

Art Review

Pangaea II: New Art From Africa And Latin America, Saatchi Gallery



Pangaea II: New Art From Africa And Latin America - Saatchi Gallery - A Minor Seismic Shift

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The Saatchi Gallery presents **Pangaea II: New Art From Africa And Latin America**, the latest exhibition at the Saatchi gallery is the follow up to last years **Pangaea**, the first foray into the talents of Africa and Latin America, and brings together the work of 19 international artists, in the second instalment of the Saatchi Gallery's museum-scale survey of two major continents.

The first room is visually consists of a visually impressive installation of 97,000 blue plastic bags that are piled into a mound to represent the lives lost in the slave trade. The work is

by Caribbean artist Jean-François Boclé, a metaphorical installation highlights dialectics such as capitalism and consumerism, privilege and injustice. The artist describes his work as postcolonial consciousness and collective history, with political text, animated chocolate drawings, blown up carrier bags, and flattened cardboard boxes, become devices for the communication of historical narratives. Expressed through the almost clinical blue plastic bags, this seems more a reflection of Western Social dystopia.

Brazilian artist Eduardo Berliner's series of paintings utilises the tension between painting and the image to question the authenticity of memory from direct experience, creating renderings of living things, scenes from the natural world, plant forms, pets people, and domestic scenes - the works are concerned with the slippage that takes place from false memory - and the unintentional invention of the image as truth. The paintings are a residue of the artist's attempt to de-fragment an event, the work is merely residual, an invention of subjective human consciousness with a slight feel of David Hockney, and what's more the artist can paint.



Image: Eduardo Berliner 'Woman With Dog', 2009, P A Black © Artlyst 2015 all rights reserved

African artist Dawit Abebe's almost illustrative paintings are an interesting addition to the exhibition, the artist presents the human figure in a manner familiar to painting post-Bacon, and Freud, but with the addition of this slight comic quality; through which the artist renders his figures with a surreal finish. With the implementation of this juxtaposition between genres, Abebe reverses the comic image from cultural icon and signifier back to a study of human form.

As a Cuban exile living in Mallorca, artist Jorge Mayet's uses his eidetic memory to re-create images and detailed landscapes and natural forms based on visions of his distant home country. The artist's practice of creating small-scale sculptural installations, and miniaturised replicas of imaginary trees, plants and other natural objects are impressive additions to the show and juxtapose elegantly with the grand halls of the Saatchi Gallery's spacious exhibition. Mayet's work speaks of nostalgia and the recognition of identity and its temporal and topographical connections to the concept of home.



Image: Dawit Abebe 'No.2 Background 1', 2014, P A Black © Artlyst 2015 all rights reserved

Another highlight of the show is African artist Boris Nzebo's multi-layered paintings and collages, interlacing figurative subjects with the architectural forms. The artist's works are a little like Basquiat's rendered by computer, with Nzebo's paintings being described as having psycho geographical impulses. The works balance the vibrancy of primitive art with the subjugation of Western tendencies to restrain. Rendering multiple layers of information as a rhythmic integration of subject matter both human and environmental.

In fact painting is particularly strong in this exhibition; such as the 'tropically' coloured geometric compositions of Latin American artist Federico Herrero, grand and vibrant abstracts, which upon closer inspection hold hidden figuration, and allusions to geographical locations, at once immediately accessible and storing more complicated modes of information.

Pangaea was a land mass that around 270 million years ago was a supercontinent containing what we now know as the earth's seven continents, which broke apart in a seismic split due to fissures in the planet's tectonic plates. But it can't be stated that this rather spacious exhibition expresses the same grandeur, as some of the artists seem not to have 'quite' found their voice as yet. But amongst the 19 exhibitors are a number of very promising artists indeed - possibly not quite capable of giving the viewer the whole world just yet - but at least giving us a strong suggestion that the tectonics could shift.

Pangaea II: New Art From Africa And Latin America - Saatchi Gallery - until 6 September 2015

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