

PABLO

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perfume bottles with the word "Paris" on each. And yes, she looks like a mixture of Lena Horne and Josephine Baker.

At 51 x 22 x 17 inches, "Lena Horns Devil" is an imposing figure.

Next to her: "Gypsy Angel" has a face

create a marionette: car grills, appliances, musical instruments, kitchen utensils, old battered signs, light bulbs, playing cards, bottle caps, scrap metal, birdcages, fabric remnants, toy wagons, office chairs.

After Hurricane Floyd, he created "Prince Miami," a sculpture made from a buoy and a Club Havana sign he'd found.

And at the von Liebig exhibit, there's Matilda Hippo, an imposing 96 x 36 x 24 inch marionette of a hippo. Her face is made with a wooden acoustic guitar

feet: delicate, fashionable black-and-white pointy shoes.

Cano's marionettes are sculptures, works of art. They're not playthings for kids, but playthings created by an artist who celebrates play as an essential element in making art. His work has elements of Surrealism and Dadaism in it. Like Picasso, Rauschenberg and Calder, Cano uses found objects in his works, picking up trash off the street, objects whose previous owners assumed had outlived their usefulness.

Museum of Contemporary Art in North Miami, is an epic extravaganza with puppets, musicians and dancers. Drawing #41 is a storyboard of the entire show, which tells the history of the world, from the Big Bang, Adam and Eve and dinosaurs to an encounter between UFOs and robots. (The show ends with all the puppets gathering on-stage singing an old Tin Pan Alley tune, "That's all; there isn't any more.")

Like his grandfather, who would draw self-portraits on restaurant menus and



COURTESY PHOTO

Cuban-American artist Pablo Cano created the marionettes that are on exhibit at the von Liebig Art Center in Naples through Oct. 28.

like an African mask, breasts created with clear Christmas ornaments, and a devil tail with red pointed tip.

Then there's "Fred Ascare," a lanky skeleton that's 24 x 11 x 4 inches. His legs are wooden spindles from a crib, his ribs the metal ice divider of an old-fashioned ice cube tray. Fred has clear eyes of glass or plastic, with little squares of clear glass for teeth. His nose is a tiny spiral of glass, his metal hands flat, the fingers long and wavy. Though his skull looks a little like 3cPO, he does, as his name implies, look like Fred Astaire.

Next to "Fred Ascare" hangs a marionette of "Fred Astaire." He's long and lean, decked out in classy black sequined tails and pants. His shoes are black patent leather, with white spats. At first glance, he looks like the emcee in "Cabaret," but then you notice the pointy nose, the receding hairline, and recognize the image of Fred Astaire, graceful even when still.

The quartet are part of Cano's "Musical Marionettes," all created with found objects and the detrius of everyday life. Cano gave a show at the von Liebig with the marionettes last Sunday, having them perform to the music of Jimmy Durante, Eddy Cantor and Connie Francis. The stage, created with silver cigarette foil, is known as the Florabel Theatre, named after Cano's friend Florabel Webster, who collected the cigarette foil for him. Fred Ascare sang "Makin' Whoopi" and Lena Horns Devil performed Cole Porter's "Let's Do It."

For those who missed the show, Cano's performing marionettes can be seen on video during the exhibit.

Cano, who lives in Little Havana in Miami, has been creating marionettes since childhood. Even at the age of 10, he'd put on elaborate shows with puppets he'd created from odds and ends scrounged from around the house.

In Cano's mind, anything can be used to



COURTESY PHOTO

An elephant marionette by Pablo Cano.

— the perfect shape for a hippo's head. Her stumpy arms and legs are 1 lb 12 oz Saltine cracker tins. Her body's an old farm sign, the fringe of her dress created from white cardboard with scarlet lettering. Cano cut up the cardboard so the lettering looks like abstract designs. And on Matilda's

They were wrong. In Cano's hands, they're transformed into art, objects of delight.

Exhibit attendees can gain insight into Cano's creative process by studying his numerous pen-and-ink workshop drawings for his multi-act show, "The Beginning." The show, commissioned by the



COURTESY PHOTO

Tea cup marionette by Pablo Cano.

placemats, Cano sketches all his workshop drawings on the backs of menus and restaurant placemats. Sometimes he draws on the front, and you can see that a particular menu's from the Versailles restaurant and bakery, "Serving Miami's most popular Cuban food for 30 years."

Since 1997, the Museum of Contemporary Art in North Miami has annually commissioned work from Cano. If you want to see more of Cano after seeing his work at the von Liebig, you can drive over to the other coast. and see "Pablo Cano: Viva Vaudeville" at MoCA, inspired by turn-of-the-century vaudeville shows. The exhibit, which runs from Oct. 20-Dec. 29, includes vaudeville magicians, comics, dancers, singers and acrobats. (Cano will also give performances at MoCA with the life-sized marionettes and rod puppets on Oct. 20, 21, 27, Nov. 10 and Dec. 1, 8, 9, 15, 22 and 29.) ■