

art ltd.

Ebony G. Patterson: "unearthing treez" at Monique Meloche Gallery

by James Yood

Nov 2015



Image: Ebony G. Patterson, *found among the reeds — dead treez*, 2015, Mixed media jacquard weave tapestry with handmade shoes, knitted leaves, and vintage jewelry, 78 x 135 inches. Photo: courtesy Monique Meloche Gallery

Bejeweled, beribboned, bedazzled—this was a remarkable exhibition from start to finish: pictorial, material, and iconographic ebullience with such an edge that it was riveting to experience. Ebony G. Patterson is one of those micro- and macro- practitioners, each work the result of enormous numbers of small decisions, an accretive glut of visual and tactile information that is so decoratively pleasing, so much fun to immerse oneself within its sumptuous sense of accelerated play, that its sheer exuberance would be enough. These are wall tapestries more than anything else, woven on a Jacquard loom and accompanied by so much more—crocheting, knitting, collage, brocade, and reams of faux vintage paste jewelry—that it all seems to risk pulling them

moniquemeloche

451 N Paulina Street, Chicago 60622
312 243 2129 moniquemeloche.com

off the wall. It's like some organic Rococo surfeit, suggestive of some dense matrix of overgrown nature from Patterson's native Jamaica, all looking like one of Nick Cave's more Baroque Soundsuits if they were unfurled from the body and laid flat, or perhaps akin to Miriam Schapiro or Robert Zakanitch's more ebullient and abstract essays in pattern and decoration.

While Patterson shares those artists' sense of sweeping but staccato color rhythms, a kind of up-tempo dancelike optical patter that invites visual pleasure, there's a fly to uncover in this ointment. In *found among the reeds—dead treez* (2015), in fact, in all the works in this *unearthing treez* series, almost hidden among the verdant overgrowth is the recumbent body of a dead man. It's an *Et in Arcadia Ego* moment of mortality and evil, that in these dense thickets of nature's fecundity bodies, suggestive of youngish black men, are dumped, victims perhaps of gang conflict or the drug trade. It's a sobering yet curiously not dissonant note, you know, from the earth we come, to the earth we return, and the bodies almost seem to become one with their environment, as if they are just so much more organic material, heading home. While this juxtaposition of figure and pattern might also suggest the work of Kehinde Wiley, here they are not two separate elements but made one: in Patterson's hands they are literally woven together.