

Scherezade

Paradise Redefined

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Edith Altschul Lehman wing



LEHMAN COLLEGE
ART GALLERY



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Paradise Redefined is a large-scale, multimedia installation by Dominican-born, New York-based artist Scherezade.

The installation is inspired by the hopes and dreams of the close-knit Dominican communities of New York City where Scherezade finds endless complexity in the process of assimilation—of forming roots here while maintaining connections to family and friends in the Dominican Republic. The installation examines the issue of what really defines home and national identity and it explores the expectations of finding a paradise on new soil with its promise for the future.

In Scherezade's installation soft sculptures resembling tents are lighted from within and serve as a metaphor for hearth and home as well as transience. Their outer surfaces offer a montage of images. Printed photographs of the city—the apartment buildings and storefronts of Washington Heights—are layered with graffiti-like drawings. Religious and cultural symbols are also incorporated into the imagery along with glimpses of tropical landscapes. The painted faces of children appear throughout. From within the sculptures, conversations in Spanish describe expectations of life in the United States along with the realities of life in New York. These voices mingle with sounds from the street—traffic, music and laughter, vendors selling wares. A very large video projection of waves breaking on a shore suggests both the island of Manhattan and that of the Dominican Republic. Sounds of the surf wash over the room. Gold inner tubes hang throughout the installation, alluding to the dangerous passage across the Mona Straits between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic and to the risks involved in making the journey. The Mona Straits are a point of entry in migration to the United States. The work evokes memories of another time and place and suggests the larger, universal saga of the immigrant experience. Preparatory studies accompany the installation.



Installation view

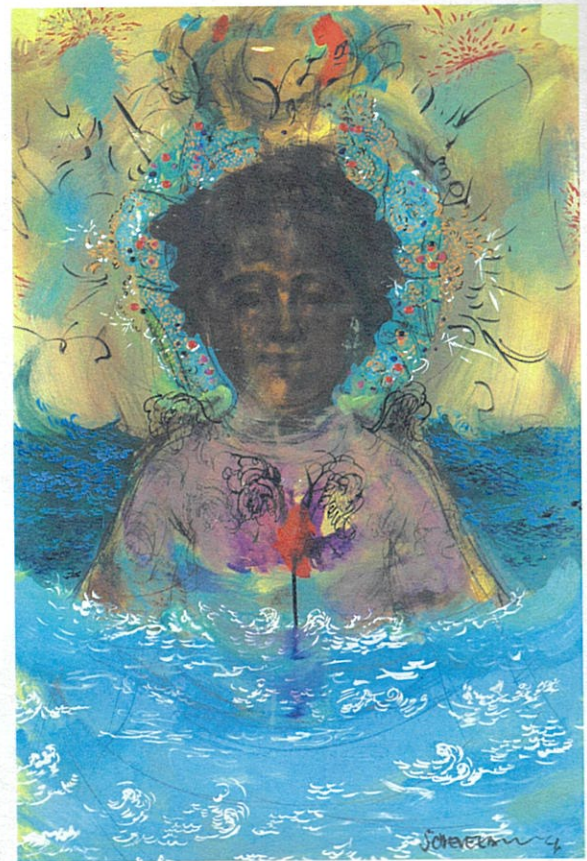


Era Gloriosa, 2006, video stills

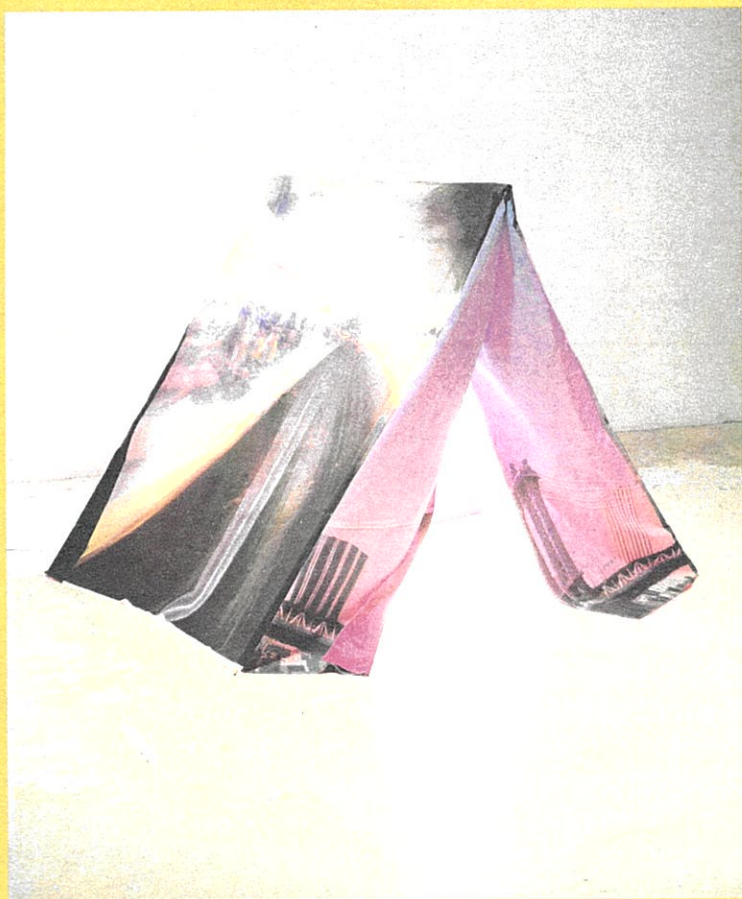


The exhibition also includes *Era Gloriosa*, an animated video that references merengue and island politics under Rafael Trujillo. Disarmingly child-like drawings underlie this serious comment on a dictatorship, its use of music to glorify a regime, and its disruption of a paradise.

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Island of Many Gods, 2006 charcoal, acrylic, glitter on paper



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