Decolonizing Refinement:
Contemporary Pursuits in the Art of Edouard Duval-Carrié

Exhibition co-curated by Paul B. Niell, Michael D. Carrasco, and Lesley A. Wolff
In collaboration with Edouard Duval-Carrié

February 16 – April 1, 2018

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Edouard Duval-Carrié, *Capitaine Tonnerre*, 2017, mixed media, 60 x 48 in.
Common Core Standards

**Elementary School**
VA.1.C.2.1 Describe visual imagery to complete artwork.
VA.1.C.3.2 Distinguish between artwork, utilitarian objects, and objects from nature.
VA.1.S.3.2 Discuss the qualities of good craftsmanship.
VA.2.S.3.4 Describe the differences between using one’s own ideas, using someone else’s ideas as one’s own, and drawing inspiration from the works of others.
VA.4.C.3.3 Use the art-making process, analysis, and discussion to identify the connections between art and other disciplines.
VA.4.F.2.1 Discuss how artists and designers have made an impact on the community.
VA.4.H.1.1 Identify historical and cultural influences that have inspired artists to produce works of art.

**Middle School 6-8**
VA.68.C.2.3 Examine artworks to form ideas and criteria by which to judge/assess and inspire personal works and artistic growth.
VA.68.C.3.4 Compare the uses for artwork and utilitarian objects to determine their significance in society.
VA.68.H.2.1 Describe how previous cultural trends have led to the development of new art styles.
VA.68.S.3.1 Use ideas from cultural, historical, and artistic references to create personal responses in personal artwork.

**High School 9-12**
SS.912.A.1.4 Analyze how images, symbols, objects, cartoons, graphs, charts, maps, and artwork may be used to interpret the significance of time periods and events from the past.
SS.912.A.3.10 Review different economic and philosophic ideologies.
VA.912.C.2.1 Examine and revise artwork throughout the art-making process to refine work and achieve artist objective.
VA.912.C.3.3 Examine relationships among social, historical, literary, and/or other references to explain how they are assimilated into artworks.
VA.912.C.3.5 Make connections between timelines in other content areas and timelines in the visual arts.
VA.912.F.2.3 Analyze the potential economic impact of arts entities to revitalize a community or region.
VA.912.H.2.2 Analyze the capacity of the visual arts to fulfill aesthetic needs through artwork and utilitarian objects.
VA.912.H.2.5 Analyze artwork from a variety of cultures and times to compare the function, significance, and connection to other cultures or times.
Born and raised in Haiti, Edouard Duval-Carrié fled the regime of “Papa Doc” Duvalier as a teenager and subsequently resided in locales as diverse as Puerto Rico, Montreal, Paris, and Miami. Parallels thus emerge between the artist’s cosmopolitan lifestyle and his artistic sensitivity toward the multifaceted identities that form his native Haiti. Whether in sculpture, painting, or multimedia installation, Duval-Carrié’s work navigates the historically rich and culturally complex traditions that comprise a uniquely Caribbean perspective. At heart, Duval-Carrié is an educator: he challenges the viewer to make meaning of dense iconography derived from Caribbean history, politics, and religion. Duval-Carrié also re-appropriates history, inscribing photographs, documents, paintings, and ephemera onto his own work and thus problematizes official Francophonic narratives against lived realities. Although he claims his art to be a secular and intellectual pursuit, Duval-Carrié’s work often convenes with the spiritual via installations reminiscent of Vodou and Catholic altarpieces and reliquaries. In so doing, the artist explores the complex intermingling of ethnicities and socio-economic circumstances that staged Haiti’s contemporary, hybridic culture, and through which the Vodou pantheon continues to pulse. Recently, the conceptual layering of Duval-Carrié’s works has been further emphasized in his materials and through consistent attention to translucent and reflective mediums, such as glitter, glass, and resin. The introspective effects of these mediums transform his works into spatial interventions that implicate the viewer in their historicity. At their most fundamental, Duval-Carrié’s works ask the viewer to complicate the Western canon, to consider how Africa has shaped the Americas, and how the Caribbean has shaped the modern world.
About this Packet
[THIS PACKET IS FOR ONE TIME EDUCATIONAL USE ONLY]
This packet serves as an educational resource to supplement the exhibition Decolonizing Refinement: Contemporary Pursuits in the Art of Edouard Duval-Carrié, and features two installations by Duval-Carrié that have been produced specifically for Florida State University. Each section contains additional information about references used in Duval-Carrié’s work to help viewers more readily access the artist’s influences and intent. Use the “Prompting Questions” section, either in the gallery or in the classroom, to introduce close analyzing and critical responses to the art. Please note that some of the information presented in this packet deals with complex histories and violent circumstances, such as slavery, so it may need to be modified to suit certain age groups. Vocabulary terms are listed in the back of the packet along with a bibliography to encourage further engagement with the material. Finally, feel free to utilize suggestions in the “Activities” section to foster interaction among students with the works in the classroom or gallery. Please do share your experiences with Decolonizing Refinement on social media by tagging us with #unrefinedFSU or @decolonizingrefinement.

