

Art in America

Adler Guerrier

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David Castillo

By Hunter Braithwaite



Miami Archimedes famously claimed that, given a lever and a place to stand, he could move the world. Documenting his walks around South Florida, Adler Guerrier fundamentally alters our sense of a location, recording his traversal through neighborhoods by means of various artistic tools. In his recent exhibition “Here, Place the Lever” (all work 2012), the Haitian-born, Miami-based artist displayed photographs and collaged drawings that speak to the relativity of a sense of place while addressing the history of urban wandering.

Guerrier’s series of 20-by-16-inch photographs was installed in such a way as to mimic the experience of how we see as we travel through an unfamiliar city. The

20 prints were hung at eye level, sometimes in a grid, sometimes in a single line, and with the odd one rising above or sinking below the rest. The images are of houses and tropical yards, as well as the streets and trains that connect home to elsewhere. While the photographs are all unspectacular, they are not boring; expertly composed, they have a studied nonchalance and their palette is sometimes lurid. Their familiarity at first hums reassuringly, but, as we realize they are completely unpopulated, we begin to feel a sense of estrangement. The first photograph one saw upon entering the gallery, *Untitled (Space for Rent)*, shows a painted for-rent sign peeling off a wooden wall. In mid-disintegration due to rain and heat, the sign at once indicates disuse (albeit temporary) and a feeling of transience. That theme of rootlessness was picked up by the next photograph, *Untitled (andalusia + salzedo)*. Here, unused and seemingly abandoned plastic shipping pallets provide a counterpoint to a Moorish-style cutout pattern in a concrete wall in the background.

Works on paper varying in size were pinned directly to the walls. Lines and geometric shapes seem to emerge from a veritable mist of splattered layers of watercolor, acrylic and graphite. Phrases written or collaged onto the surface are textual souvenirs gathered along the course of the artist’s walks.

The association with maps is unavoidable. Take the large (60-by-42-inch) drawing *Untitled (blk chrtr)*: within a diffuse ground of yellow and blue, circles and hexagons float around intersecting axial lines that could easily be read as streets. The top layer includes a collaged section of poster with its words half obliterated. The erosion of the text echoes the similar deterioration we see in the photographed for-rent sign. The fragmentation of the poster recalls Mimmo Rotella’s technique of *décollage*.

In the tension they strike between randomness and order, these works, registering Guerrier’s solitary *dérive*, recall Situationist maps. Yet while he is clearly influenced by many European sources, Guerrier takes his own path. The *flâneur* was a creature of continental capitals, whose designs were well suited to the strolling observer. South Florida both thwarts pedestrian traffic and dwarfs reasonable scale, though Guerrier does his best to defy these barriers to human comprehension.

Photo: Adler Guerrier: Untitled (andalusia + salzedo), 2012, C-print, 16 by 20 inches; at David Castillo.