

WELCOME TO THE NEW PARADISE

Itziar Barrio

Curated by Blanca de la Torre

September 10th - November 10th 2009



01

RETURN

September 10th - November 10th.
Billboard atop a building, Brooklyn.

1295 Fulton, Brooklyn NY 11216.
(Subway: A & C to Nostrand Av)

02

PUBLIC COLOSSAL

September 18th - October 3rd at Governors Island.
Fridays 10 - 4pm, Saturdays and Sundays 10 - 6pm.
OPENING RECEPTION: September 19th, 4pm to 6pm.

#11 Building Barry Rd. Governors Island, New York NY 10004.

03

WELCOME TO THE NEW PARADISE

October 1st - 29th at White Box Projects, Manhattan.
OPENING RECEPTION: October 1st, 6pm to 9pm.

329 Broome St. New York NY 10002.
(212) 714-2347. www.whiteboxny.org.

Welcome to the New Paradise is conceived as a three-part project: a public art installation, a site-specific and one solo exhibition, taking place on three islands: Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Governors Island .

Making use of an irreverent sense of humor, Barrio's symbolism speaks to the conscience and subconscious, triggering a series of mental associations, which address issues of paradise, vacation, migration and publicity industry.

The project opens with **RETURN**, a billboard crowning a building in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn. At first sight, the billboard appears to be a travel agency advertisement that attempts to lure the audience into buying an idyllic vacation package: *"Welcome to the New Paradise. You, a Lonely Wild Cat"*.

Barrio creates a melting pot of her own iconography, interconnected with elements of the exotic cultural imagery of the area, which enjoys a flourishing immigrant population, the majority of whom have left tropical settings such as the Caribbean Islands, South America and Africa, to make their home in New York City.

The area in question is bathed by exotic echoes in places like "The Sea Breeze" a club adorned by a sign with an image of a palm tree swinging in the wind, or the bursting sun logotype of "Golden Crust".

PUBLIC COLOSSAL takes place in a house on Governors Island, which Barrio has transformed into a personal jungle. The first room features the main video, *“Welcome to the New Island”*. The video, a mixing of film and animation, places two women in a tropical setting, where pink bombs explode in the background, perhaps indicative of the bombs exploding beyond our own borders that do not serve to separate us from our own paradises. Another room presents a series of photographs with stereogram-like inscriptions, such as “Public” and “Colossal” etched over lushy jungles.

Finally, **WELCOME TO THE NEW PARADISE**, at White Box in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, is conceived as a solo show of the artist. It starts with the main video, and, as in Governors Island, photographs and drawings complement the setting, while banners sustained with branches create original shelters, refuge for LCD screens showing additional videos. On these banners, the figurative is melded with the abstract, an abstract coming from an extract of one of the symbols that form her imagery.

The Palm tree is presented as a key icon, simple and disturbing. It becomes part of the merchandise created by the artist, such as caps and pins, but in this case, the clichés of the palm or dolphins don’t show any feature of certain origin, there is no Benidorm, Punta Cana or Hawaii, but the clean icon, pure, signifying. Barrio explores her relation to the symbols, some of which she repeats, taking part either in the iconographic repertoire of the artist, or the new “islandian” imagery, and this reiteration puts us in contact with the commercial realm and advertising language; as in the video *“Bailalo”*, where the artist penetrates the codes of advertising seduction with a girl who strips her consecutive layers of t-shirts with a printed word on each, until they reveal the final sentence: *you have to know your costumer*.

Itziar Barrio develops an original deconstruction of the icons and social codes that inhabit our daily lives, distorting the quotidian to establish a re-lecture of these images-symbol, and leaving a disturbing taste in the reconfiguration of this new system. She speaks about collective identity in a semiotic society, with a language that faces the difficulty of conjugating brilliantly an elegant classicism with the most absolute contemporaneity.

For further information visit the artist’s webpage at www.itziarbarrio.com

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