

Rey Parlá
Organic Harmonies

1

“Life is a game, but only gamblers live fully through wreckless abandon.”

As spoken by Rostarr in Brooklyn, New York. September 24th, 2008.

As you turn the pages of this monograph the evidence is clear that Rostarr, the artist; the painter, has arrived. Rostarr now sheds all labels and groups as he matures profoundly with this first solo exhibition in Miami, Florida, titled: *Wreckless Abandon*, reckless by nature and adventurous by choice.

Early on in the 1990s, Rostarr broke through the New York City art scene with his signature trademarks, a guerrilla type of digital art and hand-made graphics. As he evolved from making iconography and logos his need for creative expressiveness led him to engage painting as a new medium with passionate energy.

Now a soloist, Rostarr is evermore a Renaissance-man who has often executed a series of works in several media: drawings, paintings; both in studio and live performance works, murals, sculpture, digital animation, prints, textiles, books, magazines, t-shirts, record covers, and prolific musical-video collaborations with *Truth and Soul Records*, an independent record label in Williamsburg, Brooklyn dedicated to releasing sweet soul, gritty funk, beautiful Latin music, and African inspired rhythms.

Yet, Rostarr keeps moving on. His moving image output doesn't stop there, with a recent screening of the video, *Kill the Ego* – an audio-visual collaboration with photographer and sound-artist Stephan Crasneanski, which will be presented in the Fall of 2009 at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, he begins to explore and experiment with new paths in the realm of video art. Even more so, Rostarr continues to surprise us as he removes his newly acquired and validated filmmaker's cap and easily trades it once again for a French artist's beret during a very recent visit to the Nam June Paik Art Center for a painting installation measuring 60ft wide by 30ft high that he completed there during an intense week period. This is reckless abandon in action, the art of no attachments reaching a crescendo to its full potential.

Indeed, the show, *Wreckless Abandon*, demonstrates the imaginative ways in which Rostarr has reached across his known creative persona to re-invent his art and himself today while keeping consistent with his themes for over a decade of painting. His totemic drawings and calligraphic aesthetic are created by hands of a virtuoso composer and cannot be mistaken or misread superficially as empty signs or taken to represent the present group-think cultural movement, to do so would be to label his need for artistic solitude; his individual creative right, with a defined term or phrase. His art here breaks with not just past dualities and dichotomies as usual, but transcends as the works embody the creative free spirit and love needed to surpass resistance of any kind. As Rostarr comments, “the notion of style is not always the answer to a problem.” This knowledge manages to help him cross the bridge from his old work because his visual harmonies are not limited by geometrical lines and spaces and are not defined by traditional formulaic patterns.

Further, Rostarr merges his super-flat hard-line graphic aesthetic with soft-splattering brush-stroke sensibilities, improvised and chaotic in nature. He lets go of the notion of ‘preciousness in art’ to loose his attachment with the work. Some of his more calligraphic Asiatic-Surrealist works explore the aura of connectedness between Nature, Buddhism, human psychology, identity, religion, mysticism, astrology and spirituality with subtle magical touches of Minimalism. Rostarr’s realizations in other media cannot be neglected as he is constantly producing connections between these different manners of creation. He is dancing from one medium to another in a playground of giants and inviting them in as well. Emulate his spirit, let your eyeballs dance, pick up the harmonies, dance with him again in the art of seeing.

Moreover, these new works evoke a return and a remembrance of an artist using traditional tools. The use of his hands can be felt as he physically and directly injects humanity into his geometrical and calligraphy inspired forms of the Middle East and Tibetan Shangri-La. Here we can now see how the hand strokes fluidly emerge through familiar beats and shapes as they rhythmically connect to a visual symphony in a much larger and sometimes figurative scale, a psychological narrative of people, their behavior, language and places. The symbolic visual thread runs through the mediums and techniques he employs. Rostarr's process deals with the transfer of creative energy and the gestural love for the existence of the line as he makes art without over doing the moment of discovery. This is how he achieves to document and express the different dimensions of various emotions and captures the moments of personal moods and those of others. Exercising this process is therapeutic for him as he observes the finished work.

Consequently, Rostarr is once again orchestrating his abstract polymorphic painting style known as 'Graphysics', a combination of Graphic Art and Quantum Physics (visual energy). His forms are free and automatic, but full of preconceived symbolism, type and iconography sometimes presented with seductive lines forming recognizable forms many a time not immediately apparent, while other works introduce a complex vocabulary and a raw synergy of styles exploding with visual tension, a dynamic of contrasting effects in this exhibition that makes the viewing experience hypnotic. This dichotomy contextualizes Rostarr's older works with the new as he goes forward as a painter.

Also, Rostarr's work has often been described in comparisons with a "Rorschach test," but his initial graphic vision has been informed by much more than just a dualistic special effect. There are other ways to interpret his work. Rostarr is at play when he draws with inspirations and influences of urban living in Brooklyn, but he is a globetrotting artist also absorbing the landscape of his travels.

Certainly, this exhibition is not post-graffiti, it's just Rostarr, it's anti-anxiety, call it organic harmonies of the self in re-discovery. My strongest suggestion is this; choose your own title for the show, take a risk. Abandon all you know and see anew. Walk away with a unique interpretation, juxtapose two dynamic words together or think of one word that has all the meaning you can put into it, but do not make a hasty superficial decision, let the works simmer in your mind's eye; taste them, savor the flavor like it's your last – let these words only be a guide post and invitation to seeing his works as a whole and individually, you are the seer, create your own personally journey. This is what Rostarr is inviting you to do as he uncovers his paintings, drawings, sculptures and video piece for a few hours of discovery with you.

All in all, *Wreckless Abandon* is a manifestation of the vitality and free musicality in Rostarr's life. His new paintings are natural and intimate gestures once fully informed by iconography and graphic art, but these are declarations of new ways of seeing for the artist as he climbs out of an old creative vortex into a universe of non-decorative obsessions, ambiguities, mystic truths and abstraction as he abandons all inhibitions through indefinite geometries and wrecklessness.

Rey Parlá is a writer, filmmaker and artist who lives in Brooklyn, New York. His films: Sporadic Germination, The Revolution of Super 8 Universe: A Self-portrait and Rumba Abstracta have screened at the Miami International Film Festival, The Cuban Alternative Film & Video Festival and The Anti Film Festival. His poetry, photography and video art have appeared in several exhibitions and publications as a member of the Inkheads. Most recently he interviewed critical theorist Michael Betancourt for Senses of Cinema and is a co-creator/documentary director of The New Grand Tour project with Suitman, Rostarr, Deanne Cheuk, Davi Russo and brother José Parlá.