ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

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My current work addresses, among other things, the standards of beauty imposed by “Western” culture around the world. It is intended to challenge the structures that uphold a white Eurocentric cultural ideal, which certain queer bodies fail to reflect, and also, comments on the ideologies that perpetuate violent attacks on queer bodies everywhere and, specifically, in Central America. Using photography, sculpture, and video, I started thinking about and exploring the struggle to break away from hegemonic heterosexuality and whitewashed beauty standards, which I, as a queer brown person, do not uphold. With this work, I dissect and examine my cultural background and my gender identity, which, in their own way, make my existence and my movements in the world an act of resistance.

I utilize and manipulate materials, such as wax, liquid foam, paint, condoms, and concrete blocks to construct and interrupt my own narratives, based as they are on ideals imposed by state, religion, and society. I use and repurpose these materials, much as I do Christian iconography and its symbolism, as tools to critique and destabilize the patriarchal, heteronormative system that has structured my life primarily through the imposition of a strict and suffocating religious dogma. I’m interested in deconstructing, demanding, and creating visibility for bodies that lie outside the norm and thus, have been rendered invisible or hidden. I want to question and explore the full potential of how a queer, brown/black body “should” be or act in a society shaped by homophobic, heteronormative, colonial ideologies. I look to create my own space and to cultivate my voice via artistic political resistance by refusing to follow or perpetuate a “Westernized,” heteronormative, racist, classist culture, much of which is reflected in the images around us.

In addition to promoting these ideas, my hope is that through my work, viewers will perceive and empathize with these motives, and act. For example, for the works, “Selvin Andrés García, Colonia el Esfuerzo, 4 de noviembre 2009, Guatemala” (2018) and “Paulina Marrot, Zona 1 Centro, 15 de febrero 2006” (2018), I conducted research into specific instances of hate crimes that were documented in Guatemala. I, then, produced these installation pieces in which I reconstructed gestures and objects that reference the events that took place during each of those assaults. My intent here is to give voice to those who have been lost in countries like my own, where such cases normally are deemed unimportant and are then ignored or abandoned.
Martín Wannam, “God Ezra” (2017), photograph, digital inkjet print
Martín Wannam, “Selvin Andrés García, Colonia el Esfuerzo, 4 de noviembre 2009, Guatemala” (2018), multi-media installation
Martín Wannam, “Paulina Marrot, Zona 1 Centro, 15 de febrero 2006, Guatemala” (2018), photograph, digital inkjet print
Martín Wannam, “I’m Fucking Feminine!” (2017), photographic intervention, digital inkjet print
Martín Wannam, “Santuario” (2017), photograph, digital inkjet print

Martín Wannam, “Ser Hueco en Mi País” (2019), video still of a performance recorded at the Plaza de la Constitución, Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala