

Pepe Mar's cabinets of wonder

By Anne Tschida
April 2, 2013



Anyone who has seen Pepe Mar's work won't forget it. He has created one of the more distinctive looks – punctuated by his distinct color palette – around town. Until now, the Mexico-born Miamian with a BFA from the California College of Arts (and, recently, an MFA from FIU) would be best known for his funky sculptures, collaged creatures that seem to reverberate because of the intensity of the psychedelic, tropical colors he endows them with – those pinks, purples, rose-reds, yellows.

In his latest solo outing at the David Castillo Gallery, a few of those sculptures reappear, but integrated into incredibly crowded wall boxes – *Wunderkabinetts*, really. In fact that German word fits well these new works from Mar, which make up part of a very good show called “The Eye, The Vessel, and the Spell.” They really are cabinets of wonder, filled with masks and plumage and statues and pottery, some images cut from magazines, others little found objects. There is whimsy here, Latin heritage, and cultural and pop references.

These are dense works, and a departure in a sense for Mar, while remaining grounded in his signature style. Because of that density, it's nice that the gallery still feels open and uncluttered in the way the show is installed. A highlight are the four open boxes, each one a shelf exhibiting a small bronze sculpture, some pottery, found totem-like objects and a framed collage – the composition is terrific. The back wall will also draw your attention immediately. Unlike the other works, this is two-toned: tacked on a burnt-orange/butter-colored painted wall (it's luminous) are several large, black sculptures that look like wicker baskets. And Mar has given us some free-standing sculptures as well, this time a grouping of single-colored



creatures – turquoise, red, purple – that seem to be marching toward you when you enter the gallery. They're here! Visit them in the week left that the show is open.



“The Eye, The Vessel, and the Spell” runs through April 6 at the David Castillo Gallery, 2234 N.W. 2nd Ave., Miami; www.davidcastillogallery.com.