Major Survey of Artist Nari Ward to Open at PAMM in November

*Sun Splashed* will be the largest and most significant exhibition of Ward’s work to date

Firelei Báez’s first solo museum show to open alongside the Ward survey

MIAMI – May 19, 2015 – On November 19, Pérez Art Museum Miami will present *Sun Splashed*, the largest exhibition of Nari Ward’s found object sculptures and groundbreaking installations to date. This mid-career survey, featuring work from the 1990s to today, will also showcase lesser-known aspects of his practice such as photography, video, and collage. Taken together, Ward’s oeuvre speaks with penetrating insight and imagination to a broad range of themes, including African-American history and culture, the dynamics of power and politics, and Caribbean diaspora identity.

“We’re pleased to mount this important mid-career survey of Nari Ward’s work as part of our commitment to bringing internationally influential contemporary artists to PAMM. In our local context, it’s especially interesting to draw out the aspects of Ward’s practice that reference his native Jamaica, the politics of immigration, and the search for cultural identity—issues of particular relevance to the city of Miami,” said Diana Nawi, the exhibition’s curator and associate curator at PAMM. “*Sun Splashed* is an overdue opportunity for a close consideration of Ward’s diverse and experimental production that has pushed the boundaries of sculpture.”

Emerging alongside a notable group of African-American artists who rose to prominence in the 1990s, Nari Ward’s massive and tactile approach to art-making has expanded contemporary definitions of installation, assemblage, and site-specificity. His deft use of found objects imbues his work with a visceral relationship to history and the real world, allowing him to challenge viewers’ perceptions of familiar objects and experiences. Ward’s innovative approach has earned him numerous prestigious awards, including the Rome Prize and a Guggenheim Fellowship. The catalog for *Sun Splashed* will feature crucial scholarship on his singular practice, with essays by Naomi Beckwith, Ralph Lemon, Erica Moiah James, and Philippe Vergne.

**Highlights from Nari Ward: Sun Splashed include:**

- **Happy Smilers – Duty Free Shopping**, 1996—An immersive architectural installation that includes a real fire escape, found domestic objects, and an audio track
- **The Saviour**, 1996—A 10-foot tall sculpture that transforms a quotidian shopping cart through intricate assemblage
- **Glory**, 2004—A trenchant installation centered on a tanning bed made from oil barrels incised with the American flag
- **Naturalization Drawing Table**, 2004—An interactive installation based around Ward’s experiences of becoming a U.S. citizen; when activated, viewers will be able to fill out a facsimile of an INS naturalization form and have it notarized in exchange for an editioned set of drawings the artist made on the same forms
- **Mango Tourist**, 2011—A play on a form the artist has returned to in many works, the snowman, these larger than life sculptures transpose these frozen figures into tropical “tourists” made from foam, electrical detritus, and mango seeds
- **Homeland Sweet Homeland**, 2012—A densely textured work that transcribes the rights of citizens when interacting with police officers and prosecutors into a seemingly domestic wall
hanging that upon closer inspection contains all manners of collaged found elements including barbed wire

- *Canned Smiles*, 2013—Two tin cans, one labeled “Jamaican Smiles” and one labeled “Black Smiles,” which reference a seminal 1961 work of conceptual art by Italian artist Piero Manzoni and play with structures and limitations of ideas around national and racial identity

*Sun Splashed* will coincide with a solo show at PAMM for Ward’s former student, Firelei Báez, her first at a major museum. Báez’s exhibition, opening on October 15, will feature the emerging artist’s delicate and labor-intensive works on paper exploring issues of black culture, Afro-Caribbean folklore, and the complexities of diasporic experiences. Báez’s large-scale works illuminate the excluded historical narratives of women of color, while simultaneously placing her subjects in a futuristic setting where skin tone is no longer a sufficient signifier of race. A native of the Dominican Republic, her work reflects contradictions within the current discourse on race, class, and culture by carefully examining superficial variants that designate femininity, including body shape, hair texture, and clothing. The show will highlight new work by Báez and large-sized paintings created specifically for PAMM’s Rose Ellen Meyerhoff Greene and Gerald Greene Gallery. The catalogue for the exhibition will feature contributions by Naima Keith and Roxane Gay.

“Báez’s new works embody a provocative investigation on decorative elements, textiles, hair designs, and body ornaments that explores methods of resistance in black communities within the United States and the Caribbean. Her exceptional paintings show a profound appreciation of diasporic histories, as well as new contemporary approaches towards painting.” said María Elena Ortiz, the exhibition’s curator and an assistant curator at PAMM.

**Highlights from Firelei Báez: Bloodlines include:**

- *Man Without a Country (aka anthropophagist wading in the Artibonite River)*, 2014—A highly detailed work composed of over 144 small drawings that crafts parallels between obscure episodes of history and contemporary social struggles
- *Patterns of Resistance*, 2015—An arresting new series comprising blue and white drawings centered on a textile-pattern created by Báez, using different political references from social movements in the black diaspora in the Unites States and the Caribbean
- *Bloodlines*, 2015—A new series of portraits inspired by the *tignon*, a headdress which free women of color were obligated to use by law in 18th century New Orleans

**Organization and Support**

*Nari Ward: Sun Splashed* is organized by Pérez Art Museum Miami Associate Curator Diana Nawi. This exhibition is presented by Citi with generous support from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Additional support was received from the Funding Arts Network. Valuable support for the exhibition catalogue was provided by Galleria Continua, San Gimignano, Beijing, Les Moulins, and Havana, and Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong. Additional in-kind support provided by Gander & White.

*Firelei Báez: Bloodlines* is organized by Pérez Art Museum Miami Assistant Curator María Elena Ortiz. This exhibition is presented by BNY Mellon with additional support from Chloé.
About Pérez Art Museum Miami
Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM) promotes artistic expression and the exchange of ideas, advancing public knowledge and appreciation of art, architecture and design, and reflecting the diverse community of its pivotal geographic location at the crossroads of the Americas. A 29-year-old South Florida institution formerly known as Miami Art Museum (MAM), Pérez Art Museum Miami opened a new building, designed by world-renowned architects Herzog & de Meuron, in Downtown Miami's Museum Park on December 4, 2013. The facility is a state-of-the-art model for sustainable museum design and progressive programming and features 200,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor program space with flexible galleries; shaded outdoor verandas; a waterfront restaurant and bar; a museum shop; and an education center with a library, media lab and classroom spaces. For more information, please visit www.pamm.org, find us on Facebook (facebook.com/perezartmuseummiami), or follow us on Twitter (@pamm).

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