About the Exhibition
This exhibition features the contemporary multimedia arts of Edouard Duval-Carrié coupled with historical artifacts from local Tallahassee-area collections. Our principal aim is to improve and expand understanding of Caribbean visual culture and the arts of the African Diaspora by implicating the colonial heritage of north Florida and the broader U.S. Southeast in circum-Caribbean histories. In this manner, we employ Duval-Carrié’s recent works, which critique the Francophone history of Caribbean representation, as agents of “decolonization.” By decolonization, we refer to the recognition that modernity is inextricably linked to the legacy of colonial institutions as they existed historically and as these systemic conventions extend, often unnoticed, into today. To “decolonize refinement,” then, signifies our desire to draw attention to the oppressive processes utilized by colonial powers to “purify” products, such as cotton and sugar, in the service of global commerce. We wish to foreground the ways in which this history of oppression, enslavement, and invisible labor served the modern hunger for conspicuous consumption, particularly in terms of the visual and material culture this “consumption” necessitated. Duval-Carrié’s individual works tackle this subject to decolonial ends, particularly as it pertains to the Caribbean world. Through this exhibition, we seek to build upon Duval-Carrié’s artistic statements to demonstrate how these problematic processes likewise extend to Florida’s visual and material culture.

Edouard Duval-Carrié,
Memory Window #4, 2017,
mixed media in artist’s frame, 58 x 58 in.
Regional Map

Danckerts Map of Florida, the West Indies, and the Caribbean, 1696
Edouard Duval-Carrié, *Sugar Conventions*, 2013, mixed media on backlit Plexiglas, 72 x 72 in.
About the work: *Sugar Conventions*

In 1825, the French gourmand Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin wrote, “Tell me what you eat, and I’ll tell you who you are.” *Sugar Conventions* heeds this call by laying bare the socio-political realities of one of modernity’s most highly prized fare, sugar. For Brillat-Savarin, taste embodied physical, moral, and material qualities. Likewise, Duval-Carrié demonstrates the physical, moral, and material consequences of plantation culture and its product.

This mixed media work comprises nine gridded tiles (read left to right, top to bottom) whose overall form signifies the sacred geometry prevalent in Haitian Vodou practice. Individually, these quadrants address aspects of Haitian society in relation to the “culture of sugar”: the Vodou deities embedded in the Americas as a result of the transatlantic slave trade, the struggle for successful Haitian governance, the physical labor demanded of sugar plantation workers, and the social statuses crafted through caste systems. The work’s title further underscores the systemic *conventions* that participated in, and were perpetuated by, the cultivation of sugar in the Caribbean.

Sugar is not merely a conceptual participant in this work; the refined white crystals have been affixed to each of *Sugar Convention’s* nine tiles. The Rococo-style stencils used here emphasize the Western underpinnings of Haitian culture. The reality of the sugar embedded in the work also lends a material irony to the “sugary” sweetness associated with the Rococo style, revealing the sinister roots of its modern machinations.

Sugar’s vital, and complex, role in the evolution of Haitian independence renders it an important material and conceptual product in Duval-Carrié’s work. After Saint Domingue (modern-day Haiti; 1659-1804) came under French control in 1697, sugar plantations began to populate the colony on larger scales than the island had previously known. During the one hundred years in which French colonial rule dictated commerce in Saint Domingue, about eight hundred large-scale sugar plantations emerged, from which over one hundred forty-one million pounds of sugar were exported annually. This sugar was not intended for French consumption, but rather as a vehicle for French capitalist enterprise and the means by which the colonial empire accumulated vast sums of wealth in the eighteenth century. The proliferation of sugar plantations necessitated the importation of hundreds of thousands of enslaved laborers to Saint Domingue in the century prior to Haitian independence. The success of sugar as a trade good for the French empire was thus directly tied to an increase in the enslaved population of Saint Domingue.
Individual Panels in *Sugar Conventions*

The work begins with the haunting image of *Dambalah*, a Vodou spirit so ancient he precedes creation itself. According to the artist, “Dambalah is the god, the opener, the sage, the one that knows. So it’s almost like an act of faith, that this god should guide me through this project.” By foregrounding Dambalah, Duval-Carrié couches the socio-political subject matter of sugar cultivation within a spiritual, Vodou framework. Duval-Carrié uses the image from his painting *Dambalah (2000)* to represent the deity.

Sugar canes frame a digitally manipulated photograph of a Haitian tombstone. These tombs—which have their roots in the traditions of the Congo and were brought to the Caribbean in the days of the slave trade—continue to be prevalent in the countryside. The sugar surrounding the image highlights the sacrifice of enslaved Africans who gave their lives for the sake of refined tastes. Tombs such as these demonstrate how slaves maintained ancestral ties, literally leaving their mark on the Americas.

