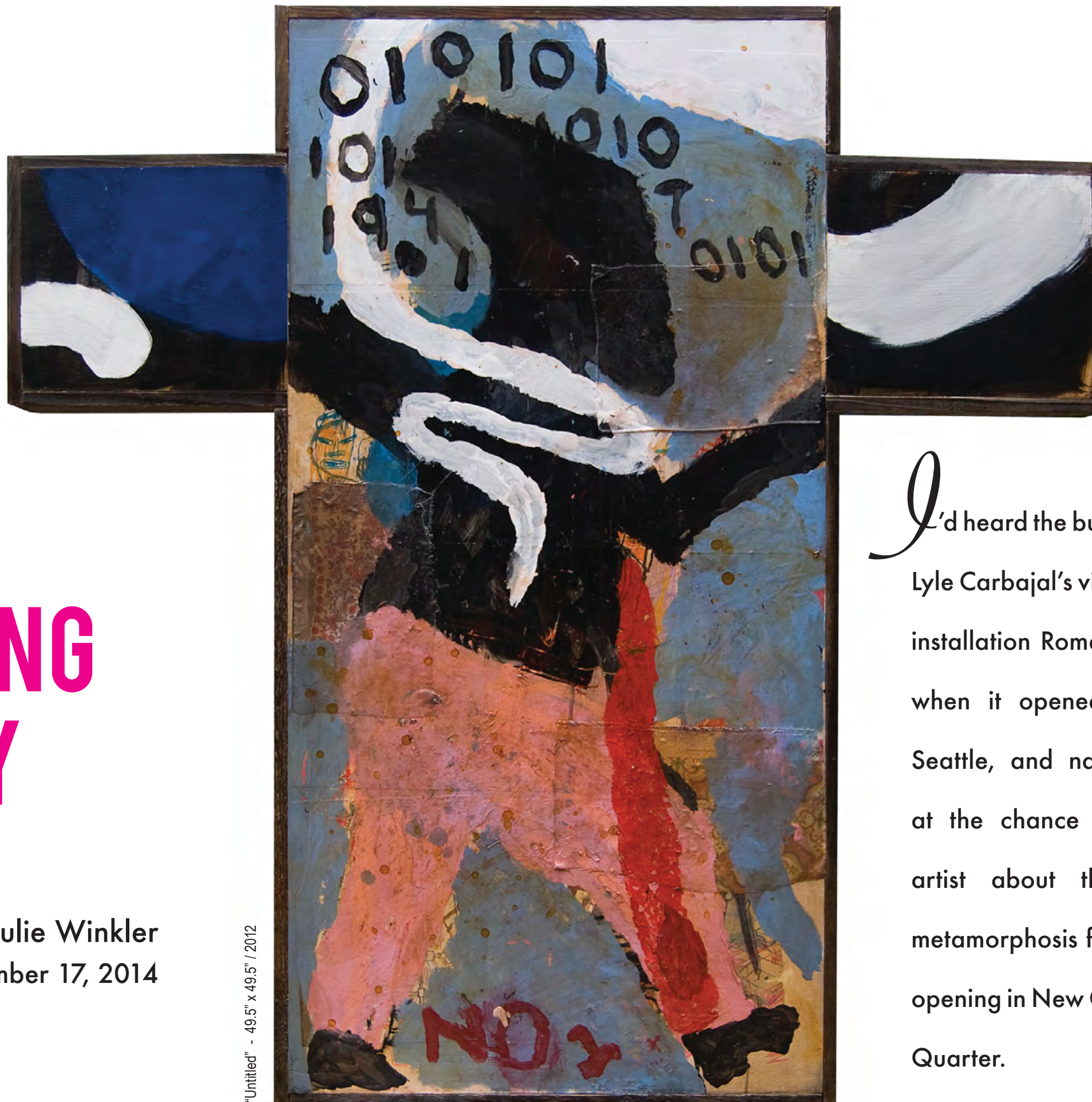


UP CLOSE: LYLE CARBAJAL'S

ROMANCING BANALITY

By Julie Winkler
September 17, 2014

"Untitled" - 49.5" x 49.5" / 2012



I'd heard the buzz surrounding Lyle Carbajal's visually arresting installation Romancing Banality when it opened last year in Seattle, and naturally jumped at the chance to talk to the artist about the exhibition's metamorphosis for next month's opening in New Orleans' French Quarter.

