

in the three images that comprise the triptych. This image immerses us in a reality “convoked” by the artist, where history and memory, fiction and reality intertwine to generate narratives and visions that are as unprecedented as they are personal.

DENNYS MATOS

## Ángel Ricardo Ríos

Juan Ruiz Gallery

Ángel Ricardo Ríos started his career in Cuba in the tumultuous decade of the 1980s, when he exhibited his edgy installations. Later on, his interest in architecture and design took him to focus on sculpture, and to produce works dominated by the principles of both disciplines. These objects, indebted to Pop Art, became his personal seal and identified his work for years. Ríos’ path towards painting was forged almost as a logical consequence of the sketches and projects he created for his installations and sculptures, many of them situated in public spaces.

Ríos, who currently lives in Mexico, has participated over the years in many group exhibitions and a variety of projects in Miami; this is, however, his first solo appearance in the city, for which he decided to present a selection of his paintings. In an act of postmodern appropriation, he has adopted for his exhibition the title of Manet’s well known, and in his time controversial, *Le Déjeuner sur l’Herbe*. This homage to the famous artist is also a way to condition viewers, at the very least, for the subject matter of Ríos’ own work. It is a highly sensual painting, where greenery and vegetation are pretexts to talk about eroticism and sexuality. We can trace these subjects in Ríos’ oeuvre back to a series created between 2011 and 2012 as a tribute to US artist Georgia O’Keefe, known for these kinds of images. In his earlier pictorial work, Ríos explored volume in an almost three-dimensional fashion, perhaps as a logical station in his passage from sculpture to two-dimensionality. In 2013, however, he began to experiment with the type of composition we see in this exhibition, dominated by a kind of *horror vacui*. Nature invades the entire space, and Ríos covers the totality of the surface with superimposed elements, lines, and colors. He uses a mixed technique of

Ángel Ricardo Ríos. *Tapiz de la habitación del Sr. Donatien Alphonse François de Sade* (Tapestry room Mr. Donatien Alphonse François de Sade), 2015. Coal pastel on canvas (triptych). 74 51/64 x 89 49/64 in. (190 x 228 cm); 74 51/64 x 106 19/64 in. (190 x 270 cm); 74 51/64 x 109 27/32 in. (190 x 279 cm).



pastels and oils to create layer and transparencies; the final results are images similar to graffiti, where elements from different planes come to mix. There is a palpable tension in these works, a certain violence in their execution, which extends over the entire space; we can almost visualize the gesture through the brushstrokes.

One of the best summaries of the show’s general idea is the triptych *Tapiz de la habitación del Sr. Donatien Alphonse François de Sade*. (“A Tapestry in Mr. Donatien Alphonse François de Sade’s Room”). The title’s reference to the famous Marquis de Sade is an explicit marker of the work’s sexual intent. The vine-like flowers that form the composition create a tangle without evident beginning or end. We are inevitably reminded of Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal*, which, in a context similar to that of Manet’s painting, also engages erotic themes (and, like Ríos, use a flower as its pretext).

With these works, Ríos is also questioning the presuppositions and stereotypes that attach to painting as an academic genre. Although he uses a traditional technique, formally he gambles for shifts that may shock some observers. A good example is *Graffiti sobre flora* (“Graffiti on Vegetation”), where Ríos manipulates a traditionally academic theme, the still life, and takes it to a different place by incorporating elements of popular visual language, like graffiti. In *Graffiti rosa en el baño azul* (“Pink Graffiti in the Blue Bathroom”), meanwhile, Ríos revisits the O’Keefe-inspired symbolism that was present in earlier works, using orchids as an allusion to female sexual organs. The most suggestive work in the show is perhaps the highly explicit *La fantasía del florero es la tuya también* (“The Flower Vase Fantasy is Also Yours”). A table becomes a human body, and the flower vase is an allegory of the male sexual organ.

*Desayuno sobre la hierba* (“The Luncheon on the Grass”), an exhibition of large-format paintings on canvas and paper, offers a rather complete panoramic on the way Ríos works in sequences, and makes it possible for us to discover a sense of continuity in Ríos’ oeuvre: with his performances in the selection of subject matter, and with his installations via the presence of a strong histrionic element reinforced by the format and the themes of his work. A unifying characteristic cutting across Ríos’ entire body of work is its stage-like nature, evident in his sculptures, his installations, and his paintings. The most notable difference, of course, is the treatment of volume and the use of space. While Ríos’ sculptures feature a more minimalistic handling of the object, his painting is a kind of exercise in catharsis, seemingly unfiltered, and the product is more visually spontaneous.

