



Being Human



Living With It



The Sharp Edge



Fiction by Joe Kane



Sitting on Nostalgia

//AUSTIN //FEATURED //VISUAL ARTS

## ‘Set Aside For’

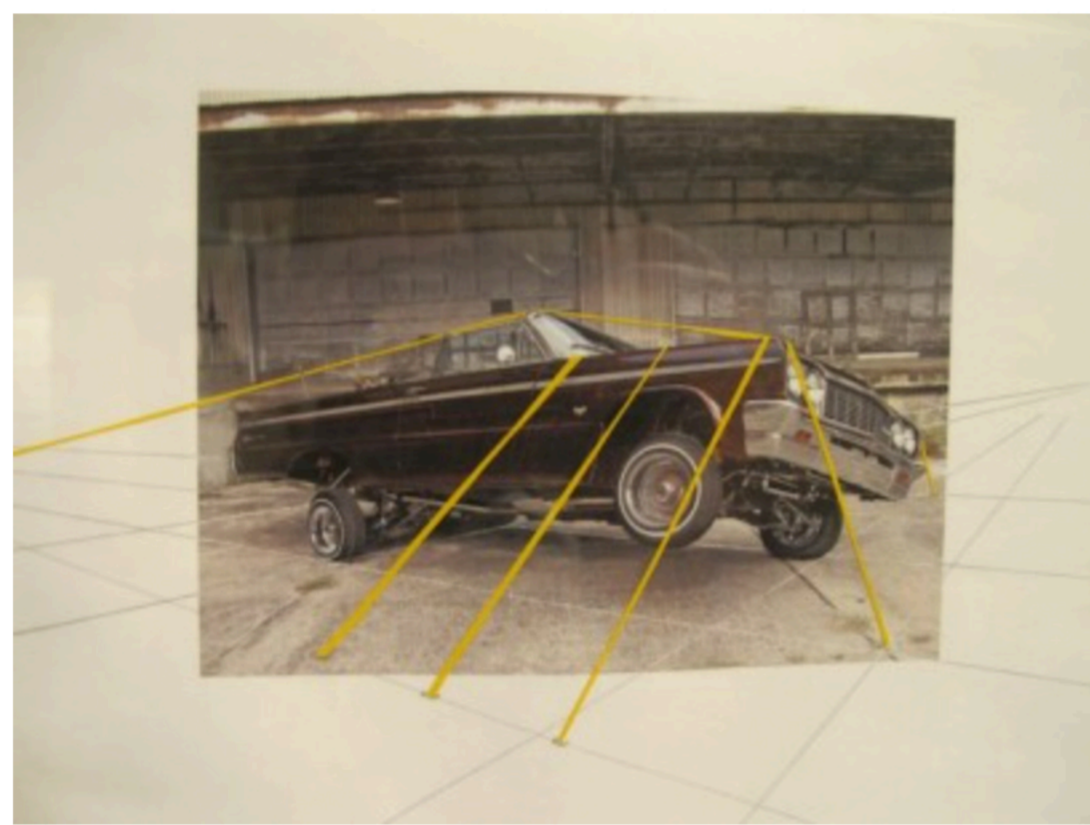
by **Matthew Irwin** on August 7, 2013



“Rook,” Raul Gonzalez, *found object, latex, spray paint*

“Work.” It refers to the artistic process as much as it does to the outcome. But seldom when we talk about work in art do we mean labor. Labor involves doing something menial for money. Labor is for *others*.

On the other hand, if the artists performing the work happen to be young Latinos, we would understand and possibly even expect a labor theme to develop. In the US, they are still others. They are Latinos; not Mexicans, not Argentines or Colombians. Certainly not Americans. And they perform labor. I’m not sure it works in their favor to set aside a show, let alone a venue, for their work.



