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Interview with Artist Lionel Cruet

2 MONTHS AGO by [JAMIE MARTINEZ \(HTTPS://ARTEFUSE.COM/AUTHOR/JAMIE-MARTINEZ/\)](https://artefuse.com/author/jamie-martinez/)



Lionel Cruet at Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, 2015

It was a pleasure coming to your studio to see your work. Can you talk about your background in the arts and how you ended up in NY?

I started in art at early stages of my life. I always say that my family has been supportive without knowing that much, as they are not in the arts. Also, one of my art teachers back in elementary school, Mayra Aguilar who noticed my interest and passion for the arts, guided me and my parents at that time. Later, I completed a Bachelor degree in Fine Arts from La Escuela de Artes Plásticas de Puerto Rico. It was a great formation and instrumental in my artistic development. It was a laboratory of exposure as well to rethink modes and types of creative approaches and research in the arts. Then I got an invitation to come to New York; I completed a professional program at School of Visual Arts in Photography and later I went to The City College of New York to participate on a Masters in Fine Arts program focused on Interdisciplinary and Digital Art practices.

If I rethink the idea of ‘ending up’ I wouldn’t say that I ended in New York, I would say I spend some time here; and it has been a place to meet other creators, others that are passionate about the arts and artists alike, but Puerto Rico is still very much a part of my environment where I create.



Lionel Cruet, *Entre Nosotros (Between Us)*, Spring Break Art Show, BKLYN Immersive, 2017

I hope that your family is OK in Puerto Rico. I first saw your work at Spring Break during Frieze week this year. It seems to me like Puerto Rico is a big inspiration in your work. Can you elaborate on that and your current process?

Thank you! They are OK and dealing with circumstances ‘living day by day’ – it’s not easy. It has been a real struggle to communicate and to assist them from abroad. After all, life is more important and they keep reminding me.

Yes; early this year, Spring Break invited us for an edition, Bklyn Immersive. My installation proposal was a collaboration with my colleague curator Sofia Reeser del Rio. The installation was entitled *Entre Nosotros (Between Us)* an audio-visual and interactive environment that recreated the illusion of a beach, stuck in time in an indoor space, using video projections, sounds, lights, a real boat, a floor covered in sand and a scattered objects that reference the contradictions of space, culture and rituals that take place in the edge where the land and ocean meet. When we were planning and designing the installation, we wanted to put together an environment that was open to interpretation but addressing global issues and geopolitics through the symbolism of the objects as well the atmosphere. We also envision a space that generated a discussion and ultimately that people could be between them and among themselves as Sofia and I have experienced before – the beach as a space that goes beyond just laying down taking sun or going for vacation. The directors of Spring Break, Ambre Kelly and Andrew Gori were extremely supportive of the artwork itself and we are very thankful. The installation was also made possible with the support of Lincoln Center Education and The Digital and Interdisciplinary Art Practice (DIAP) MFA program at The City College of New York.



Lionel Cruet presenting current and future projects for Pecha Kucha Night Taos, New Mexico Volume 20 at The Taos Center for the Arts, NM , 2016

What are you currently working on and what is your dream project?

Currently, we are working on a plan for 2018 – 2019, envisioning a continuation of what is being done, that plan would include possible exhibitions, collaborations, and residencies. There will be more to come and I encourage folks to follow my social media to keep posted on new projects and calls for participation in my projects and events coming up soon.

In regards to a '*dream project*' – wow, dreaming is a beautiful and quite frightening thing' – I will say that having a great team of collaborators with clear logistics and conceptual approach, a great approach by the community and a fluid and healthy institutional support would be perfect, last but not least an output in the art market would be rather the ideal right now!



Floods Aftermath and Other Hurricane Stories, 2015, acrylic and house paint on polyethylene blue tarp, 6 x 8' each © Lionel Cruet, 2015

You are participating in the group show BORIMeX: “Arráncame la Vida” at the Clemente Soto Véllez Cultural & Educational Center which opened Last Friday. Can you tell me more about the exhibition and the work you are showing?

Yes, BORIMeX: “Arrancame la Vida” at the Clemente Soto Velez Cultural & Educational Center is a group exhibition curated by a Jean Carla Rodea, Miguel Trelles and Valente Arana. The idea of the exhibition is to present artists from Mexico and Puerto Rico and how the work represents our native backgrounds in the United States. Originally Jean Carla Rodea, interdisciplinary artist, performer, and curator reached me with the possibility of including one of my artworks in the exhibition. During the process, we got to select a piece *Aspects, On Related Circumstances* that I created back in 2009 that reflect a process of observation of urban spaces and the abandonment after the economic recession of 2008 through a series of photographs that later got printed and ensembled in a series of 10 miniature structures. The texture of the houses are the images themselves, reflecting a state of abandonment and emptiness of spaces.

In addition, there is another piece entitled *Floods Aftermath and Other Hurricane Stories* is a painting that depicts panorama of stranded houses in the landscape, often the views after the effect of Hurricanes and heavy rain floods. The painting was produced in 2015 with the intention of comment on the material of the blue tarps itself and the relationship that exist after the catastrophes, a temporary solution and an architectural alternative that becomes part of the new disastrous landscape.

I will encourage everyone to stop by the Clemente (<http://www.theclementecenter.org/event/borimix-2017-borimex/>) to see the exhibition that will be open from November 3rd until November 30th, 2017

Good luck with the show! Who are some of your influences and do you have any advice for young artists that you would like to share?

Thank you, we hope that the exhibition is well received!

My influences come from many directions – and interdisciplinary approach- with a focus on art but certainly expanded. I take a look at literature, philosophy, and selected figures in the fine arts to shape that referential and influential point of view. In literature, specifically from the Caribbean and Latin America, I look at Césaire, Fanon, Glissant, poet Julia de Burgos, Garcia Marquez, Julio Cortazar and others. In the field of philosophy, I tend to play with concepts that have a departure from Plato, Gilles Deleuze and Feliz Guattari and others. Last but not least from that pool of fine art references, someone like Juan Downey, Helio Oiticica, Cildo Meireles and Abelardo Morell are certainly more than aesthetic long-time interests.

Advice for young artist; first of all there's a beautiful 'thing' of working by impulses in the arts but it's imperative to find and keep your references always in the front. That helps to shape perspectives and further discourses. Be serious with your artwork and remember not everything in the arts is a money making machine; there are moments where ideology prevails –follow your mission and make sense with you making.

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