

## Adler Guerrier takes to the streets for new exhibition

BY TOM AUSTIN

Special to The Miami Herald



Adler Guerrier's *Untitled* (dealership)

On a Saturday afternoon, Adler Guerrier -- a star, along with fellow Miami artists William Cordova and Bert Rodriguez, of the 2008 Whitney Biennial -- is contemplating his exhibition at the Art and Culture Center of Hollywood, a circa-1924, Old Florida house. The property has been given the all-that-jazz update of contemporary art, and Guerrier's show *Out to Lunch* -- named after the artist's strolls around the neighborhood during its installation -- anchors the main gallery.

Each end of the room is equipped with video projections of resolutely ordinary sweet home South Florida, a rat-land blur of strip

malls, used-car dealerships, brave little bungalows, McFood joints, madly breeding Walgreens, abandoned condo projects and, here and there, occasional traces of architectural grace. To create each video, Guerrier simply mounted a camera in the back of his Volvo -- "I purposely wanted the video to have the perspective of a back-seat passenger disengaged from the landscape and the passing scenery" -- and drove from his house in Coral Gables to this spot, avoiding I-95 and capturing a slice of roadside life in a real-time, 50-minute video.

Guerrier's work is about the "psycho-geographic" narrative of particular landscapes. He likes to portray society by casting himself in the role of what the French call the *flaneur*, popularized by Charles Baudelaire, a detached stroller exploring the urban wonderland and the detritus that informs our local character. On the floor are three pieces, small boxes constructed from left-over campaign posters from George Williams, a contender in the District 5 race featuring Michelle Spence-Jones; other pieces use the "Cash for your Warhol" signs that sprang up during 2009's Art Basel Miami Beach, as well as the "Rent Your Home for the Bowls" signs that were everywhere during the Super and Pro Bowls.

"There is all this leftover language we encounter every day -- left behind on fences and telephone poles, a consumer's language that takes various sculptural forms," Guerrier says. "It's interesting to look at, but it really has nothing to tell you."

## COMPLEX COMPOSITIONS

On the gallery walls are some of Guerrier's complex compositions incorporating graphite serigraphs, water colors and meticulous drawing, as well as photographs such as *Untitled*, an image of a sidewalk and a street gutter. In many of his other images from previous shows, in such pieces as *Untitled [Overtown North]* he casts himself in strange narratives. In one lonely photograph, he is a solitary figure gazing up at a lamppost in Overtown. The poetic reimaginings of bleak surroundings resemble a cross between Edward Hopper and Komar & Melamid's documentation of Bayonne, N.J.

Guerrier, who is represented by the David Castillo Gallery in Miami, is an artist for the post-pretty-much-everything age, with influences that include Ed Ruscha and John Baldessari. For the Biennial, Guerrier did an installation, *untitled (BLCK-We wear the mask)*, drawn from an imaginary collective of circa-1968 Liberty City artists dealing with riots and that year's notorious Republican convention on Miami Beach. Currently, Guerrier is in a group show at the Tate Liverpool, England -- *fro-Modernism: Journeys through the Black Atlantic* -- and his inspirations include leaders of the 1970s Black Nationalism Movement, Chester Himes, Duke Ellington and the French student movement of May 1968.

He is in the permanent collection of the Studio Museum in Harlem and was also represented in several group shows, from *harlemworld* to *Freestyle*. For the 2001 *Freestyle* show, director and chief curator Thelma Golden applied the term "postblack" to the 28 artists represented, their work ranging in scope from Kori Newkirk's renderings of police helicopters painted with hair pomade to Guerrier's abstract series of 12 *flaneur* photographs, the *flaneur* in question going from Miami to New York.

"Guerrier's artwork is unique and compelling because it encourages us to look at the environment around us with new eyes," Golden says. "His projects in multiple media . . . encourage the viewer to seek meaning in everyday spaces and activities, like a simple walk through a city, as well as to contemplate the daily lives of the strangers with whom we share our streets, sidewalks, and parks."

Born in Haiti in 1975, Guerrier moved to Miami at 12 and earned a B.F.A. from New World School of the Arts in 2000. To Maggy Cuesta, dean of visual arts, he has used Miami well. "Like many young artists here," she says, "Adler is open to the investigative process of exploring our landscape."

## LANDSCAPE TOUR

On a tour of the Hollywood landscape in his car, Guerrier points out various curiosities: an old armory, Twisted Heart Tattoo, fake ornamental columns that have ruined the modernist simplicity of an office building. "At least it's still there. So much of Miami has been leveled."

Outside the windows, the world floats by: St. Theresa church with its coral-rock walls, the downbeat Entrada Motel, Pikasso Skin Care, pawn shops, frozen custard stands, Cleopatra's Palace and Hookah Lounge. West of I-95, the sun beats down on Hollywood Boulevard, bleaching the scene into banality, the deracinated landscape becoming all too

real, with a drunk sitting on a bus bench with his pants around his ankles.

Back on the main drag, near the museum, Melina's Lingerie Shoppe, a classic kind of jaunty Florida establishment that brings to mind early South Beach, leads to a screaming-the-1950s office building raised on V-shaped pillars. Guerrier is in psycho-geographic rapture, a *flaneur* at peace.

“These remnants of yesteryear are so important,” he says. “The past guides us to what we are.”