

# Art



## Anything Goes

It's all fun and games at Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin

BY CARLOS SUAREZ DE JESUS

From ostriches standing in the ocean to donkeys riding in rowboats to zebras in an Alpine setting, the interior landscape of Paola Pivi's mind is a world unto itself.

And what an astonishing place it can be.

During the past decade, Pivi has perfected the art of luring the public into an incongruous realm that defies reality. Her conceptual gestures chart the geography between fact and fiction, placing the spectator at the threshold of an imminent transformation. A recipient of the Golden Lion Award at the Venice Biennale in 1999, Pivi has found fame in recent years with large photographic works of animals in mind-boggling settings. Amazingly she creates her imagery of beasts in anomalous contexts without resorting to digital manipulation or photographic sleight of hand.

For "Fiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii," her show at Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, Pivi has wrangled alligators into pits of whipped cream, creating hilarious outdoorsy vignettes. Three luscious Cibachrome prints feature the giant reptiles writhing in the foam like biker bimbos wrestling in coleslaw. In *Stalactito* one of the gators rears up, and with its snout dripping whipped cream, is a scaly ringer for one of the bearded Southern cracker bandmates of ZZ Top. In another piece, a gator looks like a log, bobbing in a curdled, opaque bubble bath while leering in sheer indignation at the spectator. Probably the most compelling of the three images is one of a furiously snapping beast completely covered in the fatty emulsion. The animal has broken free from the buttery bog and roars toward the spectator with bristling jaws agape, its thick, rusty tongue thrashing. Stripped of menace and rendered so preposterously, the sorry creature evokes laughter or sympathy.

In this show, named for the hissing sound alligators make, the artist catalyzes a feeling of wonderment through illusions that undermine a sense of familiar territory. After experiencing the

sounded the depths of absurdity or at least entered an unbelievable wilderness all Pivi's own.

Upstairs, Cristina Lei Rodríguez's "Endless Autumn" is a sprawling garden — fashioned from Plexiglas and plastic flora and fauna coated in thick washes of epoxy — that also conjures a bewitching



Secret Base by Japanese artist Mr.

environment with strikingly polished results. It's as if she wants viewers to lose themselves in wish fulfillment — perhaps hinting at an old episode of television's *Fantasy Island* — or to contemplate travel to an exotic locale. The large-scale sculpture is situated in a space whose walls are painted an imperial gold hue, which heightens the aesthetic of Oriental splendor. The trees in Rodríguez's Japanese courtyard garden are webbed in strings of translucent beads. They bloom with multicolor curtain tassels and ooze a sappy, spermlike veneer that makes the installation appear ripe with decay. The garden is surrounded by a rectangular arrangement of benches on which spectators can sit as if visiting a gaudy botanical attraction.

Where Rodríguez's garishly ornate smaller sculptures evoke a creepy vibe

ferment of malice, this garden seems tended by hands cultivating a luxurious elegance. It also seems to sacrifice some edginess in the process and suffers from ambition of scale. But it is beautiful. The largest tree in the installation shimmers in plastic washes of ruby, salmon, lavender, emerald, and turquoise tones. Its trunk is spackled in gold metal shavings, and its leaves are a rich mixture of burnt umber, magenta, and honey orange colors dappled in a surreal veil of light. The earth is as thick as a slab of antediluvian amber and appears as if cobbled from sediments of gemstones and pearls. In a corner sits a green lantern, ossified in a hallucinatory frosting of Persian purples and Byzantine blues.

But for all of its charm and breadth, the intense energy Rodríguez extracted from her subject matter in earlier works is missing here. Instead she delivers a less risky and overpackaged vision of nature without getting any dirt under her fingernails. Indeed it is beautiful, but

more so in a theatrical way. For those swept away by her more visceral depictions of organic life gone berserk, this pristine vision of autumn might pale.

"Nin-Stoalth" is Japanese artist Mr.'s collection of paintings and sculptures also showing at the Perrotin space. The works leech the senses like a Hunter Thompson acid trip and are freighted with anime and manga imagery. Mr. is one in a current wave of artists who teamed with Takashi Murakami as part of the "Superflat" collective, combining techniques of mass production with a traditional Japanese emphasis on outline and flat areas of color. The exhibit blurs the boundaries between art and illustration in a deceptively simplified aesthetic.

*Secret Base* is a small painting at the entrance of this exhibit. It depicts a man balled up inside his spider hole deep in the earth. The pervert cradles a kiddie porn mag and has a DVD player hooked up in the underground cavity, which is well stocked with food, refreshments, and all the comforts of home. Toward the

upper half of the composition a prepubescent girl romps in a field of daffodils. As she does jumping jacks and her skirt catches the wind, opening like an umbrella above her belly button, the douchebag steals a worm's-eye peep at her scanties.

Nearby, another untitled painting shows the face of a man wearing sunglasses. He is visible only from the nose up and is surrounded by a foreboding moonscape. As a menagerie of bizarre monsters floats in the air, the figure of a young naked boy straddles the anonymous man's head, tea-bagging him with his barely suggested testicles.

"Penyo-Henyo" Pyopo is one of the artist's many bobblehead-looking sculptures on display. The piece depicts the

oversize noggin of a green-haired girl on a child-size mannequin's body. The waif is clad in a white skirt and a red tank top printed with the words *that's earth*. She is standing on a stairlike platform painted to suggest a building in an

urban setting. Under her feet are a helipad and street scenes, and on the side of the plywood edifice are images of a plane crash and a burglar breaking a window. The large-headed girl looks not unlike a Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade balloon freed from its tether and floating over the city.

Mr.'s work luridly mines deranged notions of a comic-book nightmare, of playing violent videogames with live ammo, or of cutesy Hello Kitty debauchery in which adults feast on youthful innocence without remorse. Skewering consumerism and sexual fetishism in a postwar, Westernized Japan, he catapults viewers into a sugary world of depravity where nothing seems sacred, let alone safe.

Perrotin boasts some of the biggest names on the international scene, and these exhibits prove there's an art to letting it all hang out. It seems the dapper Frenchman has a grip on it.

Contact the author to discuss the story:  
art@miamiherald.com

Cristina Lei Rodríguez's courtyard garden installation

