

FORT GANSEVOORT ARTILLERY



Patrick Martinez in his studio. 2018. Photo by The Art Minion.

Patrick Martinez: Building a Bridge

by Bianca Collins

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Installation shot, Patrick Martinez: Remembering to Forget. Charlie James Gallery. Photo by The Art Minion.

“Freedom Cannot Wait”. “Deport ICE”. “Para Todos Todo, Nada Para Nosotros”. “Everything for Everyone, Nothing For Ourselves”.

These are not slogans pulled from defiant posters in one of many protests happening regularly across the United States, as American society becomes even more divided between the haves and have nots; those who speak English, and those who do not. These phrases are taken from recent neon works by Los Angeles artist Patrick Martinez, the up-and-comer whose name is becoming harder and harder to dismiss.

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L: Installation shot, Patrick Martinez' work in the pop-up exhibition Beyond the Streets. R: Installation shot, Patrick Martinez: Remembering to Forget. Charlie James Gallery. Both 2018. Photos by The Art Minion.

"People say to me, 'You're making POC [Person of Color]-type work — it's not even that. America has a problem with me being who I am. So, this is just a response — 'Hey, you guys are trippin'.' A lot of people get scared because it's like, 'Oh, this guy can't be *that* big of an idiot because he made this piece of art and it's in this gallery...' And I kind of like that."

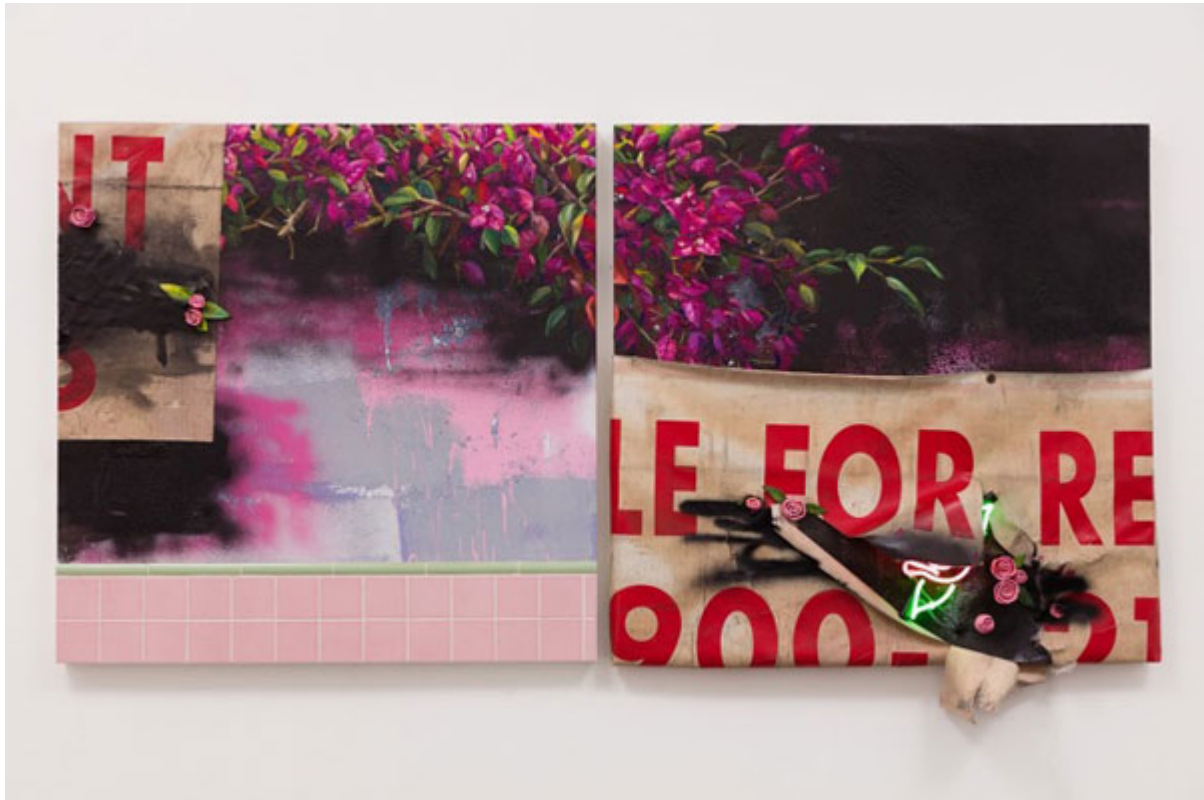
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L: Patrick Martinez gives a walk-through of his work “Nothing Is Up But the Rent” (2018) in the exhibition “Here” at Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery. R: Patrick Martinez. Where Does Your Auntie Live? (Temple Street). 2018. Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery. Photos by The Art Minion. Martinez, who is Native American, Mexican and Filipino, has been making waves with his politically charged artworks that are occupying space in important galleries in Los Angeles (Charlie James Gallery and Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery) and New York (Fort Gansevoort , opening March 2019), and must-see pop-up exhibitions, such as 2018’s *Beyond the Streets* in Downtown Los Angeles.

