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art and cake

Protest, Noun at Torrance Art Museum



Patrick Martinez. Protest, Noun; Torrance Art Museum; Photo credit Genie Davis

Protest, Noun

through March 9
Torrance Art Museum, Torrance

Written by Genie Davis

Dynamic and engaging, *Protest, Noun* at the Torrance Art Museum through March 9th, presents the work of Forrest Kirk, Nery Gabriel Lemus, Narsiso Martinez, Patrick Martinez, Jaime Scholnick.

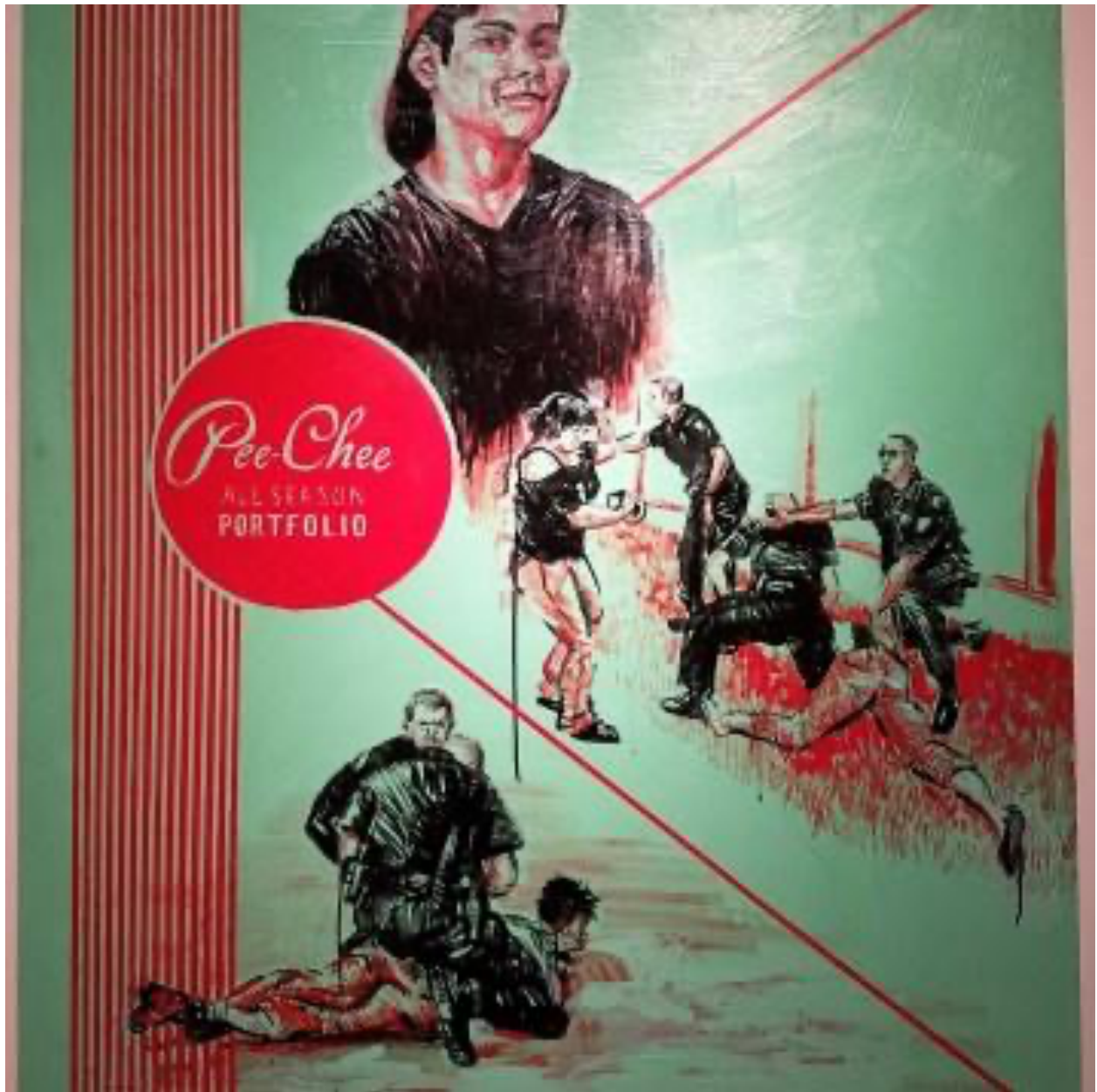
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Both fervently political and deeply passionate, the artists aptly capture the emotional and spiritual flavor of the moment, as well as advocating for political action. Yet the work is strong in its own right – outside of this time in U.S. history.

