

FORT GANSEVOORT

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Four Knockout Group Shows to See Now

By Roberta Smith, October 18, 2018.



Detail of Myrlande Constant's "Ceremony of St. Brigitte Baron La Kwa." Credit...Dan Bradica

'Pòtoprens: The Urban Artists of Port-au-Prince'

Pioneer Works, 159 Pioneer Street, Red Hook, Brooklyn, through Nov. 11

A palpable shock of the new, or at least of new information, can be found at "Pòtoprens: The Urban Artists of Port-au-Prince," an exhilarating survey of contemporary Haitian art from the capital's different communities. The centerpiece is a display of numerous monumental figurative sculptures in Pioneer Work's yawning main space — a vibrant carnivalesque antidote to the classical sculpture courts of western museums.

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Created by four artists from the Atis Rezistans collective in the city's Grand Rue neighborhood of cinder-block houses and car workshops — Jean Hérard Céleur, André Eugène, Guyodo (Frantz Jacques), and Evel Romain — these works extend the entwined traditions of assemblage and African sculpture. All four artists begin by carving wood figures that they elaborately supplement with salvaged metals, car tires or rope, but individual style and expression are not hindered. Also here: the large carved-stone heads by Ti Pelin (Jean Salomon Horace) and Dubréus Lhérisson's grim but beautiful human skulls covered with beads, sequins and shells. Myrlande Constant's expansion of the Vodou flag format into a spellbinding beaded mural that recounts Haitian history, re-enacted by spirits of the dead, known as Gede.

There is much more, including, upstairs, photographs and films that convey both the difficulty and creative richness of life in Haiti, which is still recovering from the 2010 earthquake. Many of the artists are well-known in Europe or have shown at the esteemed Fowler Museum in Los Angeles. The show's organizer, Gabriel Florenz, the curators Edouard Duval-Carrié and Leah Gordon, and their special adviser, Jean-Daniel Lafontant, have blessed New York with an invaluable chance to catch up.