

SORRY FOR THE MESS

JUSTIN FAVELA & RAMIRO GOMEZ

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WALL TEXT | ENGLISH

People of color built Las Vegas; however, the monuments that commemorate their labor are almost nonexistent. From the days of the construction of the railroad, to the latest mega-casinos inaugurated on the Strip, the memory and monumentality of physical labor in Las Vegas has been erased in order to glorify the capital that sustains it. Justin Favela and Ramiro Gomez have built careers on the dignity, discipline, and persistence of labor as both a fleeting memory and undeniable reality. Both create art aiming to deconstruct the silences of history that suppress and undermine their own narratives.

In order to re-define the memory of labor beyond the constraints of history, Favela and Gomez step outside their comfort zone to immerse spectators in the nuances of the Las Vegas immigrant labor experience. *Sorry for the Mess* aims to transcend the physicality of the “monument” and face the personal, the familiar, and the uncanny in their experiences of growing up as children of immigrants in the United States.

The space is structured as a prose poem meant to offer a window into the artists’ personal histories with the city. This installation invites us to encounter a series of abstracted memories that seek to transcend history and time through an ephemeral and metaphysical space made out of cardboard and found objects. The traditional everlasting nature of the historic monument is here subverted into a dream sequence, whose resilience will linger in the memory of its visitors and not in the permanency of its physicality.

WALL TEXT | SPANISH

Las Vegas fue construida por gente de color; sin embargo, pocos son los monumentos que conmemoran su esfuerzo. Desde los días de la construcción del ferrocarril, hasta la inauguración de los últimos megacasinos en el Strip, la memoria y monumentalidad de la labor física en Las Vegas se han borrado para glorificar en su lugar el capital con que se edificó esta ciudad. Justin Favela y Ramiro Gómez han forjado sus carreras a partir de la dignidad, la disciplina y la persistencia del trabajo visto como un recuerdo fugaz y una realidad innegable. Ambos crean arte con el objetivo de deconstruir los silencios de la historia que suprimen y desvirtúan sus propias narrativas.

Para redefinir la memoria del trabajo más allá de las limitaciones de la historia, Favela y Gómez se salen de lo acostumbrado para sumergir a los espectadores en los matices de la experiencia laboral de los inmigrantes en Las Vegas. *Sorry for the Mess (Disculpen el desorden)* pretende trascender la fisicalidad del "monumento" al afrontar lo personal, lo familiar y lo insólito de sus experiencias como hijos de inmigrantes que han crecido en los Estados Unidos.

El espacio está estructurado como un poema en prosa con el fin de ofrecer una ventana a las historias personales de los artistas en la ciudad. Esta instalación nos invita a descubrir una serie de recuerdos abstractos que buscan trascender la historia y el tiempo a través de un espacio efímero y metafísico hecho de cartón y objetos encontrados. La perpetuidad del monumento histórico se subvierte aquí hasta convertirse en una secuencia onírica, cuya resiliencia perdurará en la memoria de sus visitantes y no en la permanencia de su fisicalidad.

EMMANUEL ORTEGA RODRÍGUEZ, PhD

Emmanuel Ortega Rodríguez (PhD, Art History, University of New Mexico) is a curator, podcaster and a Visiting Professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Ortega has lectured nationally and internationally on the topics of images of autos-de-fe, nineteenth-century Mexican landscape painting, and visual representations of the New Mexico Pueblo peoples in Novohispanic Franciscans martyr paintings. An essay titled "Hagiographical Misery and the Liminal Witness: Novohispanic Franciscan Martyr Portraits and the Politics of Imperial Expansion," was published by Brill in the spring of 2018.

THE ARTISTS

JUSTIN FAVELA

Known for large-scale installations and sculptures that manifest his interactions with American pop culture and the Latinx experience, Justin Favela has exhibited his work both internationally and across the United States. His installations have been commissioned by the Denver Art Museum in Colorado and the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Arkansas. His latest major project, *Recuérdame*, will be on view in New York City at the Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art & Storytelling until September 8th, 2019. Favela hosts two culture-oriented podcasts, *Latinos Who Lunch* and *The Art People Podcast*.

RAMIRO GOMEZ

Ramiro Gomez uses the visibility of contemporary painting and sculpture to distinguish the workers whose everyday labor goes unrecognized by the society they serve. He focuses in particular on the lives of migrants in Los Angeles. Gomez's work has been exhibited in institutions across the United States, among them the Smithsonian Portrait Museum, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the Denver Art Museum, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. A participant in the 2017 Whitney Biennial, he featured in three exhibitions across the Getty's Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA initiative, including LACMA's important international group show, *Home – So Different, So Appealing*.

