

## ARTFORUM

**"NeoHooDoo: Art for a Forgotten Faith"**

THE MENIL COLLECTION

1515 Sul Ross

June 27–September 21

Delving deeply into the mystical roots of the Americas, "NeoHooDoo" uncovers an African soul in the hybrid lineage of various remarkable cultures. The exhibition contextualizes some of the Menil Collection's Conceptual-art masterworks with strong African-American, Hispanic-American, and Central and South American sculpture and video made in recent years. Visitors to the exhibition are greeted at once by the giant metal edifice of Nari Ward's *Liquorsoul*, 2007, in which repurposed corner-store neon signage, decorated with plastic flowers woven with sneaker tips, heralds rebirth from urban neglect. The benedictory introduction continues nearby with Marepe's *Auréolas* (Halo), 2004, a ring of neon auras that grants the entrance hall a soulful blue glow. This graceful sentiment is echoed in James Lee Byars's enormous brass ring, *The Halo*, 1985. The exhibition's titular reference is to poet Ishmael Reed, who is a hallmark for curator Franklin Sirmans. Reed bridges '70s-era radicalism and our new century, and included work by Michael Tracy, Adrian Piper, and Felix Gonzales-Torres provides a similar context of pushing for social change that a younger generation has embraced wholeheartedly.

From the piano-key tempest of Radcliffe Bailey's *Storm at Sea*, 2007, to the chained wooden boats bearing liquor bottles and rusted shackles in José Bedia's *Las Cosas que me Arrastran* (The Things That Drag Me), 2008, Sirmans has assembled an incisive survey of the relationship between mysticism and social consciousness in recent art. Exceptional in this regard is Peruvian artist William Cordova, who has sublimated aspects of parallel political struggles into *the house that frank lloyd wright built for atahualpa*, 2008, which is made of excavated scrap timber from Houston's Third Ward, West Monroe Street in Chicago, and the Sangarará neighborhood of Cuzco, Peru. The artist has constructed a diminutive home and adorned the rough wood with thrift-store gold chains; the corner of the structure is tagged with amateur graffiti in miniature. "NeoHooDoo" seeks to promote new, socially conscious rituals steeped in traditions unjustly forgotten and worth rediscovering.

— Sean Carroll



Radcliffe Bailey, *Storm at Sea* (detail), 2007, piano keys, African sculpture, model boat, paper, acrylic, glitter, and gold leaf, 17' 8" x 17' 9".