This section depicts a scene from Polish artist January Suchodolski’s painting, *Battle For Palm Tree Hill, Saint Domingue (1845)*, which depicts a battle fought during the Haitian Revolution. A striking similarity to Francisco de Goya’s anti-imperial *Disasters of War* series is evident. Here Duval-Carrié draws forth the racial implications of the Haitian Revolution, in which enslaved and freed Africans fought, and won, against the French colonial power.
To demonstrate the disasters that befell the government after independence, Duval-Carrié embeds a photograph of the Haitian palace crumbling to the ground after the devastating earthquake of January 12, 2010. Duval-Carrié situates this contemporary event along a trajectory of enslavement, plantation culture and sugar refinement. On either side of the photograph, three-dimensional busts of Vodou deities keep a watchful eye on the destruction.

Just above the glittering word “SUCRE” (sugar), a medallion contains a passage from a mid-18th century work by Italian painter Agostino Brunias. Brunias traveled to the West Indies to record scenes of daily life, such as this one, where a flower seller holds up a platter of her wares to two women, at least one of whom is of African descent. Duval-Carrié has juxtaposed this scene against an ethereal background of sugar cane emerging from water. For Duval-Carrié, bodies of water signify the means by which people both connect with and become estranged from one another.

Here, another image by Agostino Brunias depicts freed West Indian women of color with servants. The finely dressed women are part of the new sugar money that came to the islands in the 18th century. These women transcend their racial class by means of fine dress and jewels that align them with European aristocracy. However, Duval-Carrié complicates this painting with labels that reflect the rigorous caste system operative in Haiti and across the Caribbean at this time.
A digitally manipulated photograph of a modern-day Haitian plantation worker looks the viewer head on. The original photograph was taken by Duval-Carrié himself. In contrast to the images above, this man wears no shirt, only a sun hat to mark him by his trade. The worker embodies the point of origin of the refined sugar that glistens around him, underscoring the human toll of modern consumptive practice.

Revolutionary leader Touissant Louverture recurs throughout Duval-Carrié’s work as homage to the principles of freedom upon which Haiti was founded. This horseback rendering of Louverture references the widely circulated and anonymous portrait of the leader, *Toussaint Louverture Chef des Noirs Insurgés de Saint Domingue* (1802). The blue and red wreath symbolizes the Haitian flag and also stylistically parallels the laborer at lower left. Further, Louverture’s central placement frames him as the bedrock of Duval-Carrié’s narrative.

To complete his narrative, Duval-Carrié returns to the ever-present Dambalah, who has now gained a distinctly Creole coiffure that amalgamates the francophone and Vodou elements from preceding tiles. The backgrounds that were so finely stenciled in the previous quadrants have here turned haphazard and thick, losing their refined appearance as though consumed by sugar. Duval-Carrié embeds similar passages of disarray in his earlier works such as *Mardi gras au Fort Dimanche* (1993) and *Le Gâteau Fort* (1988), whereby peeling walls and floorboards lend a surreal presence to the scene.
The Haitian Revolution (1791-1804)

Duval-Carrié frequently engages with elements of Haitian culture, folklore, and history in his works, including the Haitian Revolution. Beginning in 1791 on the immensely wealthy French colony of Saint Domingue - a powerhouse of the Atlantic World economy and primary exporter of tropical crops across the globe, namely sugar - the uprising followed just two short years after the beginning of the French Revolution. In tandem with the French revolutionaries’ rallying cry of “liberté, égalité, fraternité,” the slaves and free black population of Saint Domingue revolted against the French colonial regime, led by figures such as the self-educated former slave, Toussaint Louverture. Over a thirteen year period, a long and bloody war raged across the island, eventually culminating with Saint Domingue’s independence when rebel leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines declared Haiti a free republic and massacred all remaining white landowners on the island in 1804.

In *Sugar Conventions*, Duval-Carrié references The Battle for Palm Tree Hill by artist and military officer January Suchodolski. In his work, Suchodolski attempts to capture the violence of the revolution, in particular, the perceived ferocity and brutality of the revolting forces on the island, here shown locked in battle with Polish mercenary troops hired by the French. The dynamic composition, with black and white bodies clashing and entwining at the apex of the hill, is offset by a triumphant rebel soldier standing to their left. Apparently barefoot and armed with a sabre, the soldier holds a decapitated white head - mustache intact - aloft over the violent scene. In the context of Duval-Carrié’s work, however, the soldier in the image loses his connotations of barbarity and becomes a triumphant figure throwing off the yoke of colonial oppression. Extracted from the surrounding battle scene and flipped 180 degrees, the figure now gestures in the direction of Duval-Carrié’s previous panel: an image of a Haitian tombstone and reminder of the drastic human cost of the sugar economy in Saint Domingue that gave rise to the revolution itself.

