

MIAMI RAIL

Pepe Mar: Excess of Sleep Produces Monsters

Santino Sini
Winter 2016



Pepe Mar: *Excess of Sleep Produces Monsters*, David Castillo Gallery, Miami Beach, 2016

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DAVID CASTILLO GALLERY

SEPTEMBER 15–NOVEMBER 19, 2016

Throughout Pepe Mar's works on view at David Castillo Gallery, spindly shapes are ethereally arranged, their energy bleeding out over subdued backgrounds, with vibrant neon streams that levitate at times and are stiffly stacked at others. Foliage-like glowing colors are also interspersed among household objects, eerie machinations, and images of culturally diverse relics.

Ecstasy (2016), an acrylic painting at the gallery's entrance, features an eyelike shape amid a cerebral swirl of white drips on a blue ground. The painting winds and melts, like the dissolution of reality as we enter sleep. *The Somnambulist's Garden* (2015), a collage work, is a canopy of copper and aquamarine leaves draped among a mass of relics and artifacts, flamingoes, parakeets, and medallions. It's like night falling in a synthetic jungle. Opposite this, another collage, this one made only of paper, with neon bursts strewn throughout, is stretched like a spider web across a vertical cross section of the room. A circular access to the work can be stepped through—a literal entrance into Mar's dream world.

There is an intense variety to the objects and images used to create these collages. Cultural references are implied by imagery of various gods, symbols, and figures from Latin, Asian, African, and European history, used to varying degrees of depth. These can be seen as symbols or as a way of expressing an encompassing superficiality; they could have to do with something to do with various cultural or genetic relationships; or perhaps each object and image was chosen purposefully (or communed subconsciously).

The seriousness of these archaic forms is juxtaposed by the neon matter that binds them and the various household and created objects: back scratchers, miniature traditional pottery, paper leaves and plastic flamingoes, Chinese lanterns and brittle stars fashioned from rolled paper. Oftentimes these objects are displayed on mock shelving contained within the works. They present chance relation, a feeling of loose acquaintance, indicative of the subconscious, of narratives forming tangentially and ever repeating. In this confusion, the collages call to mind low tide, or the aftermath of a flood. In *Le Cabinet d' Orange* (2016), the collage seems to burst from a darkness that immediately flashes to neon orange, from where the conglomeration emanates. Other works are largely sculptural, as in *Personnage (Purple)* (2016), consisting of arcs and ribbons of colored and patterned papers in the center of an orange-backed Plexiglas box. According to the gallery, the jagged and feathered form we see in many works is Paprika, “a reoccurring horned beast in Mar’s alternate reality.”

Most attuned to South Beach culture, Mar’s *Window* series (2016) displays panels of glittering neon alongside club entry bracelets, Takis chips bags, Vero Mango packaging, and Versace tags. In interweaving patterned paper, the ever present eyes of Paprika appear. So it was surprising to me to find out that these works do not reference South Beach, but instead Ridgewood, Queens, the place of inception for many of the works, showcasing the cultural confluence and excess of Miami is not entirely singular.