

NOTES ON DEMOCRACY

DEC 1, 2017 - MAR 11, 2018

**JUAN CAPISTRAN . RICARDO "TIJUANA RICK" CORTEZ
JAQUE FRAGUÁ . GILDA POSADA . SHEY RIVERA RÍOS
RoCoCo (KC ROSENBERG & MODESTO COVARRUBIAS)**

**A provocative exhibition that examines the work of
artists who explore the depths of political discourse,
process and the ideology of democracy.**

In the last two years, the political climate in our country has given rise to heated debates about the basic constitutional rights in our society. These conversations range from what constitutes free speech, the right to bear arms, how we define citizenship, and even the way we determine the safety and security of our population. Our country seems divided with both sides of the political spectrum in passionate, unwavering disagreement and an almost total unwillingness to listen to the other side. *Notes on Democracy* examines the work of artists who explore the depths of our country's current political discourse and process and the very idea of democracy. The artists in this exhibition incite political discourse and engage the process of governance to unwrap the realities of contemporary democracy in the United States.

In *Paletas*, San José local Chicano artist, Tijuana Rick, uses the tradition of oral history to document the stories of immigrant street food vendors to assess how economics, policy, and law enforcement shape their livelihoods. The piece is a powerful critique on how government policies can be very unfair toward the most vulnerable in our society while also giving voice to a seemingly voiceless population. He also pays homage to tactics of communication utilized by immigrants to spread information about their rights.

In *Fantasy Island*, Shey Rivera Rios utilizes contemporary media culture, which shapes today's social and political fabric, to pay urgent attention to how Puerto Rico is commodified as a type of "paradise" travel resort by the U.S. tourist industry, despite its recent financial and environmental tragedies. The artwork questions what the democratic process means on the island, given its capitalist treatment and its continuing status as U.S. territory.

In tune with the current political climate and discourse, in *Selective Hearing*, the artist duo RoCoCo pays attention to the way language and the foundations of democracy in the United States are being treated under these circumstances. Focusing on one of our country's fundamental rights, freedom of speech, they ask whether, as citizens, we even listen to each other.

In very much his style, Jaque Fraguá notes in *40 Acres and a Mule*, how the treatment of land/territory in the U.S. details the way democracy in it has been practiced. In his *Ballot Box* piece, he speaks to how the democratic process has primarily served the rise of capitalism, but demonstrates how change and transformation always looms under the surface.

In his two prints, *I Am We (Huey)* and *Anonymous (You are a criminal, act like one)*, Juan Capistrán demonstrates how democracy in our society has always been contested, as not all citizens are treated equally and certain histories are erased to maintain a fallacy of equality. He asks, who is our democracy really for?

In *Citizenship and Origins*, Gilda Posada questions the very idea of "democracy" in the West, paying close attention to its origins. In the movements toward equality and justice, she questions whether the type of democracy we seek is even the right one. She asks the audience to question the idea of the democracy while she reaches into indigenous culture and thought to imagine new ways of what it could look like in the future.

These artists take a close look at the various dimensions of democracy in our country and present different views on what they mean for different people. From the basic everyday rights, such as freedom of speech, the voting process, and the origins and philosophy around the idea, they effectively present us with their own thoughts and notes on democracy.

Curatorial team: Joey Reyes, Damian Kelly, William Ramirez