

ARTnews

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Reviews: National

Julio Valdez

Latin American Masters

Santa Monica

For New York—based Dominican painter Julio Valdez, the sea is open to endless interpretation, a place of universal significance and a source of personal associations. “New Water Paintings,” this show of 14 works, often featured silhouettes of bodies submerged in the ocean, sometimes surrounded by exotic fish and seaweed. Although the figures in these pieces have a haunting quality, they are clearly alive, seemingly lost in death-defying dreams.

Valdez’s water is ingeniously divided into cells of complex design rendered in subtly varying shades. The effect is of movement and depth. *Cayo levantado III* (2009—10), a large oil and ink on linen, is utterly mesmerizing, with the swirl and texture of the aqua water, despite the lack of figures. In *Mar rojo* (2006—7), the water is pink, with several figures and multihued blue capsules floating about. *El sueño de Joshua* (2008—9) depicts the artist’s son; his eyes are closed, and he is smiling vaguely while lost in reverie.

Hailing from an island nation, Valdez, illustrates the majesty and the seclusion of being surrounded by water. One of the shows standouts, *La maldita circunstancia* (2007), with its single blue figure immersed in a sea of cellular red, embodies this sense of intertwined beauty and isolation.

—Richard Chang



Julio Valdez, *Mar abierto II (Open Waters II)*, 2007, oil and mixed media on silk, styrene on wood panel 36" x 40". Latin American Masters.