His art, rendered in neon, found objects, stucco and paint, recalls the experience of city life in East LA, building a bridge between urban minority communities and the fine art world through the simple act of representation. Martinez understands the power of inclusion to ignite engagement, saying, “My work helps people to feel more welcome [in a fine art space] – more proud of where they live.”

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Patrick Martinez. Landscape for Lease (Diptych). 2017. Photo courtesy Patrick Martinez.

Ironically, it was after Martinez was formally trained as a painter that he learned to appreciate the “lack of formula” in the aesthetic of the metropolis around him. He began to hone in on the push and pull between those who illegally add to the landscape with graffiti and makeshift memorials, and those who are hired to abate such blights upon the city.

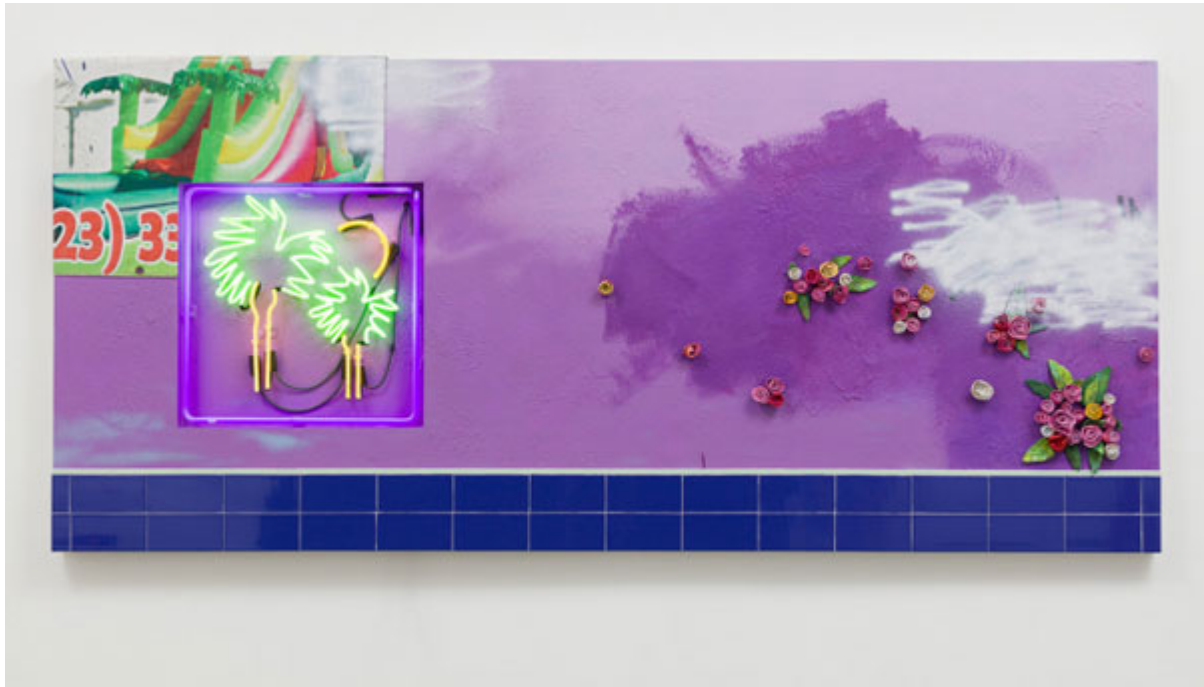
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Patrick Martinez. Remembering to Forget. 2018. Photo courtesy Patrick Martinez.

