



## LIONEL CRUET: LAYERS OF PLACE

BY JONAS ALBRO   FEBRUARY 28, 2020



In the digital era, our human understanding of location is rapidly changing. New possibilities are emerging in between “spaces” and “places.” Traditionally, a space is a physical area, a location defined by concrete measurements, with little to no significance outside that. Meanwhile, a place is a location invested with meaning, with emotion, and is limited not by physicality but only by the ideas which are attached to it. In the 21st century, digital tools allow us to create digital places which do not exist in physical space, complicating our understanding of these terms. Artist Lionel Cruet creates unique artworks which inhabit that divide, using digital tools to reference “places” which can exist in multiple “spaces” at once. Splitting his time between San Juan, PR and New York City, Cruet possesses a sophisticated relationship to these terms. Audio and visual installation, digital printing, found objects, and complex sound arrangements are combined in his practice to reference the layered postcolonial identities and geopolitics of the Caribbean, and to imply connections between that region and other parts of the world.



Lionel Cruet in his studio, 2020.

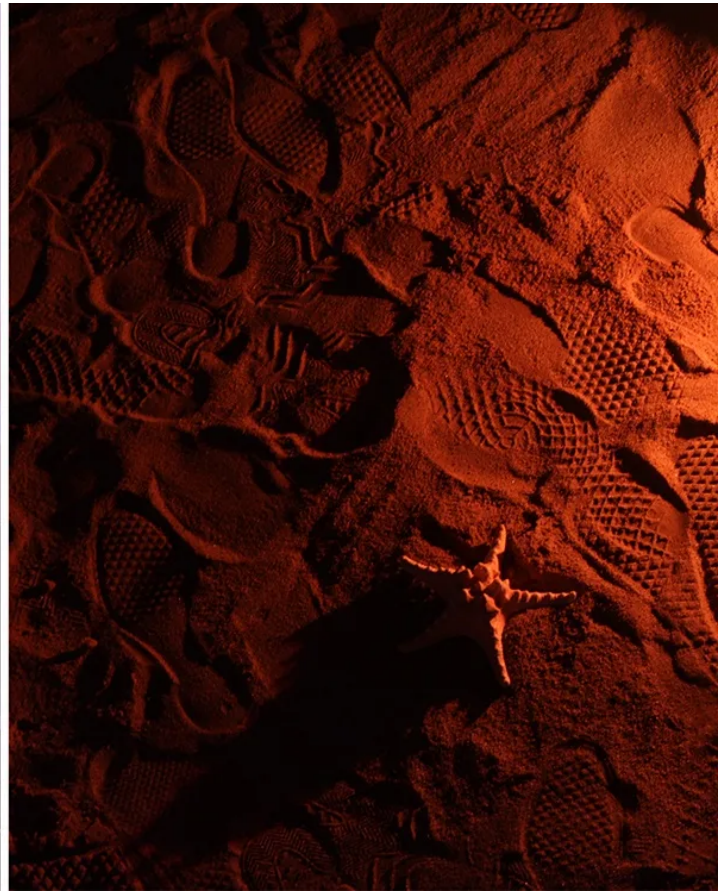
Splitting his time between San Juan, PR and New York City, Cruet possesses a sophisticated relationship to these terms. Audio and visual installation, digital printing, found objects, and complex sound arrangements are combined in his practice to reference the layered postcolonial identities and geopolitics of the Caribbean, and to imply connections between that region and other parts of the world.



*Entre Nosotros (Between Us)*, 2017, full view, audiovisual installation row boat, floor of sand, variable dimension © Lionel Cruet. Photo by Samuel Morgan Photography.

Lionel Cruet conceives of his art as an iterative practice. Each project builds on the former, as if chapters recording the text of his experience. His 2017 installation *Entre Nosotros (Between Us)* came in two distinct iterations; the first was presented at the Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center in New York, the second (*Entre Nosotros II*) at BKLYN IMMERSIVE (curated by Sofia Reeser del Rio) under the auspices of the SPRING/BREAK Art Show. Both combined different parts of his practice such as video projections, sounds, lights, and found objects into immersive audiovisual installations. Real objects, such as hammocks, a boat, or real sand were included along with digital representations of a sunset or the ocean to seemingly transport the viewer to an imagined beach landscape. *Entre Nosotros I and II* both locate the viewer in the place at the boundary of land and sea, while they are physically located in a gallery space.





*Entre Nosotros (Between Us)*, 2017, full view, audiovisual installation row boat, floor of sand, variable dimension © Lionel Cruet. Photo by Samuel Morgan Photography.

This layering of meaning through the careful choice of material and subject matter is essential to Cruet's work. For Lionel Cruet, an artwork containing multiple, reinforcing meanings is not unusual. As we move into a new era defined by a rapidly changing climate, Cruet's work will provide one lens to understand new geopolitical realities and new projects will continue.





*Flood Aftermath and Other Hurricane Stories I*, 2015, Enamel paint, polyethylene, blue tarp. © Lionel Cruet.



*Flood Aftermath and Other Hurricane Stories V*, 2020, Enamel paint, polyethylene, blue tarp. © Lionel Cruet.

In *Flood Aftermath and Other Hurricane Stories* (2015-2020), Cruet produced poignant paintings, which point both to the ecological devastation of climate change, and to how the economic, and political legacies of colonialism affect the modern Caribbean. The blue tarps, which serve as the ground for these paintings, reference their use as temporary solutions to damage from hurricanes, and also their eventual architectural permanence in those communities most affected. At the same time, the paintings literally depict scenes of flooding in Caribbean locales. This layering of meaning through the careful choice of material and subject matter is essential to Cruet's work. For Lionel Cruet, an artwork containing multiple, reinforcing meanings is not unusual. As we move into a new era defined by a rapidly changing climate, Cruet's work will provide one lens to understand new geopolitical realities and new projects will continue. Don't be surprised to come across Cruet's works and feel more in an overlapped place that appears to the real as well the imagined. •

WORKS AVAILABLE

*Espacio Intangible (Intangible Space)*, 2014. Exterior view. Audiovisual installation in storage container, 7' x 16' x 8'. © Lionel Cruet, 2014. Image courtesy of the Artist.

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