HABLAMOS JUNTOS together we speak

Yo Soy Amanda Miguel, inkjet print, 44" x 70" 2018

JORGE GOMEZ GONZALEZ

Contemporary Latinx Broadsides Project

Museo Eduardo Carrillo & Young Writers Program

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No Soy Huicho, Soy Jorge, inkjet print, 44" x 70" 2018

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El Luchador, inkjet print, 44" x 70" 2017

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Jorge Gomez Gonzalez

https://www.jorge-gomez-gonzalez.com/

Jorge Gomez-Gonzalez is a Chicano Gay Photographer, born and raised in Oakland, California. Gomez-Gonzalez' photography ranges from social documentation in the United States to documentation of communities in developing countries like Haiti, Malawi and Nicaragua to his parent's hometown in Techaluta de Montenegro, Jalisco Mexico. His current project, Mi Vida Con Maquillaje, involves taking self-portraits with makeup and staging himself as different personas.

Let's get personal. Tell us about your artwork and the importance of Latino/a artists as role-models. What education and skills are needed for an art career?

My cultural heritage is ... Chicano• I was encouraged in High School and by my partner Nick. My mentors in college for photography have been Karolina Karlic and Norman Locks. I began to work with Tracy Garcia from the Cantu Queer Center at UCSC which changed how I talked about my work. She understood right away how I felt because she had a very similar upbringing as a queer brown person. It took 5 years for me to have this connection, and it should be something everyone has instantly when they go to college and in life.

What were/are your major influences?
I grew up with a huge connection to my culture, I spent a lot of time in Mexico as a kid and in the United States my family made sure to bring their cultural and religious traditions with them. I draw a lot of influence from the intersection of being a gay Mexican male, and learning what that means to my community and to myself.

How old were you when you started your artwork?
I knew I was an artist when I realized I was good at expressing myself through art in middle school, but it was not until 2017 when I actually started to consider myself an artist. I gained the confidence to know that my work was not just going to look pretty on a wall somewhere but it was actually saying something political and critiquing our society and culture.

What was the reason you started creating art?
My art has always been motivated by emotions and music. Growing up gay I always felt

isolated, misunderstood and alone, and with that came so many emotions.. When I started my undergraduate studies I put a hold on my artistic expressions and focused on academics, but I became so miserable and had nodriving force to motivate me. That was until my partner told me I needed to get an art degree, and since then I haven't stopped creating, I am at my happiest now.

I would tell young artists.. . Do the art that makes you happy.There is someone in the world who will get your art. Listen to critiques, not just of your work but those of others, those are some of the most important lessons you can apply to your work.

What leadership skill have the arts cultivated in you?
The arts have helped me learn to take myself seriously as an artist and be confident in my artwork. I also learned to take how people view my artwork into my own hands. I often have had people come up to me and tell me my work reminds them of other artists' work. I know I have no power over who I am being compared to, but I have the power to shift the conversations. I can say "I think my work is different because..." or " I agree but...", which is important because I can shift the conversation to a direction I want and have power over the way my work is discussed. I learned that I am tired of being compared to these prominent white artists and I would prefer to bring attention to other queer brown artist like Laura Aguilar, Zanele Muholi, and it's perfectly fine for me to want that.

When did you make your first sale of your artwork?
That has been the hardest part about being an artist, I am currently working on putting a price to my work, and it feels great to say my work is worth this much and say it's a fair price.

Looking at the broader picture, can you help students understand how you developed in the areas of visualliteracy, critical thinking, and creativity? Your story will inspire them.

Describe your art medium.
I mainly work with photography but I like to synthesize all my prior mediums to inform my current work. Most of my work right now involves makeup, costumes, set designs and so on. I have been printing on Inkjet fabrics and it's been pretty amazing what I've been able to do, I made three pillows the other day with my artwork on them.

I made this piece by (process)...
Both of my pieces were done in the light and photography studio. I started by doing so

much research on Latinx icons and TV personalities I grew up with. Next I create sketches and write why the character was important for me. After that, I spend time looking for the perfect clothing and accessories for each persona. The day of the photoshoot after everything was set up I would apply my makeup and have friends help me take pictures while I directed them on how I wanted the picture, at what angles, basically my vision. Then I spent a good amount of time on post production.

What is the intent of the work? How is your art a way to tell your story?
The intent of my work is to create more representation for the brown queer population which I feel is lacking in our society, especially in the arts. I am not scared to take inspiration from being a Gay, Mexican (Chicano) male, the representation with those intersectionalities is so small. I want people to be familiar with my story and where I come from. The only other brown male queer artist I know is Felix Gonzalez-Torres, but I don't know about any brown male queer photographers who are well known. If there are any big names out there, people are not talking about them.

Your artwork creates a dialogue with the student as he/she relates to and interacts with your work. How could a viewer look more closely at the details of your work? How could he/she be moreintimately involved with your artwork?
The best way for someone to interact with my work is by looking at the title of my work, and imagining the lack of representation a queer brown kid grew up seeing. They should imagine how it feels to grow up in a space in which queer people are represented only as the butt of a joke, while knowing these are self-portraits inspired by queer and Latin culture. Ask questions like "why is make up important" and "who is the person he is staging himself as."

What would you like them to experience and notice? (You might consider hidden clues, seeing something unexpected, connections between facts and feelings, art and life, or how they might be inspired to create their own stories and artworks.)
I want people to experience a feeling of empowerment to share their stories, to feel the importance of representation and inclusion in a positive way, and to realize the narratives we share should be created and presented by those who they are about.

What (unique) skills have you developed as an artist? Finding creative ways to bring my visions to life. I have used my tiny bathroom as a set to take pictures and it's all been a fun learning experience.

How do you think art impacts our culture?
Art is an easy way for people to approach a topic and to allow people to ask themselves

question based on something they see. It causes reflection. It allows people to feel included and understood. I recently presented a piece inspired by Laura Aguilar's "Three Eagles Flying" and my dad telling me all he ever feared when I came out to my family was that someone would hurt me for being gay because that is what happened when he was young to other gay people. Based on Aguilar's work and my dad's words, I created two pieces where I had a flag of the United States of America and a Mexico flag wrapped around my neck as if it was choking me, and a Pride (Rainbow) flag covering my face to represent all the lives lost to homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, and how the biggest thing anyone can ever do to go against the violence towards the queer community is be themselves. I titled it "You tried to kill my queerness...but you will never kill this fag." The impact this piece had on viewers was a big moment for me- I realized how important it is for me to share my art and continue sharing my story. My family is supportive. A friend told me that seeing my family at my show gave him hope his family will one day accept him for being gay. That was huge for me, because it made me understand that my work could provide hope for someone else.