

“Hialeah’s Christian Duran Creates the Mother Nature of All Mixed-Media Art.”
by Bob Weinberg

Christian Duran

In the recent works of Hialeah artist Christian Duran, bare tree sprout limbs in profusion like delicate networks of veins and arteries. Other biomorphic forms are likewise alluded to, from the twin lobes of lungs to membranous, pulsating viscera. Initially inspired by abstract-art giants such as Jackson Pollack and Jasper Johns, Duran says he now takes his cues from nature.

I noticed a lot of similarities between the veins throughout the body and similar systems in nature, like a tree branch,” the 28 year old artist says. “They almost have the same function. For trees and for people, it’s almost like the bloodline; it’s what keeps it alive.”

Delving beneath the surface of objects fascinates Duran, who says he wants to express larger truths by looking inward. One series he created in 2002- which can be found on his website, www.christianduran.com- comprises tiny, luminescent works that look like X-rays. Against a black background, textured images seem to glow and reveal underlying structures, their symmetry echoing internal organs or insects pinned to black velvet.

“There are physical truths, which is what we are, like skin and bones and organs,” he explains. “But I feel like, in people and nature and life, there is a much deeper truth, which kind of keeps us alive, which keeps the soul alive, keeps the spirit alive.”

Duran has kept his own body and soul alive with a day job, teaching art at Miami Gardens Elementary School for about three years. Right now, the Kansas City Art Institute grad is enjoying his summer, staying up late to work on his paintings- his bedroom doubles as his studio- and sleeping in. He’s not sure if he will continue teaching, but he says he treasures the uncritical spontaneity of his students and tries to bring a little of that to his own work.

Currently, he is working on a collage series in which he draws or paints atop newsprint. In one image, a coiled serpent and a prickly plant are juxtaposed with the hearts, flowers and cupids of a page of the personal ads. The series, he says, points in a direction he’d like to go.

“I’ve been kind of keeping my hand out of my work, so to speak,” he says, citing the abstraction of his *Equinox* paintings, which were displayed last year at the state Capitol in Tallahassee. “But when I did these [collage] pieces, it really kind of changed for me... Now, it’s becoming a lot more personal. You can see the artist’s hand actually dip in the ink and draw in these little spaces... There may be a point in the future that I want my hand to disappear again, to bring the sky and stars back into my work. I have no idea. I feel like things kind of come and go and make full circle.”

-Bob Weinberg