January Suchodolski, *Battle for Palm Tree Hill, Saint Domingue*, 1845
Duval-Carrié’s interest in representations of the diverse racial societies of the Caribbean comes through in his references to the work of Italian artist Agostino Brunias. Between the years of 1764 and 1773, Brunias toured the West Indies as the personal painter of Sir William Young (1725-1728), a British imperial official and sugar plantation owner who served as the first governor of the islands of Dominica, St. Vincent, and Tobago from 1770 to 1773. During his time in the Caribbean, Brunias completed works capturing the landscape and society of the islands. His paintings not only served as mementos for planters and government officials to carry back home to Europe, but also ethnographically illustrated the manners, customs, and traditions of the people of the West Indies, specifically the African descendant and native communities. Brunias observed the daily activities of the racially complex population of the island, including market days, festivals, cudgelling matches, and dances, which he recorded in his paintings. He labelled his figures according to their skin color and social status, rather ambiguously distinguishing between slaves, free people of color, and “maroons.” An overview of Brunias's oeuvre, however, reveals that many of his works are not necessarily representations of any specific people, place, or event. He frequently reused forms throughout his works, including figures, objects, fabrics, clothing, and structures, reorienting them to create new compositions. In so doing, Brunias presents highly composed glimpses of life in the West Indies, heightening the ethnographic quality of his style, as he documents specific qualities and traits, rather than individuals.

In 1773, Sir William Young completed his term as governor and returned to England. Brunias followed in 1775, and while in London created a series of engravings after his Caribbean works, which gained popularity in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century. His prints were copied by other engravers and even reproduced into published volumes of Caribbean history, including the second edition of Bryan Edwards’ book The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies published in 1794, and Nicolas Ponces’ Recueil de Vues des Lieux Principaux de la Colonie Françoise de Saint-Domingue published in 1791. The circulation of these prints at the end of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century arguably shaped European ideas about life in the West Indies. Brunias travelled once more to the West Indies in 1784 where he remained until his death on the island of Dominica in 1796.
Social “Conventions” in Saint Domingue

During the years that the French empire maintained political control over Saint Domingue, the rule of law was irregularly enforced. As Saint Domingue’s plantations grew in size and wealth, so too did the island’s population of plantation owners and enslaved laborers. Colonial Saint Domingue thus became a land of increasingly diverse populations, prompting certain elite figures to intervene and further organize the colony by regulating racial and social conventions. These conventions helped perpetuate the culture of refinement on the islands that allowed an elite minority to engage in conspicuous consumption at the expense of the enslaved labor of others. Duval-Carrié reflects the social dynamic, the “conventions,” that propelled plantation heritage in the very title of his work, *Sugar Conventions*.

The Code Noir, “Black Code,” is one of the most formative “conventions” of colonial Saint Domingue’s social hierarchy. Decreed by French King Louis XIV in March 1685, these articles lay out strict regulations regarding the religious, social and political rights, or lack thereof, for people of color and enslaved workers in the colony. Modest slave protections were also outlined, but restrictions for enslaved populations were most heavily emphasized, as were punishments for their defiance.
In 1789, Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry (1750 – 1819), a wealthy slave-owning resident of Saint Domingue, expanded upon the social restrictions laid out in the Code Noir in his theoretical text, Description...de la partie française de l'Isle Saint-Domingue. This late eighteenth-century text sought to codify an exacting taxonomy for the population of Saint Domingue based on skin color and blood purity. Moreau de Saint-Méry’s obsessive taxonomy contained no fewer than eleven categories of one hundred ten combinations ranging from absolute whiteness to absolute blackness—each of those composed of one hundred twenty-eight parts of white or black blood. The exhaustive nature of this system underscores white anxieties of blood purity in a society where “impure” bodies both outnumbered their white counterparts and were critical to the commercial success of the island.

Duval-Carrié references Moreau de Saint-Méry’s “conventions” by inserting racial labels onto the various figures populating Brunias’s painting, Free Women of Color with Their Children and Servants in his own work, Sugar Conventions. Previously, Duval-Carrié has invoked this taxonomy in his painting Roman Noir à Saint-Domingue (1988).

Edouard Duval-Carrié, Roman Noir à Saint-Domingue, 1988, oil on canvas, 59 x 55 in.
Haitian Vodou

Vodou, now one of the official religions of Haiti, along with Roman Catholicism, is comprised of West African practices that syncretically blended with Catholic traditions during the colonial period on the island. As French colonists forced Catholic conversion upon enslaved Africans, Vodou emerged as a means to integrate West African beliefs into Western colonial expectations. These subversive origins have led Vodou practitioners to struggle to claim mainstream recognition for their beliefs. Practitioners believe in an all-encompassing spiritual world marked by two spheres: the visible world of humans and the invisible world of Ginen, the mythical African homeland of Vodou spirits. Vodou is thus heavily rooted in ancestral and mystical ties to Africa and the cultural rupture wrought upon enslaved Africans in the Middle Passage. Vodou practitioners strive to serve the lwa [spirits] through their devotional rites, including possession, prayer, song, and dance. These lwa are believed to themselves serve the ultimate deity, known as Bondye, the Supreme Creator.

