

# ARTNEWS magazine

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## JULIO VALDEZ

**June Kelly**

**November 7 - December 9**

Born in the Dominican Republic, Julio Valdez grew up surrounded by water. The exhibition "Para Soñar el Sol" (In Order to Dream the Sun) examined eight of his recent oil paintings, all sharing the blue-green hues of the sea. In each, the artist swirls his pigments in dizzying patterns that create a hallucinatory impression of water's ever-changing form.

Though water pervaded each painting in the show, all of the works examined different aspects of the aquatic realm. *Celestún* (2014) focuses on the frenzied surface, with ridges of water catching glimpses of green leaves on a blue sky from a landscape just out of the frame. Undulating ripples distort colorful fish that swim through the shallow sea in *Peces Curiosos II* (2014). Humans, too, make a splash -- in *Dreaming Boy III* (2012), a reclining youth floats in dreamlike eddies, and in *Oficiante del Mar II* (2010-12) a man's shadow encounters the lurking silhouette of an octopus.

While the water in each work energetically danced in dazzling light, there was a subtle sense of isolation and uncertainty throughout --the sensation one has when experiencing the vastness of the ocean and the mystery of what lies in the deep. To the people of the Caribbean islands, water is a source of life, but it can also confine them to their shores.

STEFANIE WALDEK



*Celestún*, 2014, oil on linen, 70" x 38"