

FORT GANSEVOORT

Patrick Martinez

That Which We Do Not See

Opening On:

Thursday, March 7, 6 – 8 PM

March 7 – April 20, 2019



“Everything that we see is a shadow cast by that which we do not see.”
– Martin Luther King, *The Measure of a Man*, 1958

Fort Gansevoort presents *That Which We Do Not See*, the first solo exhibition in New York City featuring new work by Los Angeles-based artist Patrick Martinez. The exhibition, opening on March 7th, is comprised of three bodies of work; cake paintings, Los Angeles “landscape paintings” and neon text pieces.

Martinez approaches his painting practice through a close observation of shadow and light, both literally and figuratively. Through formally painted portraits, Martinez sheds light on past and current civil rights leaders who would historically be left in the shadows. These portraits are found atop realistically depicted three-dimensional cakes, embodying the celebratory tone that Martinez wishes to portray. Through a study of the lack of diverse representation in historical portrait painting, a medium traditionally used to celebrate ones successes and wealth, Martinez was led to the portrait cake paintings. The cake acts as a globally and socio-economically understood medium of celebration, now featuring the faces of not only white historical figures but the faces of freedom fighters of all races. This series was first inspired by a video of Tupac’s last birthday, which included a cake frosted with his portrait that did not resemble him in the slightest. The cake paintings feature the likes of Angela Davis, James Baldwin, and Malcolm X, and include even lesser known freedom fighters such as Larry Itliong of the Philippines paying respect to Martinez’s mother’s birthplace. Martinez also works with the insignias of civil rights activist groups, such as the Black Panther Party in his piece titled *Chocolate Cake for the Black Panther Party*.

Rather than the presumed dark and pessimist tinge of such work, Martinez evokes the hope residing in the shadows. Two of Martinez’s cake subjects, bell hooks and Rebecca Solnit, influence this loving and hopeful approach to the conversation of the inclusion of people of color in the historical narrative of the United States. On the flip side, Martinez also uses the cakes as a medium for memorials to children found dead in the hands of American immigration officials. The contrast between the portraits and written names of these lost children is stark. American flag cake, titled *America’s Pie*, is nearly half eaten and acts as a transition between the two functions as both a celebratory symbol and one used in times of mourning.

The cake paintings are frosted thickly with distinct paint strokes, placing Martinez in conversation with the great cake painter Wayne Thiebaud, and are adorned with ceramic roses. This same attention to surface is also seen in Martinez’s landscape paintings. The landscape paintings act as time capsules, consisting of collaged-layers of the visual aspects of the ever-changing architectural landscape of Los Angeles, something Martinez has watched evolve for years having grown up in Los Angeles. Here, the ceramic roses originate from street memorials and bring the landscapes into a space of mourning and remembrance as lost pieces of the city themselves. However, at once, like the cakes, flowers are a symbol of celebration, again celebrating this duality, the shadows and the light. This body of work embodies the Los Angeles aesthetic, an increasingly more nostalgic one, but also communicates a nation-wide experience of loss in every big city.

The third body of work in the exhibition are the neon pieces. At times the neons can be found within the landscape paintings, creating a seamless transition between the three bodies of work. Through the neon pieces, Martinez is again illuminating the invisible, quite literally, this time through quotes. This includes the title piece, a portion of a quote by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. from his *The Measure of a Man*, 1958 speech. Each neon speaks of power, hate, truths, and freedom. These quotes are at once words of inspiration and forewarnings. The messages are communicated with the direct nature of a storefront sign, the type one might find in the window of a mom and pop bakery housing Martinez’s cakes.

Patrick Martinez was born in Pasadena, CA, in 1980. He received a BFA with honors from Art Center College of Design in 2005. His work has been exhibited throughout the US and internationally at venues including Vincent Price Art Museum, California African American Art Museum, LA Louver, Showroom MAMA, Providence College Galleries, Galerie Lelong & Co., SUR biennial, Chinese American Museum and The Studio Museum in Harlem. Martinez’s work is included in the public collections of Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), The George D. and Harriet W. Cornell Fine Arts Museum, Pizzuti Collection, and Museum of Latin American Art, California.

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