

VISUAL ARTS



JEROEN DIEPENMAAT'S 'POURDESIDENTS'

JEROEN DIEPENMAAT

Miami Art Museum exhibition underscores the theme that every old thing can become a new tapestry.

BY TOM AUSTIN
Special to the Miami Herald

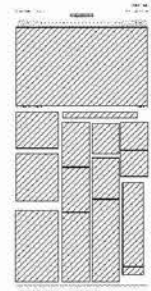
Vinyl records are a totem of the past, a nostalgic symbol of a time when Americans seemed to share more — at least in the way of music: People of a certain age can still remember when, say, Carole King's 1971 *Tapestry* sold 25 million copies and engulfed the nation.

Simultaneously, vinyl records are up to the moment. Young hipster collectors now snatch them up both for the sheer physicality of playing a vinyl record and the artistry involved in record covers. DJs like the sound of vinyl: as local legend DJ Le Spam (Andrew Yeomanson) says, an MP3 download is like "a fax of a song."

Visual artists have long put vinyl to their own uses, and the exhibition at the Miami Art Museum, *The Record: Contemporary Art and Vinyl* has

a bit of everything: outsider artists, emerging artists and established icons like Ed Ruscha. Within the show, vinyl records are photographed, melted and deconstructed for other ends: most of the work has little to do with music directly, and remain conceptual works of art.

The Record — encompassing 99 pieces by 41 artists — originated at the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University in Durham, N.C. According to Nasher curator Trevor Schoonmaker, the show's strength lies in its adherence to a mission of remaining serious contemporary art. "Some of the work refers to pop culture, but we don't have any music ephemera, posters or whatever." The intersection of pop culture and high art is tricky terrain, but it can be done right. In 2008, MOCA's *Sympathy For The Devil: Art and Rock & Roll Since 1967* revealed the not-so-



quiet artistry of rock. Last year, at the Art and Culture Center of Hollywood, the show *Artist Unknown/The Free World* created a compelling portrait of contemporary life using countless Facebook images of ordinary people.

At **MAM**, the first exhibition room of *The Record* strikes just the right note. In the middle of the room is a thoughtful sculptural installation by William Cordova, a Peruvian-born Miami artist who was exhibited — along with locals Adler Guerrier and Bert Rodriguez — in the 2008 Whitney Biennial. The piece, *Greatest Hits (para Micaela Bastidas, Tom Wilson, y Anna Mae Aquash) 2008* consists of a stack of 3,000 vinyl records, Peruvian gourds, a VHS tape and candles. Focusing on the ideas of transition and displacement, the monolithic work refers to three icons: Bastidas, a 18th century Peruvian independence martyr; Aquash, a 1970s leader in the American Indian movement; Wilson, a 1960s record producer known for his work with Bob Dylan.

The first exhibition room also has Laurie Anderson's 1977 Viophonograph — a hybrid-creation between a record player and violin that Anderson played in concert — and David Byrne's 1978 photo-montage for the album cover of Talking Heads' *More Songs About Buildings and Food*. Created with a Polaroid Big Shot camera, the 90-inch-by-90 inch piece is a life-size rendering of the band, pieced together with countless close-up photos.

A smaller project space, covered in plywood and photos contains an installation by the New York-based artist Xaviera Simmons, *Thundersnow Road, North Carolina, 2010*. Simmons, also a DJ, created a character of a folk rock singer posing for moody circa 1973 album liner photos in rural North Carolina. She then asked friends in music groups — Rain Machine, Midnight Masses, etc. — to compose songs based on the photos, ultimately making an entire vinyl album. This is perfectly-realized conceptual art, a world onto itself, filled with humor and loss, "Once we all listen to music with chips planted in our

brains," Simmons says, "maybe the first quaint iPods will inspire art shows."

Another room explores the act of deconstructing actual vinyl records. Tim Lee's celestial-shaped mobile made from Public Enemy's *Fear of a Black Planet* album refers to a 1920 sculpture by Russian constructivist artist Alexander Rodchenko, who also challenged social conventions with his work. Dario Robleto's installation goes way back: he combines the prehistoric roots of petroleum, the basis of vinyl records, with the way in which record grooves mark our present-day history.

Along one wall is the massive *Lamb of Man/Atom and Eve/Americana Materia Medica, 2006-2007*, an assortment of faux album covers with ironic titles like *Our Actions are Inconsistent with Heaven*. To complete the installation, Robleto melted Billie Holiday records to create buttons for a piece called "Sometimes Billie is All That Holds Me Together, 1998-99." He then put the buttons on thrift store clothing, eventually returning the button-equipped clothing back to the original thrift store. For the piece *There's An Old Flame Burning In Your Eyes, or, Why Honky Tonk Love Is The Saddest Kind of Love, 1998* Robleto used melted Patsy Cline records to manufacture matches that were then left at honky-tonk bars.

The final room includes two buoyant pieces. Malick Sidibe's 1960s photographs of Africans shaking off the yoke of imperialism but simultaneously celebrating American pop culture are riveting, particularly an image of two young women proudly displaying their 1965 *James Brown: Live at the Apollo* album. In the center of the room is a display case with the fanciful pretend albums of Mingering Mike, a Washington D.C.-born outsider artist who cast himself as a soul star in the 1960's and 1970s, with titles including *Ghetto Prince* and *Mingering Mike: I'm Superman*.

The Record show even extends to MAM's gift shop area. Assorted artists were asked to compile "album crates," a selection of their favorite albums: viewers can pull out the re-

cords and play them on turntables with headphones. Vik Muniz's crate provides a glimpse into 1970s Brazil with the work of album cover designer Cafi: unlike the flash of today's music world, the covers for albums by such stars as Beto Guedes are modest and sincere.

MAM also asked various locals to contribute their favorite albums: Gloria Estefan, like 25 million other people, picked Carole King's *Tapestry*. Vinyl records really are a great equalizer, an exercise in democracy.

If you go

"The Record: Contemporary Art and Vinyl," through June 10.

Where: [Miami Art Museum](#), 101 West Flagler St., Miami

When: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday-Friday; noon to 5 p.m., Saturday and Sunday. Closed Mondays.

Admission: \$8 adults, \$4 for seniors; free for children under 12 and students.

Info: 305-375-3000 or www.miamiartmuseum.org

ON AND OFF THE RECORD

DJ Le Spam, Lauren Reskin of Sweat Records, artist Nicolas Lobo and Daniel Milewski of Lester's have worked with MAM to put together an outreach program, "On the Record," that tracks Miami music history.

Presentations include three panel discussions at the museum, as follows:

- April 5: Before the 1970s: soul and funk
- April 19: Nuclear Valdez
- May 3: Mid-1990s to the present day.

MAM also will host "Vinyl Swap Shops" with Sweat Records.

Another outreach program, "Off the Record," uses a "MAM Soundbomb Bus" — a 1970s Volkswagen minibus that will travel to various festivals with DJs and materials for making album-inspired art.

The outreach programs are

supported by a Knight Arts Challenge grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.



CHRISTIAN MARCLAY/PAULA COOPER GALLERY

CHRISTIAN MARCLAY'S 'RECYCLED RECORDS, 1983'



BOB BIELECKI/LAURIE ANDERSON

LAURIE ANDERSON PLAYING VIOPHONOGRAPH, 1977



PETER PAUL GEOFFRION

MARCDARIO ROBLETO'S 'LAMB OF MAN / ATOM AND EVE /
AMERICANA MATERIA MEDICA 2006'



GENE OGAMI/COLLECTION OF DENNIS & DEBRA SCHOLL

SEAN DUFFY'S 'BURN OUT SUN, 2003'