

# CRITIC'S PICK LEYDEN RODRIGUEZ-CASANOVA



Rodriguez-Casanova's *A Fence Obstructing Space*, created for Scope Miami in 2007, satirizes velvet ropes and gated communities.

Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova likes to make waves. For Socrates Sculpture Park in Long Island City, Queens, he wanted to build a public swimming pool for kids to splash in over the summer. But that idea, he says, turned out to be a logistical nightmare. Architectural icons—as he calls commonplace structures like pools, prefabricated sheds, and fences—fascinate him. He characteristically riffs on the taken-for-granted forms in ways that may be confusing, even annoying. “I like displacing things,” says the 36-year-old artist, who designed *A Fence Obstructing Space* for the 2007 Scope Miami fair. The black aluminum fence, which alludes to gated communities, was installed to block the entrance to the fair’s VIP lounge. He thought it would be “really cool” to “piss off” patrons, he said at the time.

This winter Socrates Sculpture Park exhibited Rodriguez-Casanova’s *An Inaccessible Gazebo* (2008) as part of its “Open Space” project. The work, in pristine white with Victorian flourishes, is made of nothing more than durable plastic on a concrete foundation. “Normally gazebos in the late 19th century would be made of cedar; in Roman times they would be marble,” the artist explains. “This is a very instant-gratification, consumerist version—a shelter for you to enjoy nature.”

The gazebo, like the art-fair fence, appears designed to keep people out, but Rodriguez-Casanova actually hoped park visitors would defy the velvet-rope mentality of museums and VIP lounges and hop the railing of his “inaccessible gazebo.” He explains, “I’m totally open to whatever would happen to it. Whether you jump over it or put spray paint on the gazebo, it becomes a public structure.”



The Cuban-born artist lives in Miami and shares a studio with his wife, sculptor Frances Trombly. He is represented by David Castillo Gallery, where his work sells for between \$5,000 and \$12,000. Rodriguez-Casanova, who arrived in Miami in 1980 and grew up helping his father, an electrician, with home-improvement projects, attributes his interest in making objects evoking domestic life to his working-class upbringing. Educated at New World School of the Arts in Miami and Ringling College of Art and Design in Sarasota, Rodriguez-Casanova speaks of his approach to art: “I want people to interact with my work, to come up and grab it. You almost don’t know if something is real until you hold it. It’s a very primal thing to do.”

—Elisa Turner

*Elisa Turner is the Miami correspondent for ARTnews.*