

Brazilian Customs Snafu

March 23-May 4, 2013

Opening reception: Saturday, March 23rd 5 - 7 pm

It's a curious title for an exhibition, but, simply put, it reflects what happened: Because of a bureaucratic hold-up in his homeland, the arrival at the gallery of the works of Brazilian artist Alcides Pereira dos Santos (1932-2007), whose debut was planned for the Outsider Art Fair, was delayed.

Along with mixed-media paintings and drawings by fellow self-taught artists Charles A. A. Dellschau (1830-1923), Willem van Genk (1927-2005), and George Widener, together with offerings of Rigo 23, they make up a selection of bold, unusual works, each of which expresses a strong sense of focus and a singular personal vision. Like an homage to everything that rolls, sails or flies, they all depict real or imaginary kinds of vehicles or vessels, too.

"Brazilian Customs Snafu" brings together works in which each artist's sense of composition is particularly pronounced; often, their form is a large part of their rich content. In all of these works, the character of each artist's line—fine or bold, loose or tightly controlled—contributes decisively to his distinctive pictorial language.

Both Dellschau, a Houston-based butcher who made watercolor paintings, drawings and collages depicting fantasy flying machines, and van Genk, a Dutch orphan who suffered from behavioral problems but found satisfying, escapist expression in art, created images that are packed with color and precise visual information. On view in "Snafu": Dellschau's mixed-media-on-paper pictures of airborne vessels and van Genk's pictures of cars and trains buzzing along in European cities.

The Portuguese artist Rigo 23 (b. 1966) contributes ink-on-paper drawings of the Reaper drones the U.S. has used in Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Yemen. They resemble newspaper front pages and propaganda posters at the same time. In their emphatic headlines, the artist expresses his concern for the financial and human costs of this kind of high-tech, low-responsibility warfare. Rigo's drones are unmanned and 21st-century deadly while Dellschau's flying machines look like cozy Victorian carriages, yet they both possess comparable lines and structure. With nearly a hundred years separating their creation, the flying machines of Dellschau and Rigo symbolize the entire trajectory of the history of air travel, from the most primitive and idyllic, to the most highly sophisticated and lethal.

George Widener (b. 1962), the renowned savant based in North Carolina, is fascinated by natural and not-so-natural disasters, like the sinking of the *R.M.S. Titanic* just over a century ago. Widener, who is able to rapidly carry out complex mathematical calculations in his head involving the specific days of the week on which certain dates fell far in the past or will fall in the future, makes works on paper that bring his interests and skill together in neatly rendered compositions that are at once mysterious and sophisticated. He does so in his detail-rich images of the *Titanic* on view [here](#).

Born in Bahia in 1932, Brazilian farmer, Alcides Pereira dos Santos, discovered painting at the age of nineteen. Dos Santos brings bold outlines and a vivacious sense of color to his graphically inclined canvases. It's a punchy-pop palette straight from sun-soaked Brazil—to acrylic-on-canvas depictions of ships, hang-gliders and funky airplanes.

Dos Santos' paintings were included in Fondation Cartier's "Histoire de Voir" exhibition in Paris in 2012. George Widener's current solo exhibition "Secret Universe IV" will be on view at the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin through June 16, 2013. A new monograph on Charles Dellschau with texts by Thomas McEvilley, Roger Cardinal, James Brett, Randall Morris, Barbara Safarova and others, has been published by Marquand Books and has a release date of March 31, 2013.