

FORT GANSEVOORT

HYPERALLERGIC

The Transcendent Spirit of Haitian Contemporary Art

Valentina Di Liscia - November 3, 2018.



A visitor admires the vodou flags of Myrlande Constant in PÒTOPRENS: The Urban Artists of Port-au-Prince.

PÒTOPRENS is an exhibition about Haitian artists that rebels against stereotypes that might surround Haitian art, particularly after the devastation of the 2010 earthquake. It is a testament to the artists' technical skill and aesthetic inventiveness as much as to their grit, resourcefulness, an enviable sense of humor. When I noticed that the individual works are labeled with each artist's name and a short bio, but not otherwise dated or titled, Duval-Carrié described the process of visiting the artists' improvised, crowded ateliers in Port-au-Prince to choose works for the exhibition. He and Gordon would spend hours sifting through years', sometimes decades' worth of sculptures, which their creators could not always date. The priority had always been to protect their artworks, while cataloguing, archiving, and exhibiting them often had to take a backseat. PÒTOPRENS may change that. (Its curators are currently in conversation with different institutions about reprising the exhibition elsewhere.) "Sometimes, [the artists'] artworks are better housed than they are. Many of them had built tiny little sheds to put them in, to make space for art," says Duval-Carrié. "I'm in awe in front of them — the way they persevere."

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PÒTOPRENS: The Urban Artists of Port-au-Prince, *curated by Edouard Duval-Carrié and Leah Gordon and organized by Gabriel Florenz, continues at Pioneer Works (159 Pioneer Street, Red Hook, Brooklyn) through November 11.*