

ARTFORUM

Adler Guerrier

PÉREZ ART MUSEUM MIAMI
1103 Biscayne Blvd.
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In 1968, Amiri Baraka’s harsh sentencing for purportedly inciting civil unrest in Newark, New Jersey, was symptomatic of the racial discrimination that led to the riots. He was guilty of “formulating a plot”—the judge’s words that inspired the subtitle of Haitian-born Adler Guerrier’s first solo museum exhibition. While themes of racial iniquity loom large in his exhibition, truth and fiction are blurred, preventing the work from becoming didactic.



View of “Adler Guerrier: Formulating a Plot,” 2014.

For instance, the mixed-media installation *Untitled (BLCK-We Wear the Mask)*, 2007–2008, is a collection of artifacts from a fictional artist collective BLCK based in Liberty City, a predominantly African American neighborhood of Miami, that Guerrier imagined to be in solidarity with other radical Black movements across the country in the 1960s. The assemblage includes monochromatic photographs, black text on black protest signs, and prints with half-observed urban scenes.

“Untitled (Overtown North),” 2006, is a photographic series of nondescript locations, largely of empty lots and streets at night that are lit by the eerie effulgence of lampposts. The title is instructive: It points to the Miami neighborhood Overtown, as well as to Wynwood, directly north. The work simultaneously evokes in mood the recent past of Wynwood—an abandoned warehouse turned gentrified arts district—as much as the recent present of Overtown—a center of urban decay that was once a bustling economic center for African Americans. As in much of Guerrier’s work, politics and poetics are held in tension—in this exhibition, by nimbly blurring past and present, here and there.

-Alpesh Kantilal Patel