



Firelei Báez: *Can I Pass?* Installation view from *Bloodlines*, Pérez Art Museum Miami, 2015. Courtesy Pérez Art Museum Miami.

Photo: Elman

## A Video Chat with Firelei Báez – Artist

By Elman + Perez-Trujillo

**F**irelei Báez was born, in 1981, in the Dominican Republic to Dominican and Haitian parents, and immigrated to the United States at the age of nine. She grew up in the Miami area where she continues to spend time, but currently lives and works in New York.

Firelei Báez makes large scale, intricate works on paper that are intrinsically indebted to a rigorous studio practice. Through a convergence of interest in anthropology, science fiction, black female subjectivity and women's work; her art explores the humor and fantasy involved in self-making within diasporic societies, which have an ability to live with cultural ambiguities and use them to build psychological and even metaphysical defenses against cultural invasions.

She received a B.F.A. from The Cooper Union's School of Art in 2004, participated in The Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2008, and later received an M.F.A. from Hunter College in 2010. She has held residencies at The Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Workspace, The Lower East Side Print Shop and The Bronx Museum's Artist in the Marketplace; and was a Fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Massachusetts.

Báez' work has been written about in *The New York Times*, *The LA Times*, *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *New American Paintings*, *The Huffington Post* and *Studio Museum Magazine*.

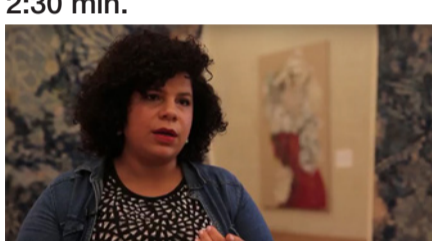
She was a recipient of the prestigious Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Award as well as the Jaque and Natasha Gelman Award in Painting.

From October 15, 2015 to March 6, 2016, Báez had an important solo exhibition at the Perez Art Museum Miami (PAMM) in Miami, Florida.

We interviewed Báez in the midst of her exhibition at PAMM. The videos below are organized by topic and run between 60 seconds and 3 minutes. Tap on any video. You must be connected to the Internet to view the videos.

### INTRODUCTION:

2:30 min.



### EXPOSURE TO BROAD INFLUENCES: 1:14 min.



*What was your earliest awareness of art?*

### STRONG DRIVE FOR ACHIEVEMENT 1:14 min.



*You attended Cooper Union and Hunter College. What did you learn that still informs you today?*

### VALUES LEARNING DISCIPLINE: 1:39 min.



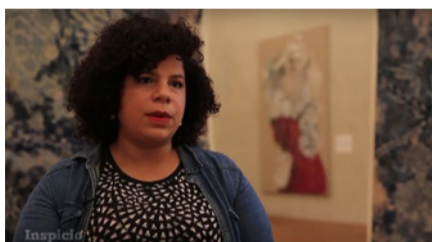
*What was it like for you to move from Miami to New York to attend Cooper Union?*

### CRITICAL THINKING: 1:29 min.



*What is your awareness of the Miami art community?*

### DEVELOP A VOICE: 1:37 min.



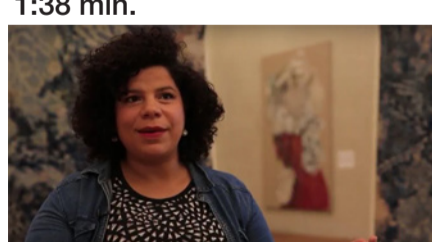
*When did you start incorporating political elements into your work and how did that evolve?*

### CRITICAL THINKING: 1:54 min.



*How does the historical discrimination you portray compare with your contemporary experiences?*

### INSIGHT & INSPIRATION: 1:38 min.



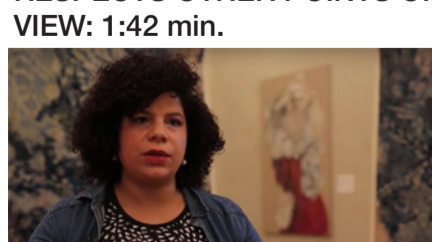
*Do you feel like you have an unlimited amount of experiential and political inspirations?*

### CRITICAL THINKING: 1:06 min.



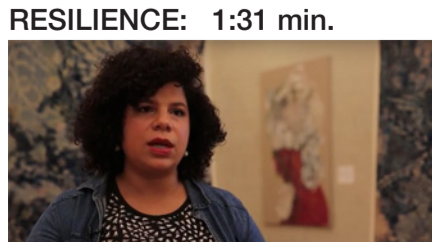
*Why are all the facial features blurred in many of your pieces, while the eyes are very defined?*

### RESPECTS OTHER POINTS OF VIEW: 1:42 min.



*How do critics influence you?*

### RESILIENCE: 1:31 min.



*What are the most important things to teach artists in college and graduate school?*