

DECONSTRUCTED
RECONSTRUCTED

Angel Otero's exhibit at the Bronx Museum reimagines the traditional to create thoroughly modern masterpieces

by
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photography
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"From a young age, I have been making art in general, including drawings, and paintings. I always wanted to create," says Puerto Rican-born artist Angel Otero. But it wasn't until his teens that the realization really took form—while walking around the Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico he was frozen in his tracks by a painting by Arnaldo Roche Rabell.

"It hit me like a lightning bolt—I was struck by how the painting was constructed. He painted people and animals on canvas and then scratched the painting off to reveal more color and tonality," he says. "I didn't know something like this was possible, and I thought to myself 'I would love to create something like this one day.'"

Otero left his native Puerto Rico at age 22 to enroll at the Art Institute of Chicago, where he perfected his own distinct process-driven construction technique.

"What makes my work popular is the fact that I make paintings on a plexiglass surface and use oil paints to create layers," he explains. Recalling his favorite memories, Otero layers different references to them on the plexiglass, while accumulating paint. He subsequently removes the glass from the wall, scrapes the paint off, and uses it to form a collage on canvas. "It creates a unique abstract composition that gives you a glimpse into the subject I was painting."

Otero primarily works with oil paint and sculpture in deliberately abstract forms. "I don't think art needs to be revealed so clearly," he says. "I perceive abstract paintings in a really emotional way."

His exhibition at the Bronx Museum will showcase a completely new body of work juxtaposed with the works of leading Abstract Expressionist Robert Motherwell, but Otero didn't see the connection at first.

"My work isn't derivative from his; I made it with an entirely separate purpose," he explains. "But slowly, the more I started to read about Motherwell, it started to make sense to me, and I feel very confident about the exhibition and the connections the curator is making."

Angel Otero: Elegies will be on view from October 25 through April 29, 2018 at the Bronx Museum. **SEE RESOURCES ■**

**EMOTIONAL ABSTRACTION**

Among the pieces to be shown at the upcoming Bronx Museum show will be: *At Five in the Afternoon*, 2017 (OPPOSITE), and *Sour Times*, 2017 (ABOVE, TOP); Otero in front of one of his works at Brand New Gallery.

