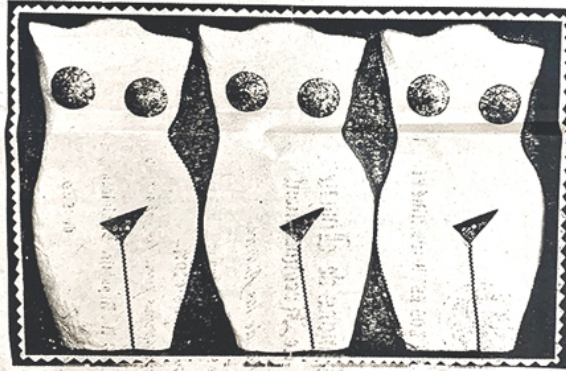


ART SECTION

The Eighth Individual Exhibit of Alette Simmons Jiménez

Visual Seduction of the Unsuspecting Observer



In this country, the female figure is habitually depicted as a safe and shockproof fully clothed peasant woman. Bronzed. A tropical flower tucked behind the ear, a basket of fruit balanced on her head. Wearing an expression of quiet resignation, bearing the brunt of Dominican culture as many visualize it. Woman as farmland. Woman as domestic worker. Woman as rest of the earth.

Into this no-man environment—like a shot of cool air from out of the north—comes the bold realism of Alette Simmons Jiménez's

"Seducción Visual", her eighth individual exposition. Her work is an explosion of found objects—razor blades, feathers, wood, rivets, baubles and pseudo-finey—beads, marbles, pearls, rickrack, bold color combinations—black, gold, peach, green, red, powerful emotions—uninhibition, outrageousness, snafu; and everywhere—the female form.

Simmons is the fair, plump, pale green-eyed product of a military father and an interior designer mother who painted and drew. The family moved around

plot. Perhaps if not for some twist of fate, she would be back in the States tending mental patients. Psychology fascinated her. But, she had a talent for art and of all those in her family who demonstrated artistic ability, Simmons had, she now believes, the right temperament for an independent career and the aggression necessary to work at it everyday. In 1975, she graduated from Louisiana's Tulane University with a BFA. A year later, at the age of 24, the Wisconsin native moved to the Dominican Republic. Despite having lived in a country

for the past 12 years in which Simmons considers her biggest obstacle is being taken seriously, her biography indicates a certain degree of éclat—besides her individual exhibits, she has undertaken six collective exhibitions and 20 commission works. The commission alone has included artwork for Gran Hotel Lina and Hotel Santo Domingo in the capital, Hotel Villas Doradas in Puerto Plata and Casa de Campo in La Romana.

The artist attributes the

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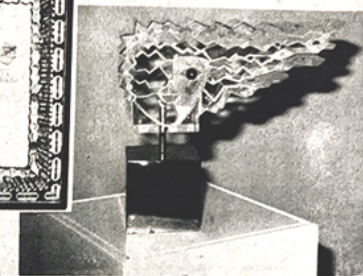
dominate use of women as subject matter to her formal training in the U.S. "The use of females I guess came from academic studies. Usually, they give you a female figure to start out. It's a figure she loves because of 'the combination of curves and angles.'"

Is there reflected anywhere in these works Simmons' former desire to be a psychiatrist? Does that broadness somehow reveal the number of moves her family made? Does she try to convey anything in this exhibit? None of the above. Says Simmons, "I usually don't get involved with symbolism. Painting is just something that comes from within. I like to leave it to the subconscious. When I sit down and take into consideration the size of the canvas, the way I'm feeling, my found objects dictate what comes out."

An exception to the rule, the piece "Games People Play" does transmit some kind of message. Simmons first noticed and bought some marbles in a grocery store, a symptom of her found objects



fetish. What then evolved was not only the concept of children's games, but adult games too—games of the heart, games of money, games in life and politics. The resulting work—garish, replete with risqué elements—razor blades painted pink, fake money carefully rolled up—is, as Simmons terms it, "a statement of life, almost a Russian roulette of life."



"Fort Knox Babies" is nine painted doll heads arranged in a square encircled by a wreath of painted plastic fruit and a string of pearls. No particular message, intended. "Babies" is one more instance of Simmons' special free association style, a work that could evoke social commentary for some, guffaws for others. A reflection of life at the Alette Simmons circa 1988.

Her works in this particular exhibit aren't always so bold, however. Besides collages, a relief, a mural of three torsos, and paintings, she has also included several very aesthetically pleasing plexiglass pieces. The creation of such works is a slow and tedious process involving chisel, rasp and sandpaper. "La Brisa" ("The Breeze"), a polished angular female face perched on a bronze cube, with stylized hair blowing to one side and one purple/blue marble eye, beckons movement out of a static medium.

Likewise, "Golden Girl", a nude plexiglass torso accented with gold paint, is incredibly artistic, clean and beautiful. For these few works, found elements have been all but disregarded and the simplicity which Simmons likes so much is evident in those smoothed, whittled forms presenting the female body as essentially an abstract or geometric shape.

Although Seducción Visual deals primarily with women, the exhibit otherwise transcends religion, class, race, cultural barriers, any one style or school. An exposition which accomplishes this in a fresh, inoffensive way is a definite achievement.

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