

## ART REVIEW: JONNY NEGRON @ CHATEAU SHATTO GALLERY IN LOS ANGELES

August 29, 2018



From afar, Jonny Negron's paintings at Chateau Shatto are not unlike tastefully illustrated advertisements for some unnamed tropical paradise. Look closer at these picturesque scenes, though, and it becomes clear that "Small Map of Heaven" documents waters engulfed with trash, beachgoers undergoing trauma, and a faded pink bathroom as a site for tears.

The Puerto Rican born, Brooklyn-based artist references the delayed response to the destruction in Hurricane Maria's wake. An abundance of flora envelops the gouache paintings. Although beautiful, these omnipresent plants swarm and tighten their grip on whatever is in their way, suggesting nature's revanchist desires in an era of climate change.

Negron, who has a background in comic book illustration, cites Japanese woodblock prints, or ukiyo-e, as inspiration. In *Generator*, a submerged spectre faces a Champion generator on the ocean floor, peering at the one device, now useless, that could have saved its flesh and bones. Hints of the 18th-century artist Maruyama Okyo's woodblock prints of yurei (ghosts) come to mind.

Like the apprehensive face in Paul Gauguin's gouache painting *Breton Girl By the Sea*, the windswept shore and balmy night in *Bonus* reminds us that often no setting, no matter how idyllic, can brighten whatever internal issue eats at us. The cartoonishly-chiseled man, eyes focused nowhere, sits on the beach in a daze.

A man weeps in a cloying bathroom in *To Live and Die in LA*, grasping the same plants that have been present in the other waterlogged paintings as puddles of water sparkle on the tile floor. Los Angeles, too, experiences destruction--albeit from fires due to forest encroachment and rampant home-building.

Water is always present throughout *"Small Map of Heaven"*--although it can offer relief from the debris and destruction on land, it is also the source of such peril.

*"Small Map of Heaven"* runs from July 14th - September 1st, 2018 at Chateau Shatto (1206 S. Maple Ave, Suite 1030, Los Angeles, CA, 90015)

---