Duval-Carrié has devoted much of his career to depicting the Vodou spirits, the lwa. Though these spirits do not assume any one particular likeness, Duval-Carrié often portrays them as humanoid forms in transitional spaces, such as the sea. This liminal reference invokes the Middle Passage as well as contemporary migrations from economic and political woes that have again forced Haitians from their homeland in recent years. Thus, Duval-Carrié draws upon Vodou imagery as a way to parallel the perpetual “inbetweenness” of Haitians with the intercessor status of the lwa. In Dambalah la Flambeau (2000), which Duval-Carrié again references in Sugar Conventions, the artist depicts the “blank and pitiless” face of Dambalah, the primordial creator, and one of the most powerful of the lwa. He looms over the chasm of the sea, whose vegetal forms signify the mystical journey to Ginen. Dambalah’s central bust divides the opposing sides of the image that seemingly face off. At right, ancestral figures sit in a vulnerable wooden boat along a tropical landscape that may either be read as Africa or Haiti, while at left, militarized and urbanized environments have obscured the presence of human and natural forms. This duality references the social and political distinctions between Haiti and the U.S., specifically Duval-Carrié’s adoptive home of Florida, and the duality that underscores the dynamic among spirits in the Vodou realm of the lwa.
Prompting Questions: Sugar Conventions

Can you identify all of the ways in which “sugar” is present in this work?

How many different types of media has Duval-Carrié incorporated into this piece? Do you notice any patterns in the kinds of media and where they are placed in the composition?

Why do you think Duval-Carrié would include images from the past into this work? What aspects of this image are “original” to the work and which aspects are “copies”? Are there any conclusions we can draw about why Duval-Carrié would combine “original” images and “copies”?

What recurring themes are present in the images Duval-Carrié employs in this work? How do these themes and images help shape the identity of Haiti as it is presented by the artist?

Duval-Carrié has said that the work can be “read” from left to right and from top to bottom. Why is it important to “read” the work in this way? What kind of story does the work tell through this “reading”?

Could Agostino Brunias’s depictions of West Indies peoples be problematic in any way? How does this artist’s work relate to the narrative of Europeans in Duval-Carrié’s piece?

How does Duval-Carrié attempt to problematize European depictions of Caribbean subject matter in his works? Why do you think he does so?

Grinding sugarcane in the field, Tallahassee, Florida, ca. 1917
Edouard Duval-Carrié, *La Fin de Ti Noël*, 2017, etching on Plexiglas, plate 14 of *The Kingdom of This World* series, 31 x 27 in.
Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier’s novel *The Kingdom of This World* was first published in 1949 under the Spanish language title *El Reino de Este Mundo*. The book follows the trials and tribulations of Ti Noël, an enslaved laborer on a colonial sugar plantation in Saint Domingue who struggles, in the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution, to find a place for himself as a free man. Carpentier thus portrays the Haitian Revolution, and revolution broadly, as an imperfect action, one that does not in and of itself bring about real change. The novel’s abrupt end finds Ti Noël labeled as much an outsider as he was as an enslaved laborer. In this way, Carpentier’s novel seeks to decenter the Haitian Revolution as a decisive rupture in Haitian history, marking the distinction between colonial enslavement from national freedom. Rather, Carpentier attempts to signify the fluidity between Haiti’s oppressive colonial past and its oppressive national present, thus suggesting that the Haitian Revolution did not do away with hegemonic power structures, only reorganizing them.

Edouard Duval-Carrié first read *The Kingdom of This World* as a teenage boy growing up in Puerto Rico. After fleeing his native land of Haiti, which had come under the violent rule of François Duvalier, this novel became a vital lens through which Duval-Carrié engaged with his estranged homeland. According to Duval-Carrié, the novel’s attempt to decenter the Haitian Revolution became an entry-point into the fluidity between Haiti’s colonial and national epochs. In this way, Carpentier’s novel has influenced Duval-Carrié’s entire body of work, which attends to the legacy of colonialism in the present-day Caribbean.

*The Kingdom of This World* draws upon magical realist tropes to portray figures from Haitian history as mystical creatures that metamorphose from human to animal (and even insect) forms. Carpentier’s novel thus asks questions about the essence of one’s self, in body and mind. Duval-Carrié utilizes this theme of transformation and identity as the starting point for a series of works that illustrate scenes from Carpentier’s imaginative novel. Duval-Carrié’s series includes a set of fifteen scenes—one for each major chapter of the novel—that have been etched onto fifteen clear Plexiglas plates. From these plates, Duval-Carrié strikes a series of prints. In addition, Duval-Carrié produced a grouping of paintings that reflect the imagery present in the etchings and prints. Additionally, in collaboration with the Facility for Arts Research at Florida State University, Duval-Carrié has utilized laser-cutting technologies to duplicate his Plexiglas etchings by machine. These clear acrylic etched plates have been framed and hung in the museum gallery not as an artistic tool, but rather as a work of art in its own right. In this manner, Duval-Carrié’s artistic process asks us to consider which of these many pieces of the series is the “original”? This artistic play on originality and reproduction references the themes of identity and transformation repeated throughout Carpentier’s novel and, more broadly, it references the fluidity of past and present in the Caribbean today, where contemporary society has been so directly informed by colonial history. This material and concept are closely interwoven in this series, as they are in all of Duval-Carrié’s works.

