



Franky Cruz

2015 AIRIE Fellow

Some Kind of Heron #8, 2015

Digital print

13.5" x 10"

“These are images from a series of photographs that were shot in June 2015, in a beautiful cypress dome in the Everglades National Park. This concept started with questions of human identity and behavior and how it relates to the creatures of this planet. Embodying this white bird created an empathic connection between the human and our majestic natural environment. A connection that seems to have been severed by our modern day methods. Wearing the metaphorical skin of the creature, stepping out of our shoes and into their claws, paws and hopefully not bellies. Searching for some kind of heron who seems to be an alien in its own environment.

A heron whose plumes weigh more than gold.”

Franky Cruz (Santo Domingo, DR, 1984) received his BFA in Painting from the New World School of the Arts, Miami in 2011. Solo exhibitions have been staged at Locust Projects and at Spinello Projects, in Miami, respectively. He has participated in group exhibitions such as *Monarchs: Brown and Native Contemporary Artists in the Path of the Butterfly* at MOCA North Miami, *FREE!* at Brickell City Centre (Miami), and *Mere Façade* at Spinello Projects (Miami). He has received awards such as South Florida Cultural Consortium, Ellies Creator grant and The Wave Maker grant. He has also participated in numerous artist residencies such as Home Base Project (Berlin) and AIRIE: Artists in Residence in Everglades (Miami). Cruz currently lives and works in Miami.

Franky Cruz's ongoing project has led him to create a series of new painting methods collaborating with the natural life cycles of Monarch butterflies. The Vivarium Meconium Laboratory (VML) has grown into a butterfly-rearing and painting laboratory where Cruz adapts native conservation techniques to diligently raise the creatures with both scientific methodologies and personal, deeply-vested care. The pollinator is raised from egg to larva to chrysalis, which is then suspended on a grid above a sheet of watercolor paper that captures the colorful liquid secretions - remnants of their metamorphosis - in shades of umber, ochre, magenta and green. The cycle achieves completion as the butterflies are released into the South Floridian ecosystem. Cruz describes VML as a “butterfly painting machine with butterflies as its exhaust,” but also as an important environmental indicator; a “canary in a coal mine” that alerts us to the condition or dangers in the biosphere. VML is a call to action encouraging the general public to support regenerative and balanced ecosystems, while exploring new ways of seeing in new methods of painting.