“It Wasn’t Meant To Be, Jorge Guzman,” Robert Jackson Harrington, *Drawing on Paper, 2013*

categorize art for the convenience of our own understanding (and marketability), shows delineated by ethnicity categorize the artists, as well. A show dedicated to young Latinos, in a Mexican art center, might be necessary to illuminate voids in US culture, but, when relied on too heavily (18 years), does such a theme limit an artist’s ability to expand outside that context?

Take, for instance, my friend Cannupa Hanska. He’s a member of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation, who grew up going to the Indian Market in Santa Fe with his mother. Her sculptures, paintings and jewelry paid the bills.

Today, Cannupa is an immensely talented sculptor with a family of his own. His work is Contemporary in the historical sense and could fit easily in the pages of *Juxtapoz* magazine, but it also addresses issues related to his Native heritage (though he also identifies as Norwegian, German, French and Italian). If the [venue showcasing his work](#) isn’t specifically dedicated to that genre of work, the theme of the exhibition often is. He says that these spaces are “set aside for” Natives, and he values the opportunities to show his work, but also feels trapped by the context.



“Keep Up!,” Cannupa Hanska, *Ceramic, Mixed Media, 2012*

The career of *Con/Juntos* curator Michael Anthony Garcia might offer a slightly different view. After appearing in *YLA 11*, he formed the collective Los Outsiders with two other participants, Hector Hernandez and Salvador Castillo, in response to a closed gallery system. They had to go to Mexico for their first exhibitions, but, according to *The Austin Chronicle*, they began to establish themselves in Austin through art criticism, offering parodied reviews of local shows. “They wanted to create a critical voice that they felt was necessary to encourage growth in younger artists,” the story reads.



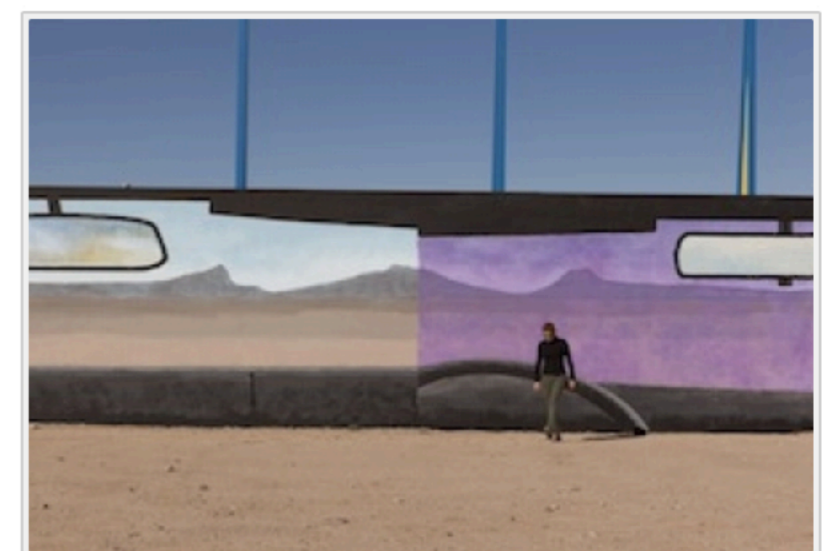
“Unknown Sources,” Ricardo Paniagua, *laquer, magnetic wood veneer panels, and steel, 2012*

Mexic-Arte show.

Garcia’s success is clearly the outcome of a lot of hard work, and his art does contain elements of working-class labor (sowing, construction), but I doubt we’d still say that he’s been laboring.

Hear me out. Lately I’ve been contemplating the notion that themed exhibitions bind artists to certain parameters rather than creating a space for them to freely explore their own ideas. (Dorota Bizcel for [Glasstire.com](#) demonstrates how at least two artists refused the assignment to work *With/Together*). Whereas any themed exhibition might adequately describe our tendency to

In other words, Los Outsiders changed the context by challenging the system that held them out and by focusing on young artists, not just young *Latino* artists. As a result, Garcia has enjoyed a bout of wider recognition, showing at City Hall People’s Gallery and the apartment gallery Red Space. *The Chronicle* even named him “[Your Austin Artist](#)” in its story commemorating the current



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