Edouard Duval-Carrié, *La Tete de Boukman*, 2017, etching on Plexiglas, plate 9 of *The Kingdom of This World* series, 31 x 27 in.
Plot Summary: *The Kingdom of This World* by Alejo Carpentier (1949)

**Part One**
The book opens with Ti Noël working on the sugar plantation of Lenormand de Mézy in Saint Domingue alongside Makandal, a fellow enslaved laborer. One day, while crushing cane in the perilous sugar mill, Makandal’s hand becomes caught and his arm must be amputated, rendering him useless as a laborer. Makandal thus flees the plantation and, in so doing, learns to harness the powers of the land’s flora and fungi. Makandal subsequently becomes the Lord of Poison and devises a potion to be used to kill plantation owners and their families across the island. Mme. Lenormand de Mézy dies after consuming a poisoned orange. Makandal’s powers of the land bring him the ability to transform into various non-human forms. Years later, he returns to the plantation, but alludes capture by shifting form from man to insect and flying away.

**Part Two**
Many years have passed, and now, incited by Bouckman, enslaved laborers engage in an uprising against their masters. After a scene of excessive drinking, the enslaved men perform extreme acts of violence against the island’s white population. The uprising ultimately fails and ends in brutal death for most. Ti Noël is then sold to a Cuban master and departs to labor on a plantation in Santiago de Cuba.

**Part Three**
Again, the novel quickly moves ahead by many years. Ti Noël pays for his freedom and returns to Saint Domingue on the eve of the Haitian Revolution. Free men of color now rule the land, but Ti Noël struggles to find his place in this emergent nation. He becomes jailed and thus effectively enslaved again, forced to work arduous manual labor constructing the fortress of King Henri Christophe. Ti Noël escapes prison and witnesses the King’s suicide. The King is buried in the mortar of the fortress constructed by imprisoned men like Ti Noel.

**Part Four**
Ti Noël finally finds happiness and community on the land of Lenormand de Mézy’s former plantation, but this contentment is short-lived as forced labor continues to plague the island. Ti Noël harnesses the knowledge of the land imparted onto him by Makandal and begins his own transformation. Ti Noël becomes a goose in the hopes that the flock will accept him into their community. Ti Noël, however, remains an outcast and finally realizes that hierarchy and hegemony are universal qualities that shift form but cannot be eradicated from the world. Ti Noël thus transforms back into human form to leave, as Carpentier says, “the same inheritance he had received: a body of flesh to which things had happened.” He calls his fellow countrymen to rise up against “the new masters” and then disappears into the night, never to be seen again.

Edouard Duval-Carrié, *Ti Noël a Sans Souci*, 2017, etching on Plexiglas, plate 13 of *The Kingdom of This World* series, 31 x 27 in.
“That afternoon the slaves returned to their plantations laughing all the way. Makandal had kept his word, remaining in the Kingdom of This World. Once more the whites had been outwitted by the Mighty Powers of the Other Shore.” (46)

“While his master was being shaved, Ti Noël could gaze his fill at the four wax heads that adorned the counter by the door. The curls of the wigs, opening into a pool of ringlets on the red baize, framed expressionless faces. Those heads seemed as real—although their fixed stare was so dead—as the talking head an itinerant mountebank had brought to the Cap years before to promote the sale of an elixir for curing toothache and rheumatism.” (4)

“Makandal’s left hand had been caught with the cane by the sudden tug of the rollers, which had dragged in his arm up to the shoulder…The master called for the whetstone to sharpen the machete to be used in the amputation.” (15)
Metamorphose #1

“They all knew that the green lizard, the night moth, the strange dog, the incredible gannet, were nothing but disguises...In one metamorphosis or another, the one-armed was everywhere, having recovered his corporeal integrity in animal guise.” (35-6)

Metamorphose #2

“Behind the Mother Drum rose the human figure of Makandal. The Mandigue Makandal. The man Makandal. The One-Armed. The Restored. The Transformed.” (41)

Metamorphose #3

“Something of his sojourns in mysterious places seemed to cling to him, something of his successive attires of scales, bristles, fur.” (41)
**Metamorphose #4**

“His chin had taken on a feline sharpness, and his eyes seemed to slant a little toward his temples, like those of certain birds whose appearance he had assumed.” (41)

**L’ Orange de Mme. Lenormand de Mezy**

“The poison went on decimating families and wiping out grownups and children…With involuntary haste to occupy the last grave left in the cemetery, Mme Lenormand de Mézy died on Whitsunday a little while after tasting a particularly tempting orange that an over-obliging limb had put within her reach.” (29)

**La Tete de Boukman**

“All was silent…The head of the Jamaican, Bouckman, green and open-mouthed, was already crawling with worms on the very spot where Makandal’s flesh had become stinking ashes. Total extermination of the Negroes was the order, but some armed groups were still sacking outlying dwellings.” (69-70)
**Les Mastiffs Cubain**