Crafted in stucco, ceramic tiles, spray paint and found objects, his Wall works seem to have been pulled directly from the gritty streets of Los Angeles, a “combined landscape” of different walls, colors and textures in neighborhoods across the city.

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Patrick Martinez. Los Angeles Landscape (Echo Park). 2017. Photo courtesy Patrick Martinez.

While Martinez' neon signs "remix advertising" to act as calls to action to defy the status quo of hot-button issues like immigration and race relations, his Wall works are a more subtle subversion; an attempt to close the gap created over centuries of institutional prejudice between the fine art world and minority communities.

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Patrick Martinez in his studio with his cake portrait of Angela Davis, "If They Come Morning (Angela Davis)". Photo by The Art Minion.

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Despite recent progress, artistic representation of communities made by members of those communities are few and far between in fine art exhibitions. This needs to change, as studies have shown that representation is a key catalyst for empathy, inspiration, engagement and ultimately, paradigm shifts.

Martinez muses, “No wonder people feel excluded [from the art world]. There’s no commonality. I always have been preoccupied with inclusion. Even with parties, I wanted to give everyone the option to come. I knew from a very young age being represented... was important.”



Patrick Martinez. A Red Velvet Cake for a Native Son (James Baldwin). 2018. Photo courtesy Patrick Martinez.

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Enter Martinez' newest body of work: portraits on sculptures made to look like birthday sheet cakes, of activists who have created a new narrative for America – who are not invisible, but under the radar of our zeitgeist. The usual suspects are present: Angela Davis, The Black Panthers, Malcolm X, James Baldwin. But, lesser known agents for change are also included in the lot – Larry Itliong, Subcomandante Marcos and Sitting Bull – promising to ignite an important “learn moment” for the otherwise educated folks who make gallery hopping a part of their regular routine.

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Patrick Martinez. ¡Ya Basta! Tres Leches Cake (Subcomandante Marcos). 2018. Photo courtesy Patrick Martinez.

Martinez sees populating a fine art gallery with portraits of such rebels as an act of infiltration. “The art gets into the gallery, and conversation and awareness moves forward from there. If it gets into a [museum] collection, the visibility is cemented. People will wonder, ‘Why?’ There’s an importance with portraiture. These questions will come up.”



Patrick Martinez. Chocolate Cake for the Black Panther Party. 2018. Photo courtesy Patrick Martinez.

His new series of Cake works will be installed with a nod to an urban bakery and exhibited for the first time on March 7 during Armory Week at Fort Gansevoort, New York’s edgy new gallery space in the Meatpacking District, alongside his Neon and Wall works.

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Patrick Martinez in his studio. 2018. Photo by The Art Minion.

“My work is about equality. We all add to the fabric of history. My last name might be Martinez, but I know what I’m doing. I’m making dynamic art that has layers... I’m just trying to represent, you know?”

His new, playful, realistic Cake portraits are sure to create a buzz, as they portray subversive activists in a certain positive light (after all, a cake is made for a celebratory event). His work will hopefully also draw in passers-by who don’t often see much through a gallery window to which they can relate – a reason to celebrate, without a doubt.