

## Jesús “Bubu” Negrón: Reflection Room

Opening Reception: Thursday April 28, 6-9 pm

Exhibition runs through June 18, 2016

Gallery Hours: Tuesday to Saturday 11-6 pm

Curated by Carla Acevedo-Yates

Henrique Faria Fine Art is pleased to present *Reflection Room*, Jesús “Bubu” Negrón’s first solo exhibition in the gallery. A gathering of materials and documentation of past and recent projects, *Reflection Room* is a site-specific project, conceptualized as a single object, informed by the gallery’s previous function as an apartment. The objects that occupy the space represent a comprehensive range of works from Negrón’s well established practice, including drawing, painting, video, sculpture, and documentation of site-specific interventions. Arranged to emulate a domestic space, the artworks demonstrate the confrontation between Negrón’s public and populist creative practice and art’s historical existence in the private sphere.

Curator Carla Acevedo-Yates describes in the exhibition text how the spaces of production and consumption and the roles of artist and observer become fused through Negrón’s multi-disciplinary practice, “As a worker—in and outside the sphere of contemporary art—Negrón has labored as a street sketch artist, *Dibujos de espalda (Back Portraits)*, 2002-ongoing; a gardener, *Mi otro trabajo (My other job)*, 2009; and an artisan, *Banco Marimbula*, 2012 and *The Spirit Behind the Vejigante Mask (Ethnographic Abstractions)*, 2015. In doing so, Negrón places himself in solidarity with people whose work he envisions not as a trade but rather as a field of cultural knowledge.” By incorporating these various spheres of expertise, Negrón further challenges the exclusivity and formality of the art world. One such example is seen in Negrón’s cigarette butt weavings. In *Cigarette Butt Street Rug* (2016) and *Mini Colillones* (2002-present), Negrón re-contextualizes and effectively elevates both the collection of the butts from city streets and their transformation into textile and sculptural objects.

Negrón’s sense of community figures in his projects that feature Vejigante masks. Negrón has spent time with the craftsmen who have carried on the tradition of these masks, which dates back to the African slaves that had been brought to the island and has been passed down from generation to generation, in an effort to learn the personal histories connected to these masks and make them available to current and future generations. The masks, made of painted coconut shells, were meant to invoke devils and spirits that inhabit different areas of Puerto Rico and are still worn today during the festival of Carnival. The work *Ethnographic Abstraction* (2016), on view in the gallery, demonstrates the syncretism of folkloric and conceptual art practices with the pairing of a Vejigante mask and a large canvas that abstracts the mask’s designs, a gesture that displays Negrón’s interest in ethnographic constructions.

Music is another method that Negrón uses to bring communities together and invite positive, surprising interactions between people and their immediate environment. The *Banco Marimbula* (2011) also draws on Puerto Rico’s African heritage as it reconstructs a now disused musical instrument used in the early days of salsa and son, the marimbula, as a bench located in a public square. In this way, the public bench, normally considered a space of passivity and separation from the hustle and bustle of the street, becomes a space of collective action and engagement as strangers join together in the common goal of music-making.

As Acevedo-Yates concludes, the exhibition “shifts the viewers’ attention from individual discrete objects to the space they occupy in a careful staging that encourages an active contextualization of the work.” With calls for inclusivity and contemplation, *Reflection Room* becomes not only an immersive environment where the viewer can come to explore Negrón’s practice more deeply but also a mirror through which the artist and the voices and histories he celebrates can be intimately seen.

**Jesús “Bubu” Negrón** (Puerto Rico, 1975) is an artist whose work is characterized by minimal interventions, the re-contextualization of everyday objects and a relational approximation to artistic production as a revealing act of historical, social and economic proportions. Negrón lives in the neighborhood of Puerta de Tierra in San Juan, where he is part of the Brigada PDT, a grass-roots community organization for the preservation and wellbeing of the neighborhood, its history and its people. After completing an artist residency with M&M Proyectos in Puerto Rico (2002) his work has been featured in multiple projects, notable ones include: *Abubuya Km0* organized by Kiosko Galeria, Bolivia (2014); *Living as Form* organized by Creative Time, New York (2012), curated by Nato Thompson; *The Obscurity of the Jungle* with Proyectos Ultravioleta for SWAB Barcelona in Spain (2013); the *1st Bienal Tropical in Puerto Rico* (2011), where he was awarded the “Golden Pineapple” prize for best artist; *Interpretation of the Soneto de las Estrellas* with Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros in Mexico (2013), curated by Taiyana Pimentel; *Trienal Poligráfica* in Puerto Rico (2009), curated by Adriano Pedrosa, Julieta González and Jens Hoffmann; *Sharjah Biennial* in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (2007), curated by Mohammed Kazem, Eva Scharrer and Jonathan Watkins; *Whitney Biennial*, New York (2006), curated by Chrissie Iles and Philippe Vergne; the *T1 Torino Triennale* in Italy (2005), curated by Francesco Bonami and Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev; and *Tropical Abstraction* at the Stedelijk Bureau Museum in Amsterdam (2005), curated by Ross Gortzak. His work has been reviewed in *Flash Art*, *the New York Times*, *Journal des Arts*, *the LA Times*, *The Art Newspaper*, *Art Nexus* and *Frieze Magazine*.

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