“One morning the harbor of Santiago was filled with barking. Chained to each other, growling and slavering behind their muzzles, trying to bite their keepers and one another, hurling themselves at the people watching behind the grilled windows, hundreds of dogs were being driven with whips into the hold of a sailing ship. More dogs arrived, and still more, shepherded by plantation overseers, farmers, and hunters in high boots.” (83)

**Makandal S’Envole**

“In his cycle of metamorphoses, Makandal had often entered the mysterious world of the insects, making up for the lack of his human arm with the possession of several feet, four wings, or long antennae. He had been fly, centipede, moth, ant, tarantula, ladybug, even a glow-worm with phosphorescent green lights.” (44)

**L’Apotheose de Makandal**

“When the moment came, the bonds of the Mandigue, no longer possessing a body to bind, would trace the shape of a man in the air…The fire began to rise toward the Mandigue, licking his legs. At that moment Makandal moved the stump of his arm, which they had been unable to tie up, in a threatening gesture which was none the less terrible for being partial, howling unknown spells and violent thrusting his torso forward.” (45)
Ti Noël a Sans Souci

“After several days of journeying, Ti Noël began to recognize certain places…Following the seashore, he made for the old plantation of Lenormand de Mézy. By the three ceibas that formed a triangle he knew that he had arrived. But nothing was left there…The plantation had turned into a wasteland crossed by a road.” (105-6)

La Fin de Ti Noël

“Ti Noël employed his magic powers to transform himself into a goose and live with the fowl that had made his domain their abode. But, when he attempted to take his place in the clan, he encountered sawtoothed beaks and outstretched necks that kept him at a distance…Ti Noël vaguely understood that his rejection by the geese was a punishment for his cowardice.” (176-77)

“In the Kingdom of Heaven there is no grandeur to be won, inasmuch as there all is an established hierarchy, the unknown is revealed, existence is infinite, there is no possibility of sacrifice, all is rest and joy. For this reason, bowed down by suffering and duties, beautiful in the midst of his misery, capable of loving in the face of afflictions and trials, man finds his greatness, his fullest measure, only in the Kingdom of This World.” (179)
Prompting Questions: The Kingdom of This World

What do you notice about the kinds of materials Duval-Carrié has used in this series?

Why do you think Duval-Carrié would work in transparent materials?

Why would he want to frame and hang an etched plate typically reserved as a tool to produce prints?

Are there any common themes you notice across the images he’s selected? Why would he select these images in particular?

How has Edouard taken artistic liberties and deviated from what is written in the novel’s text?

This series of works comes from a novel that is known as “Magical Realist,” because it incorporates both realistic elements as well as supernatural or magical elements. Can you find both in Duval-Carrié’s illustrations? Does his work also seem “Magical Realist”? If so, how?

Edouard Duval-Carrié, *Makandal as Mosquito*, 2017, mixed media on acrylic, 48 in. diameter
Edouard Duval-Carrié has called Miami home for over 20 years now. Although, previously, the artist has incorporated themes related to landscape and immigration in South Florida into his works, such as *The Grand Florida Marsh* (2015) and *Embarkation for Florida* (1997), this exhibition marks the artist’s first engagement with North Florida as a critical vehicle for his imagery and artistry. Duval-Carrié’s *Memory Window* series, seen in the exhibition *Decolonizing Refinement*, incorporate photographs of North Florida’s history of enslaved labor into resin-based, backlit panels that lend the works, and the images encased within them, an ethereal glow. This glow signifies both the attentions that should be paid to the African American heritage of North Florida, upon whose blood and sweat the region’s economy was literally built, as well as the ghostly presence of these images—images of men, women, families and communities that have been omitted from the region’s official narratives.
The history of Tallahassee’s plantation culture largely dates back to the early 1820s when a wave of American planters migrated to the newly formed territory to establish agriculturally based enterprises. Though the region had once been home to numerous indigenous groups, such as the Apalachee, the tyranny of colonization along with various wars left the region largely unpopulated by the 1820s, and thus rife for exploitation by white settlers. One of the plantations established during that period was the Goodwood Plantation, today known as the Goodwood Museum and Gardens, located in Tallahassee. The Croom family purchased the lands in the 1820s and the main house was first constructed in the 1840s, which sat on an impressive 1700 acres of land. The Croom family used the plantation to cultivate and harvest cotton, for which they exploited the labor of an indeterminate number of slaves. The bell tower, which still stands today, attests to the watchmen who used to supervise enslaved laborers who toiled over the grounds.

The Grove Plantation, today known as the Grove Museum, in downtown Tallahassee, was established concurrent with the Goodwood Plantation and owned by Richard Keith Call, one of the largest slave owners in antebellum Leon County. Enslaved laborers built the Greek revival-style main house of The Grove in the 1840s. Many of these laborers also constructed elaborate railroads in and around Tallahassee to allow for expedient importation of resources and exportation of plantation crops. Unlike sugar, which could not thrive in North Florida, cotton grew easily in the North Florida climate, making it a popular plantation crop. By 1860, there were over 1000 cotton-producing plantations in the state, 400 of which had at least 30 or more enslaved laborers working the land. During the era of Reconstruction, freed slaves continued to work plantations as sharecroppers, which perpetuated the cycle of exploitation and oppression begun under enslavement.

