



Maria E. Piñeres, *Sittings*

18 April – 23 May 2015

Opening Reception: Saturday, April 18th, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

Walter Maciel Gallery is pleased to present *Sittings* by Los Angeles based artist Maria E. Piñeres marking her fourth solo exhibition with the gallery. Piñeres continues her use of traditional needlepoint but with a multitude of new intricate stitch patterns. The show includes work from three recent series: *Playland*, *Portraits* and *We Like Men*.

The works included from the series *Playland* references the now defunct 1980s' Times Square gaming arcade where Piñeres regularly hung out during her adolescence in New York. Nestled in perverse contrast with the then ubiquitous porn palaces, peep shows and sex shops, Playland stood as a shiny, visually stimulating beacon to youth and in keeping with the topic Piñeres combines images of groping rent boys and nude pin-up girls within the contextual backdrop of a pinball machine. Their sexuality can be seen in a playful and sentimental light void of shame and smut while preserving the common pinball themes of luck and chance. The Latin phrases that appear as machine names lend airs of levity and existentialism, alluding more to the real game of life than one of fantasy or play. Furthermore, the techniques used to make the varying stitched patterns are advanced in these works creating a mixture of textures and added shading to allow for the expansion of the image graphics.

In the series of *Portraits*, Piñeres features a range of subjects who did sittings for her while she stitched their portraits. Ranging from close friends to new acquaintances, each portrait has a distinction in its

formal presentation with different props and backgrounds used within interior and exterior environments. The strong palettes vary depending on the relationship and mood of the setting with a conscious decision being made on how to pose and where to crop each figure. For example, the piece entitled *Leo* depicts Piñeres's godson staring at the viewer with one eye masked behind his long bangs. He is wearing different camouflage patterned shirt and shorts seated on yet another camouflaged patterned chair. Shown cropped at the knees with one hand slung over the back of the chair, he has a spontaneous gesture teetering between that moment where he seems to be getting into a comfortable pose while at the same time contemplating his tolerance for staying put and yearning to run away.

The third series *We Like Men* Investigates the human form as cross hatched graphite and color pencil drawings. The bodies are specifically cropped to accentuate different parts of the male anatomy done as an exploration of the human form in relationship to the emotion of facial expression or body language. Some of the drawings show a view of a faces (or faces) with expressions that are indicative of the gesturing of the body while others simply depict a pair of opened legs or the back side of a body with the rear end shifted to the left. The body parts float across different colored camouflaged backgrounds relating to some of the imagery seen in the stitched works. A similar grouping of drawings shown on four panels compare the subject of flowers set within a similar camouflage backing.

Piñeres has shown throughout the US and most recently is included in the exhibition *Interface* at the Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art in New York. Other prominent shows include *Stitches* at the Armory Center for the Arts in Pasadena, *Pricked: Extreme Embroidery* at the Museum of Arts & Design in New York, *Celebrity* at the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art in Arizona and *Wild Girls* at Exit Art in New York. Her work is in many important private collections in the US and she has been included in publications such as The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, Time Out New York, The New Yorker, Time, The Village Voice and V.



***Suggestive Role Play* featuring the work of Carolyn Castaño, Monica Lundy, Linda Vallejo and Jenifer Yeouroukis**

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Walter Maciel Gallery is pleased to present *Suggestive Role Play* featuring the work of Carolyn Castaño, Monica Lundy, Linda Vallejo and Jenifer Yeouroukis, four female artists from the West Coast. As implied

by the title, the works in the exhibition convey notions of imitation, mockery, fantasy and identity within the context of art history, media, societal pressures and feminist issues.

Produced in conjunction with Gary Dauphin, Carolyn Castaño presents the video *El Reporte Femenil /The Female Report* spoofing TV news anchor Maria Elena Salinas who is perhaps the most recognized Latina journalist in the United States. In Castaño's version the newscaster is identified as Silviana Godoy reporting on women in Latin America in a long exhaustive monologue intercut with images of political figures, pop stars and revolutionaries. Godoy recounts the accomplishments and downfalls south of the border in particular portraits of revolutionary women. In a concurrent series these heroines are transformed into portraits using Castaño's signature crafty materials such as glitter and sequins made into light box paintings. Similarly, Linda Vallejo explores identity but she pokes fun at the art world and its absence of Latina culture. A perceptive visual artist, Vallejo began to notice a growing trend of kitschy materials ranging from mass produced trinkets as sculpture to wildly untamed images created from found objects used by conceptual artists as spontaneous assemblages without any reference to diversity. This experience allowed for a parallel shift in her art practice but with the awareness of her Mexican-American heritage by painting the objects brown and essentially "making them Mexican" thus extracting the subjects from their traditional Caucasian identity to redefine their personas and histories. The same concepts apply to the two dimensional reproductions of popular art historical paintings using new digital techniques that are also included in the show. The images in Castaño and Vallejo's work are hyper-political while at the same time emotional portals to a past remembered and sometimes forgotten. Both artists live and work in Los Angeles.

Bay Area artist Monica Lundy debuts *House of the Strange Women* named after a book found at the San Francisco Public Library that contained hundreds of mug shots of men and women arrested for prostitution and pimping between 1918 and 1938. Depicted as both small and large format drawings made of gouache, ink, charcoal, mica flakes and coffee grounds, the portraits of the criminals--or more aptly victims--are indicative of their harsh existence with bruises, scratches and scars scattered across the blank deadpan stares of each face. Lundy creates personal expression and sorrow with heavy gestures and smeared edges mimicking the horrific adventures of the past while emphasizing the inherent human beauty accentuated by sparkly chips of mica seen within the layers of pigment. The monotone dark palette gives the figures a historical context perhaps alluding to the spotlight of a Hollywood actress from a silent film of their era. The act of performance is explored literally by Portland based artist Jenifer Yeouroukis who uses herself as the subject portraying femininity and notions of being a woman. As noted by Yeouroukis, "the body carries the burden of truth. In urban society, as we resist the organic gesticulations of our natural physiques and bend to accommodate media driven trends and mores, the body becomes more of a site of struggle than a liberated truth." The show includes two works, *Trip Tych Tart* and *Feral*, that utilize theatre, film and dance conventions to construct identity both false and true, blurring the line between authentic existence and constructed performance with the body. In conclusion, all of the works included in the show acknowledge a consciousness of imitating, concealing or reconstructing identity in order to reveal a greater understanding of how gender, race and behavior can be misconceived.

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The gallery is conveniently located in the heart of the Culver City Art District and is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11am-6pm.

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