IRINA LEYVA

### NEW YORK / NY

## Valeska Soares

Jewish Museum

A new installation in the Jewish Museum’s entrance lobby presents the work of New York-based Brazilian artist Valeska Soares. The installation is part of an ongoing program titled *Using Walls, Floors and Ceilings*, a contemporary version of the museum’s 1970s exhibition program, which at the time was called *Using Walls*. Back then, as now, the museum was acquiring works by contemporary artists with the intention of integrating their discourses into a dialog with earlier modes of expression already in its permanent collections.

Soares’ installation features a large, old carpet placed right at the museum entrance, in front of the admissions desk; over the carpet hangs a

selection of old pocket watches. The installation ponders the transience of all human settlement, since both carpets and watches are portable and evoke the ideas of travel and motion. It also calls our attention to the feelings of melancholy and nostalgia for the past, and, situated in this public context of urban traffic and social exchange, emphasizes the background of alienation and loneliness that is such an integral component of contemporary artistic practice.

Some years ago, in an exhibition titled *Ultra Baroque Aspects of Post Latin American Art* at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, Soares presented a deeply emotional installation made from reclining chairs and wax pillows, where viewers could see the imprints of a pair of knees and traces of leg hair left behind by a parishioner's reclining prayer. The general impression was that of contemplating the remains of an offering; the hairs signaled the possibility of an expiatory ritual, similar to the funeral practices of ancient Greece and Rome, where the grieving pulled strands of hair and added them to the pyre where the body of the deceased burned.

Soares' installation at the Jewish Museum evokes, through the objects it contains, the absence of the bodies that used them in the past. In this case, the carpet is also a paradigm of silence, of muted steps that cannot be heard, even if their presence can be felt as their memory is evoked. The use of the carpet is particularly moving in such a densely populated megacity as New York, where a large carpeted area is often required in apartments, rented or owned. The Asian carpet in this installation also brings to mind the era when the museum building was a private home, and its placement at the entrance resembles that era's inviting sense of decoration, a reflection of Upper East Side gentility and the way in which such barometers of wealth still affect us today.

**Valeska Soares.** *Time Has No Shadows*, 2015. Installation: mat and pocket watches. Variable dimensions.



Often, the works of artists are assembled from antiques and old, well-used materials. A 2012 exhibition at Eleven Rivington Gallery in New York City (today 11R Gallery) was based on recycled books, using only their covers to create designs that resembled a map by Boetti with their graphics in contrasting colors. Before then, in 2008, Soares presented an installation at Fortes Vilaça gallery in São Paulo that was formed by a large floor item made from first pages torn from books (the pages that were manuscript dedications are inscribed); evidently, this work focused on written expressions of love and affection. In consequence, the testimony of feelings was recycled and transformed into a visual presentation that differed entirely from its original format's intent, becoming more expressive in this context as a testament to the whims of time and of human emotion.

In a broader context of international art production and practice, Soares' evocations are inscribed in today's international trends toward making viewers focus on an emotion, a memory, or a sentiment through the use of installation. I was reminded of the French pavilion at the 2007 Venice Biennale, filled with Sophie Calle's prints of romantic rejection letters received by the artist via email, which, with their expansion and amplification of correspondence in the occupied space prompted considerations about the nature of the subject, and the way in which such emotions are expressed today through the changes provoked by technology, and what feelings arise as we contemplate such private narratives as an artistic discourse.

The process of recycling and reinterpreting gives new, different life to what has been discarded, and it augments the variety of the histories viewers have access to as they examine the marked, scratched, worn, patched fragments of the past, put together by Soares into a new narrative. The exhibition is titled *Time Has No Shadows*, a very appropriate label for the experience of constant reinterpretation. It also produces a magic-lantern-like effect by projecting the words of the title onto the carpet in a spiral shape, with an old pocket watch hanging over each text. These modifications and alterations of the objects' original purpose, which give us a multiplicity of the reflections, the carpet, and the watches with their chains, connect a universe of stories with these frayed relics of a different time, inviting viewers to contemplate and project their own narratives of this installation and the objects it contains.

ALBERTO BARRAL

## Beatriz Milhazes

### James Cohan

Beatriz Milhazes' peculiar new work can be seen from the street outside the gallery. It is three-dimensional and hangs from the ceiling as though one of her paintings were attached up there and its many rings, fringes, circles, squares, showers of metallic threads, and strips of alternative colors were gradually dislodged and slipping to build a sculpture in circular zigzag, grazing the ground. Viewers have had a chance to read the name "Milhazes" on the wall; now they can also read "Milhazes" in space, in a somewhat reflective, transparent three-dimensionality, with undulations, spheres, and lines in different materials. The work of this Brazilian artist, well established in the international scene, is highly personal. It brings together mono-transfer techniques, a collage of decal media she has invented. These self-generated technical features—which are essential for Milhazes—connect painting, printmaking, and collage in unique originals. In the same vein, Milhazes' art is inhabited by elements of popular speech, carnival, and Brazilian music; she treasures her country's natural riches, as well as concepts