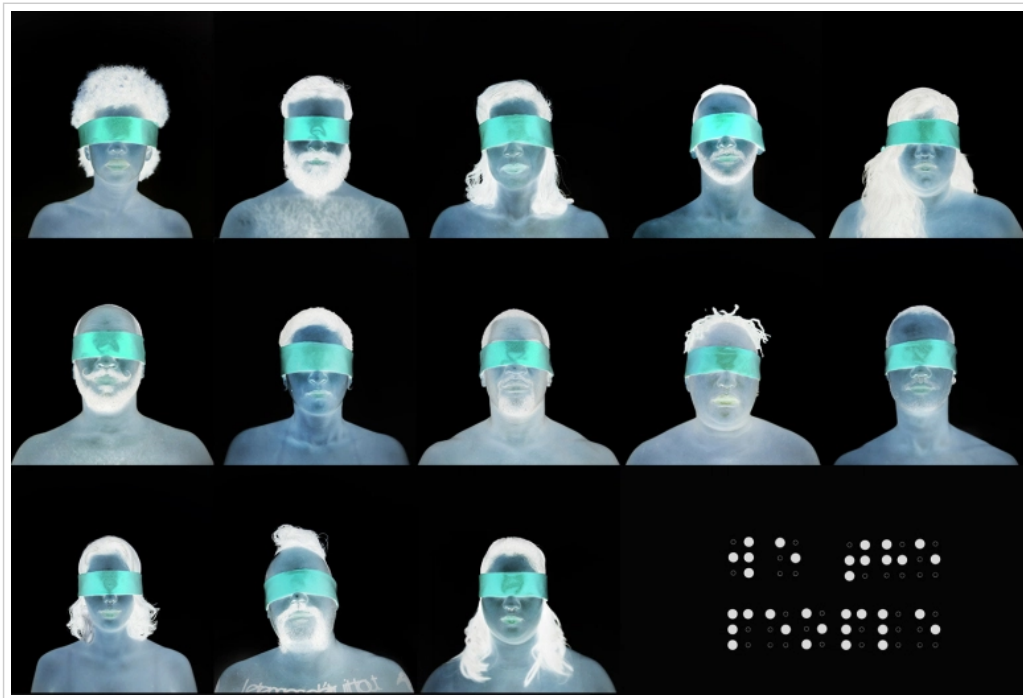


ART AND CAKE

A Contemporary Art Magazine with a Focus on the Los Angeles Art Scene

Deconstructing Liberty: A Destiny Manifested

Author / August 27, 2017



Luiza Prado. "We The People" 2016, Photography installation. Photo Credits: Luiza Prado

Deconstructing Liberty: A Destiny Manifested

at Muzeo Museum and Cultural Center, Anaheim

by Liz Goldner

Through October 15th

As one of the first "Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA" (Latin American & Latino Art in LA) exhibitions to open, *Deconstructing Liberty* presents a forthright, proactive perspective with a goal to, "question ideas traditionally associated with American liberty such as patriotism, community, citizenship, the pursuit of happiness, freedom, equal rights, and activism, as they resonate in forms of collective identity across the globe," explains curator Marisa Caichiolo. Formerly from Argentina, residing in Los Angeles, she mounts Latin themed exhibitions in disparate parts of the globe. As one of her more powerful shows, this one addresses the subversion of liberty in Latin American countries and the American territory of Puerto Rico.

As a further nod to the elusive pursuit of liberty by Latinos living in the U.S., work by Los Angeles artist Linda Vallejo is included in the exhibition. Her *Justice* near the entrance, a brown-skinned statue of liberty, is a voluptuous model, minus the crown, blindfolded, holding a spear in one hand and unbalanced scales in the other. *Justice* represents an in-your-face statement about the unfair condition many Latinos face in the U.S., whether they are long-time citizens or not.



Honduran born Leonardo Gonzalez's *Cabbage and Kings* is a humorous, poignant installation centered on two videos displaying workers from third world countries, harvesting and shipping bananas to wealthier countries. The break-through *Banana Boat Song* (1956) by Harry Belafonte is broadcast from the videos, while several bunches of bananas hang over and alongside them. Yet the uplifting tune of the Belafonte song belies—and even sardonically enhances—its deeper message about unjust wages, unfair working conditions and the exploitative practice of laborers transporting goods from the Caribbean to other lands; while the accompanying videos further emphasize this disparity.

The most blatant piece addressing the plight of refugees is *Deep Impact*, a sculpted globe drawing attention to our planet's imperiled immigration borders, by Norton Maza from Chile. As the globe turns, its various areas successively light up and even appear to be on fire, with each lighted place indicating a country or region where immigration is at risk. On a deeper level, the fiery globe is a metaphor for our endangered planet, reminding us of climate change, which profoundly affects third-world countries.

Here also is *Exodus* by Mexican Betsabee Romero, an installation of recycled, artistically engraved tires, alongside a large photo of a caravan of cars, presumably inhabited by people fleeing their country: yet these small cars are nearly entirely immersed in mud and unable to move.



Continuing the theme of endangered immigration is an installation by Cuban performance artist Carlos Martiel. His two photographs and one video in *Cauce/Riverbed* depict his life-size naked body, lying in the mud: it alludes to the many challenges facing immigrants with poor education and marginal English who move to California and to the larger U.S., while expecting better lives.

Especially provocative is Cuban Angel Ricardo Ricardo Rios's *La Flor mas Bella del Ejido* painting, covering two walls. Using only his hands and body to paint onto the large canvas, he creates an abstract work with compulsive repetitions suggesting flower and plant life, and seemingly referring to the scourge of addiction that pervades his country—it is also evocative of Jean-Michel Basquiat's more obsessive paintings.

Deconstructing Liberty: A Destiny Manifested | ART AND CAKE

The conceptual *Talking Head Transmitters* by Chilean Eugenia Vargas Pereira is a photo of the artist inundated with numerous audio headsets, along with wires hanging all over her head and body. The artwork accompanied by an actual broadcasting studio is, according to the wall label, “a space to promote spontaneous exchange among visitors, artists, school children and to all of those who would like to communicate, reflect, protest, play, sing, dance, and most of all, to get to know the people who inhabit Anaheim through the radio waves.” Indeed, *Deconstructing Liberty*—as one of more than 70 “Pacific Standard Time” exhibitions to inhabit SoCal’s museums and galleries into 2018—is opening up channels of communication, while addressing the heritage, influence and difficulties of Latinos in their own countries and in California.

