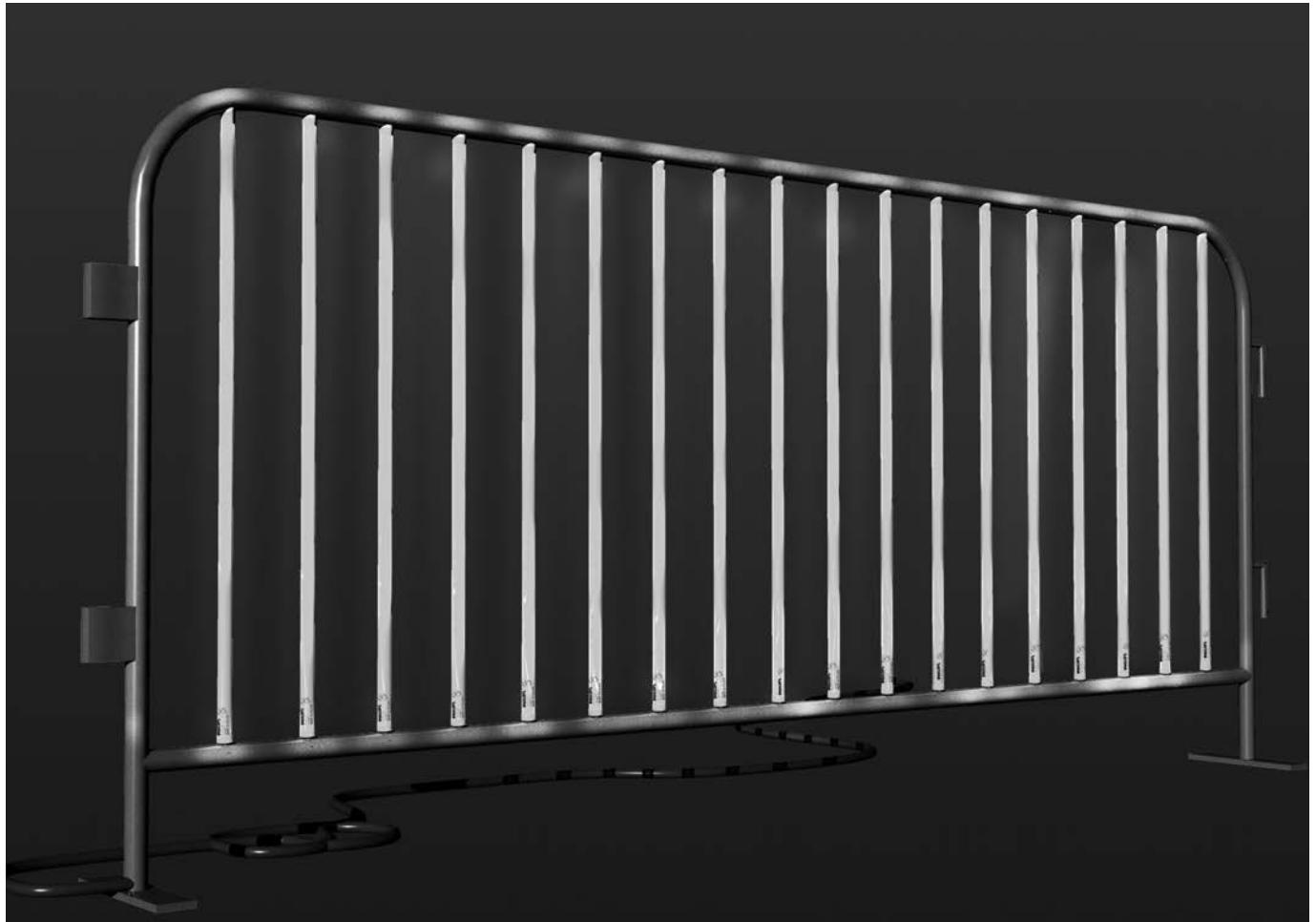
Emergency Exchange, 2019

Bullet resistant acrylic package exchange box and one month's supply of emergency drinking water pouches

12×14×16 inches

Courtesy of the artist and
Spinello Projects, Miami

Agustina Woodgate's *Emergency Exchange* consists of a month's supply of emergency drinking water enclosed within a bullet-proof acrylic exchange box. Commonly found at gas stations, banks, pawnshops, and other sites where hard currency is traded, this device provides an added measure of security by remaining firmly sealed until the door on its opposite side is fully closed. The work suggests that something as fundamental to human survival as water can be subject to the same rules of quid pro quo that govern any economic transaction. The implied reference is to ongoing efforts by multinational corporations to take control of and monetize potable water. In the face of imminent, severe global water shortages, this trend risks triggering more of the kind of suffering and violent conflict that has already been seen in Palestine and other locations throughout the world. More generally, the piece indicates the alarming intersection of worsening environmental crises and the ever-diminishing role of the commons in preserving equitable access to vital resources.



Antonia Wright and Ruben Millares

Wright: b. 1979, Miami;
lives in Miami

Millares: b. 1980, Miami;
lives in Miami

Where there is power, there is resistance, 2021

Steel barricade and
fluorescent lights
44×80×30 inches

Courtesy of the artists and
Spinello Projects, Miami

Where there is power, there is resistance is part of a series of works in which Ruben Millares and Antonia Wright explore the sculptural and symbolic potential of standard steel barricades. Though more often associated with mundane crowd control at celebratory events like parades and concerts, these generic objects have recently taken on new connotations, having been extensively deployed to manage protesters in places like Hong Kong, Chile, and the many sites where large numbers turned out in defense of Black lives following the murder of George Floyd. Barricades also played an infamous role on January 6, 2021, buckling under the angry mob that stormed the U.S. Capitol in a failed attempt to block the ratification of the recent presidential elections. By replacing a barricade's vertical bars with fluorescent lights, the artists neutralize its function, making it easy to shatter. Moreover, to a significant extent barricades rely on their own innocuousness, directing the passage of bodies through urban space in an almost subliminal manner. By transforming the object into a thing of conspicuous beauty, the artists abrogate its psychological operations.

In loving memory
Asif Farooq
September 19, 1979–August 1, 2020





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Exhibitions and programs at Oolite Arts are made possible with support from the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, the Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade Mayor and Board of County Commissioners; the City of Miami Beach Cultural Arts Council; the Miami Beach Mayor and City Commissioners; the State of Florida, Florida Department of State, Division of Arts & Culture, the Florida Arts Council; the National Endowment for the Arts; the Lynn & Louis Wolfson II Family Foundation, The Jorge M. Pérez Family Foundation at The Miami Foundation; the Al & Jane Nahmad Family Foundation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Additional support provided by Walgreens Company.

there
is resistance.