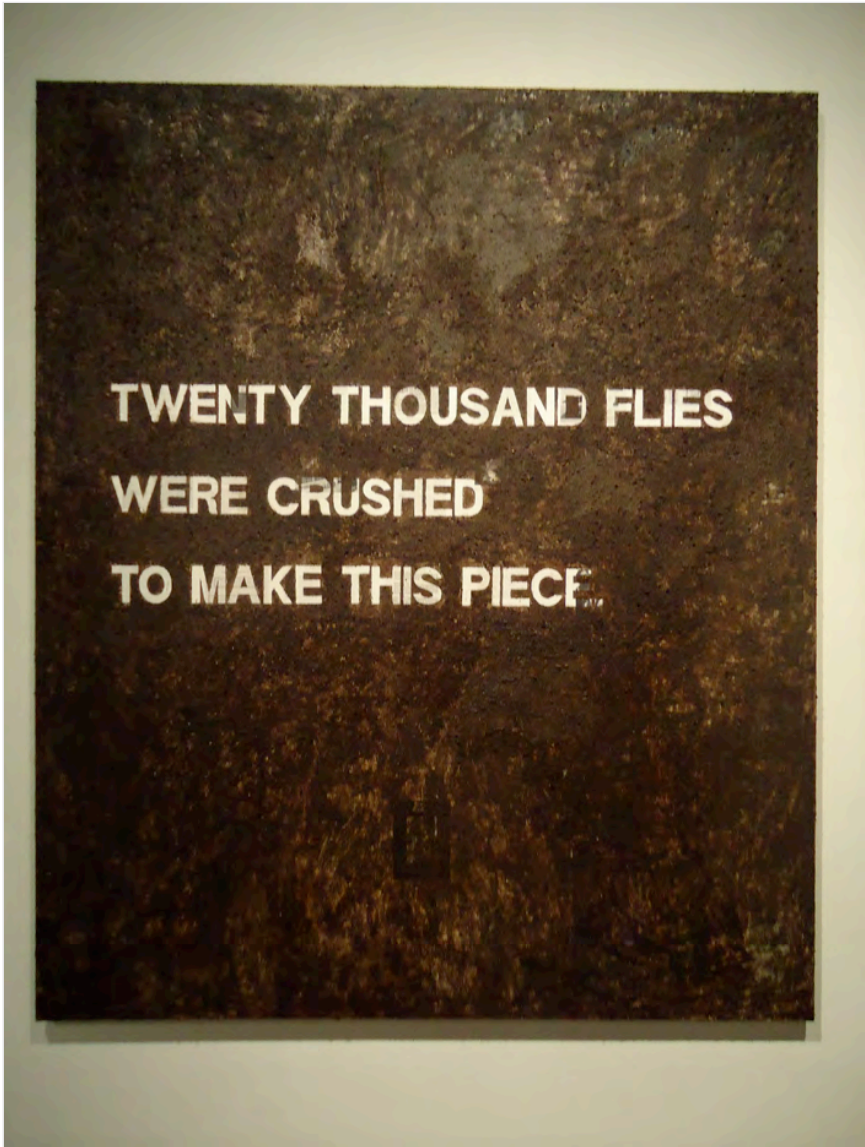


**For the love of life and insects**

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Fabian Peña, collage, crushed flies on canvas.

It's too simple and unfair to call Fabian Peña the bug man, but to many who have seen his remarkable and unique works, that is what jumps off the canvas — literally in some cases — and leaves a first impression. Nine collages, light boxes and sculptures from Peña now make up his first solo show, "Subliminal," at the [David Castillo Gallery](#).

Wondering just how much bug is involved in the Cuban-native's pieces? One huge, brownish canvas has large text stenciled out in white, which reads, "Twenty Thousand flies were crushed to make this piece." All of the other works list either "crushed flies" as a primary material or "cockroach wing fragments." One beautiful collage also incorporates smashed eggshells.



Peña, collage, eggshells, crushed flies on canvas.

This is in no way gimmicky. The mass of crushed flies becomes the paint, covering vague, blurred imagery from magazines and newspapers, some of which Peña collected in the U.S., in Mexico and in Cuba, many with historical meaning and allegory. There are storylines going on here, all somewhat “encased” by the bug — a reversal of roles. Children and scientists (OK, some big people, too) place the moth, butterfly or wasp inside frames and seal them, in order to study them, collect them, have fun with them. Here, the remnants of bug carcasses become the encasings, and we view fragments of *our* life within.

In the case of cockroach wings, one has to marvel at the detail that Peña employed to create, for instance, a skull. The brown wings have been cut into tiny, tiny squares and then create the new “skin” of this skull. Life is on a perpetual wheel here. As Peña says, insects such as cockroaches and flies are always around us and with us, in life and in the decay of death. His is a study of this cycle, but without being heavy-handed or too dark. The element of scientific play, the fascination with alternative materials, makes “Subliminal” an experiment as much as a commentary. This is life, he seems to say, in all its earthiness, its rawness and its inevitable end.

*Fabian Peña’s “Subliminal” runs through Nov. 5 at David Castillo Gallery, 2234 N.W. Second Ave., Miami; [www.davidcastillogallery.com](http://www.davidcastillogallery.com).*