

ARTPULSE

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Daniel Fiorda, *White box series 2014*, Typewriter Diptych, wood, plastic, concrete typewriter, 25.5" x 25.5 x 3," each panel

DANIEL FIORDA

Lélia Mordoch Gallery – Miami

By Irina Leyva-Pérez

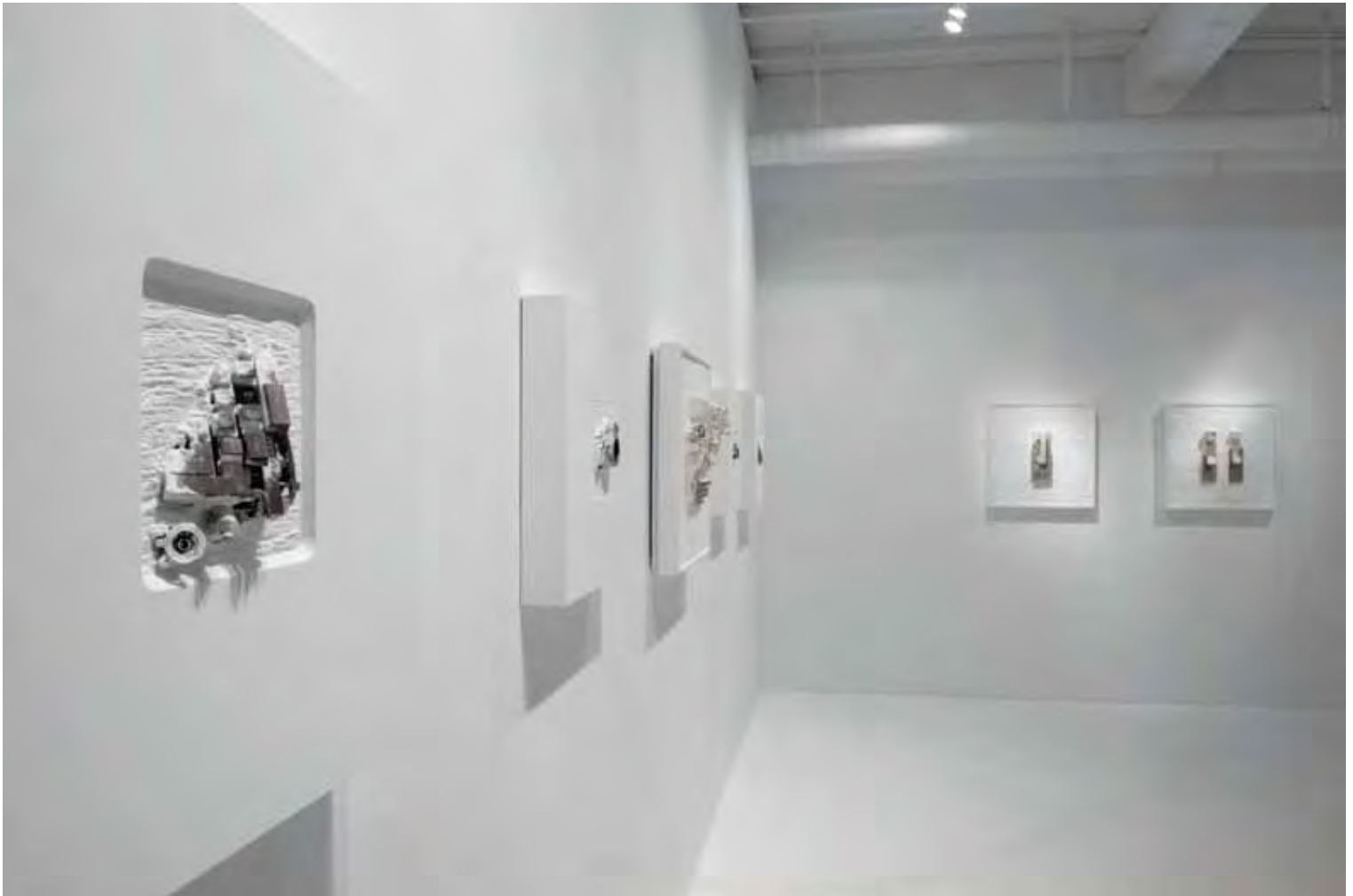
Argentinean-born, Miami-based artist Daniel Fiorda (born in 1963) has been using objects as part of his artwork for years. Perhaps, as the artist reflected on in a recent interview¹, his fascination with them is a consequence of his upbringing in a world in which objects were accumulated and kept around.

His artistic trajectory officially began in 1983 when he was 19 years old, and he held his first exhibition in an art gallery. Back then, his sculptures were made from metal scraps that he collected from his father's welding business. Ever since, the sense of giving a second life to objects that have been discarded has been in one way or another at the center of his work. His recent solo show, "Archeology of the 20th Century," follows this unifying thread, summarizing the evolution of his work.

