



## ***Materiality***

**Claire Oliver Gallery**

**Stand N-312**

Claire Oliver Gallery has chosen to curate their stand for the 2017 edition of Pulse Miami with the theme of Materiality. When investigating the role of materiality in art we can attempt to expand notions of time, space, process, or participation. We may consider how materials obstruct, disrupt, or interfere with social norms. Materiality, as an aesthetic concept, has evolved out of formalism's interest in the purely visual aspects of art to create both context and communication.

The artworks chosen for our exhibition include fabric constructions by Bisa Butler, photomontage mixed media works by Lisa Alonzo and magazine clipping collages by Gabi Trinkaus. All three artists' works of art extend beyond the physical matter to encompass conceptually relevant information related to the work's physical existence; the components chosen give reason for the being of the object.

Confronting the accepted narratives, instigating conversations and questioning the status quo have long been the domain of artists. In the new works of Lisa Alonzo, we are seduced to see the world from a different perspective than that which our own history and culture promote. With the hope to gain insight and understanding, Alonzo keeps these dogmas alive in her studio practice and continues to question the role of mass media and group think in our work-a-day lives.

Applying paint to clear acrylic panel through a pastry piping bag, Alonzo adds new layers of meaning with her symbolic application of material and rendering of image. Paint as frosting, paint as pixels; a beautiful cake: sweet, bright, and non-confrontational on the exterior, Alonzo uses this as means to soften the delivery of the important questions just below the surface. As the viewer peers through the entwined overgrown jungle vines, we glimpse behind this top layer another, filled with caustic chimney smoke from a belching factory furnace.

All art is political in the sense that it influences or is influenced by society's views. Drawing a parallel between the current partisan climate in America and the stratagems of chess, Alonzo moves Gothic game pieces through bucolic landscapes and gritty streets. Just as the Goths invasion of the Roman Empire is seen as leading to its ultimate destruction, the artist questions the gamesmanship that presently exists in our political arena and to what end will this unrest bring? Regime normally refers to governing parties, however Alonzo asks us: could it also reference race, culture, or gender?

Following on the heels of Post-Modern theoretical discourse, acknowledging the relative nature of truth, Gabi Trinkaus' materiality provides a theoretical approach that is both time and situation-based. By borrowing from an aesthetic associated with the world of high end marketing, the artist plays with the idea of seduction in her work, while carefully commenting on the broader culture of material consumption. With a slice of wry humor, the viewer is initially seduced by ultra-sexy images of beauty and glamour. However, with closer observation, we realize that laying just beneath the surface of the work is a powerful editorial on our present Instagram/Tweet social media driven culture. When self-worth is developed and destroyed 140 characters at a time, surface is often mistaken for substance.

From a distance, the portrait works appear to be large scale photographs of flawless women, easily digestible Instagram selfies. However, upon inspection, the work's well-developed layers reveal cracks in the mask shown to the "public." A guise of self-confidence and importance placed upon the canvas one edict at a time by CHANEL, GUCCI and Louis Vuitton.

As the viewer scrutinizes the surface of a Trinkaus work, it becomes evident that it has been constructed both physically and conceptually to raise questions on our private versus public personas, social roles and the pressure to "belong". Labels and text fragments, alongside champagne bottles, cars, watches, pistols and bling make up the glistening flotsam and jetsam of media content, woven into the larger optical impression and allowing the viewer to contemplate their unique role to play in this challenge of a globalized life. "From the get-go I had a critical approach in mind, yet with a hint of humor and much sincerity. The media swatches allow me to go in all of these directions at the same time. This is why collage proved to be the ideal technique for this on-going surface vs substance vs society series of work." says the artist of this new work.

Materiality has reappeared as a highly controverted topic in contemporary art. Modernist criticism tends to privilege form over substance, but in order to engage critically with the meaning, for example, of hair in David Hammons's installations or latex in the sculptures of Eva Hesse, we need a very different set of methodological tools. Bisa Butler uses authentic African printed cotton and mud cloth to tell the story of her ancestral homeland, and the cradle of civilization. Butler is a third generation Maker, leaning technique from her African grandmother. Conceptually important to the work is the rigid structure of the traditional craft, a thing of beauty that keeps one warm and comforted, however the materials used are a thoughtful combination of castoffs found and those fabrics taken from the subjects of the works themselves.

In the 1960s the definition of art was expanded radically due to the questioning and re-evaluation of various materials. For the first time, material gained ascendancy over form. After the conceptual art of the 1970s had directed attention increasingly towards text written and pictorial documents as means of expression, in the 1980s young artists turned back to the balance of material and form. However, the possibilities of digital technology led to a reduction in the importance of concrete materials at the end of the 20th century.

For the young generation of artists today, the aspect of materiality has again become a key concept. Against the background of current social and cultural developments, they are elaborating upon and transforming the approach of earlier decades. Bisa Butler, Gabi Trinkaus and Lisa Alonzo use the artistic handling of materials in a social climate where added importance is given to factors such as making things oneself and recycling with aesthetic pretensions, to provide a bridge between ordinary experience and concepts that transcend the viewer's physicality. Our relationship to a work of art develops over time. Perception is further affected by other signs of process such as degrees of refinement and the limitations inherent in materials. With the works of art displayed in Materiality, Claire Oliver Gallery attempts to show the viewer the significant addition to concept an object that is hand-made and Material important.