Left: African American Workers in Florida Cotton Fields, c. 1900

Above: Edouard Duval-Carrié, Of Cotton, Gunboats and Petticoats, 2017, mixed media on Plexi, 72 x 60 in.
Glossary of Terms

Decolonization: The release of a country or territory from political control by another country; to free from colonial status. In the context of this artist’s work, Saint Domingue (modern-day Haiti, 1659-1804), was colonized by the French in 1697. Following The Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) the French were overthrown and Haiti was declared a free republic, thus removing their status of “French colony”. They then implemented their own political and social systems to self-govern their nation.

Decolonize: A theoretical framework and a call to action that seeks to incorporate voices, epistemologies, and heritages previously suppressed by dominant groups into a pluralistic discourse. Walter Mignolo, Anibal Quijano, and Enrique Dussel are key figures in this socio-political movement. By striving to give newfound presence to Afro-Caribbean and African-American histories, Edouard Duval-Carrié’s art seeks to decolonize.

Refinement: Refinement is the socio-cultural process by which Western civilization marks itself. This is a process of purification that may be enacted physically through treatments to materials that transform the cellular nature of the substance, such as the refinement of sugar from unprocessed brown cane to sparkling white crystal. Refinement also refers to similar processes as they were historically enacted to “improve” upon both material and social culture alike.

Code Noir: A legislation or legal decree, written by King Louis XIV of France, which served as a guideline of rules and protections regarding slave ownership. This document outlined how slave owners were supposed to treat their slaves, how slaves were to be viewed as personal property, what protections and rights slaves had while under control of their owners, and a number of other specifications. This legislation was difficult to enforce effectively due to France being so far away from Haiti. Many of the protections and regulations were regularly violated.

Lwa: Also spelled “Loa”; Spiritual beings of the Haitian Vodou religion. The spirits are believed to have influence over human activities, such as farming, healing, and warfare, influence over human behaviors through possession, and influence over natural forces, such as wind and thunder. Vodou practitioners view their relationships with lwa to be reciprocal, which means that if they actively worship these spirits, then the spirits will not cause them misfortune or harm.

Magical Realism: A distinctive literary genre, popular in mid-20th century Latin America, which inscribes extraordinary or exaggerated elements onto an otherwise realistic setting or scene. Known in Spanish as lo real maravilloso, the “marvelous real” became a mechanism through which writers, such as Alejo Carpentier, expressed the uneven modernity of Latin America as a product of the region’s uniquely colonial underpinnings.

Saint Domingue: The name by which Haiti was referred under French colonization. Modern-day Haiti was called Saint Domingue from 1659-1804. Upon the conclusion of the Haitian Revolution, which granted the newfound nation its freedom from France--and marked the first successful slave revolt in the Americas--Saint Domingue became known as the free republic of Haiti.
**Toussaint Louverture:** The leader of the Haitian independence movement against France. He was the son of an educated slave and was freed in 1776. Like George Washington in the US, Louverture has monumental status in Haitian history and has been widely commemorated. In addition to his inclusion in *Sugar Conventions*, Edouard Duval-Carrié has produced a series of over a dozen bust portraits of the Haitian leader.

**Vodou:** Now one of the official religions of Haiti, along with Roman Catholicism, is comprised of West African practices that syncretically blended with Catholic traditions during the colonial period on the island. As French colonists forced Catholic conversion upon enslaved Africans, Vodou emerged as a means to integrate West African beliefs into Western colonial expectations. Vodou is known by other names across cultures, and many in the West often refer to it as “voodoo.”

Student Activities

Artistic Reflection

- Have each student choose an image by the artist
- Have the student identify the different types of artistic elements and qualities found in the picture
- For each element or principle of art, have each student write:
  - What each principle/element is
  - What that principle/element means
  - Why the artist might have chosen to use it
  - Was using that element/principle effective in portraying their message, and why?

Quote Matching

- Have each student match a quote from The Kingdom of This World to the artist’s images
  - Images on the left, quotes on the right; similar to a word bank
- Alternately, have students come up with their own illustrations for The Kingdom of This World’s quotes and then compare them to Edouard Duval-Carrié’s work

Personal Reflection

- Have each student choose their favorite piece by the artist.
- Have the student write and discuss the following:
  - Why did you choose this piece?
  - How does this piece make you feel?
  - What message is the artist trying to convey?
  - Why do you think the artist used the symbols or artistic elements that they did?

Content Reflection for Discussion

- Have students read and discuss topics about The Kingdom of This World. Questions could include:
  - What did you like most about the story? Why?
  - What did you think about the main character(s)?
  - Would you have responded to his situations the same way?
  - Would you have done anything differently?
Selected Bibliography


Image Sources

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