

# FORT GANSEVOORT

## Take Two<sup>®</sup>

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SoCal artist uses Pee-Chee style to document police use of force

By Austin Cross



Austin Cross and A Martínez | Take Two®

For people young and old, the name might bring back memories of pastel-colored portfolios and drawings of athletes in action. Students in the U.S. have toted them to class [since the mid-1960s](#).

Millennial and L.A.-based artist Patrick Martinez grew up with the folders, but when he got older, he decided to use the medium to portray another side of American life: controversial incidents of use of force by police officers.

He now replicates the folders on large wood panels; running and jumping sportsmen have been replaced by scenes all-too-familiar to media watchers: the choking death of Eric Garner, the shooting of Laquan McDonald and the arrest of Sandra Bland.

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For the Southern California native, art and activism go hand in hand.

Take Two's A. Martinez sat down with the artist recently in his downtown L.A. studio.

*(Transcript has been edited for clarity.)*

## Highlights

### **I want to start with the obvious question: Why Pee-Chee folders?**

I did the first one in 2005, and it was about taking these all-American scholastic items and introducing the fact that high schools and middle schools across America were being policed. Now, with all the stuff that's happening in America, I'm updating the

folders to make it more realistic in the times that we're living in, putting people's portraits and situations across the front and the back of the folder.

"Po-lice misconduct misprint 6" (lost colors series) acrylic on panel  
2016 PHOTO COURTESY OF PATRICK MARTINEZ / Charlie  
James Gallery



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**There's this uncomfortable juxtaposition in these works: on one hand, Pee-Chee folders are fun and innocent — they're for kids. But on one of them you show a college student arrested in her cap and gown while pushing for the Dream Act. On the same folder, there's a picture of the Texas pool party incident — the cop has his knee on a girl's back. Would you say the point is to make people uncomfortable?**

Sure. I think that's what some art can do — make you feel like you're questioning things that are going on. It's also to record these happenings. It can cement something in American history. We tend to learn different cultures through their art, so this is what I'm presenting in terms of our culture — this is what's happening right now in the time that we're living in. It's so much content to work with; it's incredible. I can just keep on doing these things. It's amazing.



A new piece in progress.



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Dallas Police Officers in the wake of the Dallas shooting. [Austin Cross/KPCC](#)



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**Isn't that sad? You can keep on creating these images — it's almost like you will never run out of things to paint.**

I think it's important to do it, but then it takes a lot out of you because you're winded on this stuff. I love to paint and draw, but it's just so much to talk about. You wish it could be a different situation, but this is what we're presented with, and we can't ignore it, and we can't put it underneath a rock. We have to deal with this, so this is how I'm dealing with it.

You try to give the benefit of the doubt, right? If some dude was a threat then, you know, you can't really knock that. But then, a lot of these people are just being targeted, whether it's a traffic stop or they thought he was someone.



Philando Castile in a new piece in progress. [Austin Cross/KPCC](#)



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PHOTO COURTESY OF PATRICK MARTINEZ / Charlie James Gallery



"All-American class of 2016" acrylic on panel 2016 PHOTO COURTESY OF PATRICK MARTINEZ / Charlie James Gallery

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I know some people might see this and say, "Okay, where are the images that aren't negative toward the police officers?" On the same work where you have the officer shooting at Alton Sterling, there's one to the left of the Dallas Police officers who were fired upon. It's not necessarily one-sided. There are two sides to everything you seemingly do.

These officers are obviously distraught and torn up. In this piece, I wanted to show how much violence can happen in one week in the United States. People are accusing cops of being insensitive, and I'm showing them in a sensitive situation where they're crying, or they're distraught, holding their heads or their mouths.



Dallas Police Officers in a new piece in progress. [Austin Cross/KPCC](#)

**What do you hope that younger people get out of this?**

I'd hope that people are paying attention. In America, we like to forget about things and push things aside. Like, "Oh, I'm fine, so you're fine." That's not necessarily the case. I'm trying to show in these paintings solidarity, that these things are happening, documenting that someone cares.

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Artist Patrick Martinez and Take Two's A Martinez at Patrick's art studio. [AUSTIN CROSS/KPCC](#)