The homogenous-looking pieces in this exhibition are part of *The White Box Series*, created in 2014, and aesthetically different from the early ones. Although he has been working with gadgets such as typewriters, cameras, telephones and sewing machines for the past 10 years, these new pieces are showing a completely different visual language. He left behind the use of color and "collage" effects of previous works in which he combined elements from various artifacts into the same assemblage. He is also breaking away from the *Nostalgic Series*, in which objects were placed complete, as a vintage piece, almost venerated like a relic. We can easily see these changes if we compare *Typewriters*, from *Nostalgic Series* (2011), and *No More Dialectics #3* (2014). In both pieces he used typewriters; in both instances the objects are included almost intact as part of the piece. However, *Typewriters* shows a shiny golden machine over a black background, while in *No More Dialectics #3* the object is almost interred in a white dusty compound.

In this new series it is still easy to identify the initial gadget used, and it becomes the center of the piece. This visually simple solution makes it possible to concentrate on the object imbedded in each "box." He encapsulates them in a dusty white background made out of plaster, giving it the appearance of previously being "buried." This tableaux effect creates a sort of scenario in which the objects seem to emerge like ghosts from a past. We can't help but imagine the previous life of it, how it was used and to instinctively question through how many hands it passed before ending in Fiorda's. These "machines" used to be passed down from one generation to the next. He collects these objects, probably knows the story of many of them, and keeps them as part of his ever-growing collection until the time is right to include them in his artwork. He is recycling not only the actual artifacts, but also the memories attached to them in the form of images, words and dreams. In turn, the process of interaction includes a dialogue between the artist and the objects first, and then between the finished piece and viewer—done intentionally by the artist.

As mentioned previously, typewriters are among the machines that Fiorda frequently searches for and later recycles into his works. These hold a special place in his memory, since he used to play with his grandmother's as a child. These childhood memories developed into an obsession that inclined him to collect many of them. Consequently, he started to view them as emblematic objects of a past time, as well as evidence of the changes in technology and ways of life. After being an essential tool for many years, the typewriter has been displaced by the computer, becoming the perfect symbol of all that is thrown away and discarded as obsolete. *Typewriter Divided #1* is another of these pieces with the iconic machines. Fiorda cut a typewriter in half and placed it



"Archeology of the 20th Century," installation at Lélia Mordoch Gallery, Miami. Photos: Mariano Costa-Peuser.

like a diptych, two almost symmetric halves trying to converge in the middle. The ample and neutral background functions like the space left intentionally by the artist for memories.

Tube Phone #1 is one of several pieces that used telephones. Presented in a similar format to *Typewriter Divided #1* but exhibited as a single piece, a phone is featured on a wall, recalling a day when phones were immovable, rotary-dial objects that we worked around, rather than those that adapt to our movements, as the current-day versions do today.

A third group of pieces is dedicated to photographic cameras, especially 35-millimeter models. Two of these pieces, *35 mm camera #1* and *35 mm camera #2*, respectively, each show a camera emerging from a white background. The format for this group is slightly different than the rest, with the supporting surface smaller and the frame wide to take the place of that space. The square form reminds us of a bold frame, like those used for old black-and-white photographs, evocative of a distant past. Cameras are precious objects, though perhaps because of their relative extinction, because despite the contemporary obsession for documenting almost every second of our lives, it is now done most of the time with a simple cellular phone. These exercises of endlessly capturing millions of images become a daily occurrence, and without the filters of the past. Consequently, because most photos today are digital, the printed image is almost extinct.

He also uses isolated random elements—pieces from machines, such as a phone charger, fragments from sewing machines or a keyboard. A piece that makes us think again about technology and its short life span is *Panasonic Calculator*, an homage to the days when people actually had one. Now the machines of choice are phones, computers and tablets.

These objects, and by extension the works, represent a past when communication was more personal and "physical" instead of the current-day "virtual" exchange, a time when there wasn't a digital trail left after almost every contact among humans. Part of Fiorda's message is a call to attention towards how ephemeral technology is nowadays, especially in the U.S., when a new phone is out on the market practically every day. He also calls attention to the excessive consumerism of a contemporary society that is constantly discarding.

Fiorda is a recycler of objects as well as a hoarder of memories. He also reflects on the fleeting effect of life through these discarded objects and observes the changes in the ways we communicate with each other and within social groups.

Ultimately, Fiorda is an "urban archeologist" who unearths the things around him, accumulating old "machines" that are, in fact, artifacts from another time that have been pushed aside by the advance of technology. He learns that what might be trash in the eyes of many represent an aesthetic possibility for him to explore in his art by repurposing an otherwise extinct object. At the same time, he is a visitor from the future, looking back at our time and imagining how our civilization might be perceived in the eyes of the generations to come. ■

(January 8 – March 7, 2015)

NOTE

1. Raisa Clavijo. Daniel Fiorda: An Archeology of the 20th Century. *ARTDISTRICTS* No. 34, February/March 2015. Miami, FL., pp. 20-23.

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