While the works connect and confront issues such as immigration and homelessness, climate change, and unequal income and justice issues, the overall impression of the exhibition is just how good each piece is, with the palpable sense of a call to action second to the excellence of the work. That said, the works here are beautifully created to expose the ills of society and demands we not look away from them.

A number of pieces utilize objects such as rugs and ottomans, clothing; there are neon works; stunning wall art created on re-purposed cardboard produce boxes; and an exciting curation that balances color and form with message.

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Narsiso Martinez always seems to produce richly emotional, perfectly created work. In “Easy to Peel,” the fruit-boxes as canvasses utilize ink, charcoal, gouache, and acrylic to create a beautiful portrait of a farm worker picking that fruit. It may be easy to peel, but taken for granted entirely is the labor it takes to get it in the boxes; labor that is most often provided by immigrants, disparaged by the political powers that be. Likewise, his equally large-scale “Sunday Morning” depicts workers packing vegetables. It is the beautiful intricacy of his work and the uniqueness of his choice of ‘canvas’ that powerfully drives his message home.

With Jaime Scholnick's "In Memorium –Far Too Many," vintage fabric and mixed media convey a poignant look at the immigrant experience, of struggle, loss, and persistence. Other works by Scholnick, including "Berta Caceres Coat" are positioned throughout the gallery, sculptural shells both haunting and poetic. She has also created a large scale mixed media work on vintage ottomans in the center of the main gallery, "The is Our Ottoman Empire."

Artist Patrick Martinez takes on inequality of justice, racism, and police brutality in his "Po-lice Censored Misconduct Misprint" from his Lost Colors Series. The acrylic on panel work has a knock-out peach background with blue and black images styled as if it were a photographic montage from the "Pee Chee All Season Portfolio" indicated on the work. A black graduate clutches his diploma in the most dominant image; fanning out below is a montage of police brutality against a black man. Following an identical aesthetic with an orange background is "All American Class of 2016" which gives us images of basketball and football players and cheerleaders, chased by and shot at by police.

Working in vibrant neon on plexiglass, Martinez also offers works such as "Soul Stack," and "Fight the Power," neon words whose palette as well as message is dynamic. "Fight the Power," in pink and green includes a graceful rose at its base; "Invest in the Oppressed" is the message of "Soul Stack," in orange and hot pink. His "Morning and Night" work quotes James Baldwin and Angela Davis, reading "If they come for me in the morning/They will come for you in the night." The green and aqua "Deport ICE" speaks for itself as a sensible directive.

Like a mysterious and magical children's book illustration, Nery Gabriel Lemus in "The Strong Mother (Bunchy and Mom)" and "The Wise Mother (Bunchy and Mom)" uses charcoal and acrylic ink on paper. The works address feminism and the power of love in beautifully crafted large scale drawings that feature two loving bears and two stunning black panthers. Lemus' acrylic-on-floor-mats graphic work "A Memorial to Three Unknown Females" is also a stand-out, you won't look down without thinking twice.

Forest Kirk's bold, beautiful acrylic, spray paint, and glue works, including "The Right Tool for the Job" are brilliantly acerbic in message

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and vibrant in color. In that particular work, a bright blue uniformed policeman is holstering a water pistol, with a tricycle emblazoned on his uniform.

Socially and politically electrifying, and beautifully made work: Protest, noun is not lacking in superlative adjectives. If art succors change – and it does – this exhibition is certainly emblematic of that. Come for the message, spread the word, and stay for the beauty of the work.



Torrance Art Museum
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