Installation is only a few weeks away. His studio is deep in the throes of preparation, complete with his signature style panels as well as a pretty impressive building he's working on. "It's ready for detailing now", he explains. It's evident that traditional folk art plays a powerful role in both inspiration and method for his paintings, and Carbajal has mastered harnessing its raw, soulful, innocent form.

A multimedia artist known for his seemingly crude, unsophisticated images, Carbajal keenly uses his style to explore complex themes. With Romancing Banality, the focus is on cultural and economic perceptions of the different cities he's inspired by and lives in leading up to his exhibitions. He draws inspiration from the people, life, and energy, thoroughly researching his subject before it's translated through his unique technique and style. Every Romancing Banality exhibition, therefore, differs in content, mood, and experience.

Carbajal impressively creates an entire environment within each show for a complete experience.



I was especially curious about the structures constructed for each installation. "A reflection of the city," he tells me. "You can see folk art in all cities. To me, that's what [the structure] is- a contemporary form of folk art. It's a piece of the visual landscape we often overlook."

The influence of living in New Orleans is definitely reflected in the paintings to be exhibited here, which have been created while he's been living on Canal Street, near the French Quarter in advance of the opening. The structures, however, are pre-planned.

"The structures are based on previous landscapes, on the urban qualities of the locations," he explained. "These models, with their outsized, three-dimensional presence, incarnate the visual language of a specific city in which I've lived, epitomizing what I see as its most vivid elements. Also, they suggest associations relevant to my travels, biographical details, and larger concerns." "The structure for this show, 'La Vaquita' Carnicería, was inspired by my many visits to Mexico City. It'll be used in this New Orleans show as well as the upcoming one in Nashville. Seattle's structure, 'M&M Auto' in Hollywood, was based on the actual shop and my personal experience growing up in LA, while the structure influenced by my time here in New Orleans, 'Sho Sho' Snowball Shack, will be constructed for a future show, hopefully when Romancing Banality travels to France".

He went on to passionately speak to their inclusion in the exhibition and the deeper symbolic representation.



"Self Portrait as Narcissist" - 32" x 38" / 2014



"Felix" - 48" x 48", 2014

"It's just people coming together, and it's just born really of that regional culture. And that's what I really love. I see the beauty and the art in that, and I want to bring that to the shows."

Carbajal is a no novice to the contemporary art scene. Formerly a seasoned art & design director, his contemporary works have been shown across both the US and France over the span of his decades-long career. Over 20 years since his first exhibition, Carbajal acknowledges his current endeavor is both a financial and personal investment, and reveals why he's driven to create the experience repeatedly from scratch.

"It's a challenge," he admits. "Now that I'm doing installations it's bringing this whole third dimension into it, and I just love the challenge of it. I think it makes life worth living just to really put yourself out there."

The message the viewer takes away from the experience is what I believe to be the one constant of this particular exhibition- it's overall message and ability to immerse someone almost first-hand into a perhaps unfamiliar culture, providing them the ability to interpret it based on their perceptions and draw their own conclusions. They undoubtedly walk away possessing a new and unique viewpoint, embedded in that "far-away" place, which may be as near as the barrio next door -perhaps even our mind.

Romancing Banality opens October 17th & 18th at Gallery Orange in New Orleans, LA

819 Royal St., New Orleans LA • 504.875.4006

galleryorange
CONTEMPORARY

www.gallery-orange.com • www.romancingbanality.com