

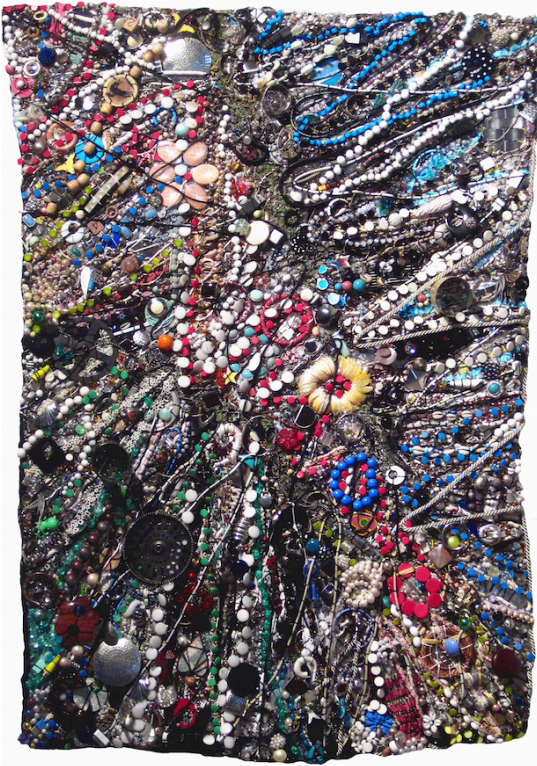
NEW ORLEANS ART INSIDER

INSIDE ART NEW ORLEANS

SHAWNE MAJOR AT CALLAN CONTEMPORARY

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By D. Eric Bookhardt



When Hew Locke, a British artist from the culturally Caribbean nation of Guyana in South America, first came to New Orleans to install his carnival-inspired work in Prospect.3, he didn't expect to feel at home here. He had heard about our carnival but didn't think a North American Mardi Gras could rival the Caribbean-style festivities of his native land. But when he saw all the beads dangling from trees all over town, he changed his mind and realized that our Mardi Gras must be the real deal after all. That same giddy, anarchic energy that we associate with random clusters of carnival beads also defines Shawne Major's densely abstract tapestries cobbled from beads, buttons,

baubles and trinkets stitched together into very precise yet random looking wall hangings. They resonate a certain vibratory contrast because even though abstraction has historically been associated with some of the most serious art and artists--and Major comes across as quite serious herself--her mixed media wall hangings are crafted from some of the most ephemeral objects in popular culture. So even though the New Iberia native's works are not explicitly about carnival, the parallels are so pronounced that they provide a sense of what abstract art might have looked like had it originated in south Louisiana.



Fascia, top, is especially carnivalesque because of the way its dense strands of beads seem to almost spin like a vortex of baubles, faux turquoise and plastic flowers in motion. Twin Flame is darker and denser and evokes a slower sort of movement as patterns of beads, buttons and purple faux pearls seem to almost ooze like an elegantly bejeweled lava flow. But Bower, left, suggests a vestment, perhaps the remains of a royal tunic from a lost civilization that communicated via coded sequences of beads. Others are shaped like animal pelts, but all of these fantastical concoctions exude a psychotropic joie de vivre, the inexplicable electricity of small, shimmering objects that were once in motion, and only recently came to rest.