

Top Five Prospect.3 moments

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In Walker Percy's 1961 novel "The Moviegoer," which "Prospect.3: Notes for Now" artistic director Franklin Sirmans has described as a key inspiration behind the international art exhibition taking place in New Orleans this fall, the narrator describes "the search" as a process of discovering one's surroundings on a more profound and personal level:

"The search is what anyone would undertake if he were not sunk in the everydayness of his own life. This morning, for example, I felt as if I had come to myself on a strange island. And what does such a castaway do? Why he pokes around the neighborhood and he doesn't miss a trick."

It's a concept to keep in mind as you explore the official P.3 lineup this fall. No matter where your own search takes you, don't miss these five best artists and venues.

1. Camille Henrot at Longue Vue House and Gardens (7 Bamboo Road; free)

Henrot's astounding "Grosse fatigue" won her the prestigious Silver Lion award for most promising emerging artist at the 2013 Venice Biennale. Its subject is both deceptively simple and staggeringly complex:

the history of the universe, from the beginning of creation to mankind's highest intellectual achievements.

In just 13 minutes, the story unfolds via an intricately choreographed dance of windows on a computer desktop accompanied by a propulsive backbeat and spoken word narration that will echo in your mind for days.

The artist recommends sitting through the piece twice to absorb everything, but you might want to watch it even more times than that.

2. The Propeller Group at UNO St. Claude Gallery (2429 St. Claude Ave.; free)

If Henrot's "Grosse fatigue" aims for the head, "The Living Need Light The Dead Need Music" — a video by a multinational trio of artists who work under the name The Propeller Group — goes right for the heart by way of the jugular.

Part documentary, part fever dream, the piece takes traditional South Vietnamese funeral customs (which include an indigenous brass band tradition that sounds very New Orleans) as a starting point for an exploration of the spaces between life and death and between dreams and reality.

While you're waiting for the 20-minute video to begin, spend some time with artist Christopher Myers' sculptural remixes of brass band instruments in the adjacent gallery: If you think they're mind blowing, just wait until they make their appearance in the video.

3. Zarouhie Abdalian at the New Orleans African-American Museum (1418 Governor Nicholls St.; free)

Not all of the standout moments in Prospect.3 depend on grand spectacle. To best experience New Orleans native Zarouhie Abdalian's installation "Chanson du ricochet," visit the New Orleans African-American Museum in the Tremé early or late in the day during opening hours.

That way you'll have a good chance of having the venue to yourself, and more appreciation for what Abdalian has managed to create using just recorded voices and some strategically placed bits of mirror. It's a piece that speaks to both the history of a specific location



and that of New Orleans in general with a quietly devastating power.

4. Douglas Bourgeois and Sophie Lvoff at the Contemporary Arts Center (900 Camp St.; \$10 general admission, \$8 students and seniors, free for Louisiana residents on Sundays courtesy of The Helis Foundation)

On the surface there isn't much in common between Bourgeois' psychedelic vignettes and Lvoff's carefully composed landscapes, street scenes and interiors. But they share a common geography: the New Orleans of the imagination.

Their juxtaposition on adjacent walls on the second floor of the CAC is one of the better moments in a venue that has its share of confusing passages, and the resulting dialogue is delightful.

It isn't hard to imagine the drag queens and greasers in Bourgeois' hilarious Louisiana high school yearbook send-up dancing cheek-to-stubbed-cheek under those gently glowing interstellar rings in Lvoff's atmospheric portrait of an empty Saturn Bar.

5. Andrea Fraser, Monir Farmanfarmaian, Hew Locke and Ebony G. Patterson at the Newcomb Art Gallery (Woldenberg Art Center, Tulane University; free)

It's almost doing these artists a disservice by grouping them together in this list, since each one presents work that's worthy of considerable individual attention. But the Newcomb's eye-popping and thoughtful installation is a one-two-three-four punch of visual delight.

The conversation here touches upon several motifs that are central to New Orleans' own sense of identity, even though not all of the works — which include Farmanfarmaian's dazzling mosaic wall pieces, Fraser's sculptural pile of discarded Brazilian carnival costumes, Locke's intricate rope-and-bead wall drawings, and Patterson's glittery interrogations of masculinity in Jamaican dance-hall culture — were created with New Orleans in mind.

All venues in "Prospect.3: Notes for Now" are open Wednesdays through Sundays (closed Mondays and Tuesdays) from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. through January 25. Visit <http://prospectneworleans.org> for more information.