

Artist Statement

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Imagine the worst experiences you had were forever written on your skin. As if *that* one time you woke up to a Peel Police officer pointing a gun at you or that moment you felt your stomach drop as a stranger made sexual advances on you was stenciled on your skin, in black, for everyone to see. Imagine if it wasn't just the short synopsis of that experience but included your reaction to it. That experience with the officer or the stranger is convoluted with your panic, fear and is a visual reminder to you that after both experiences, you couldn't stop crying and wanting to disappear.

You're then left with two choices. First, you could attempt to wash off these words. You could keep scrubbing at them or hiding them under long sleeves with the hope that no one will ever see them. However, you know this would be a futile. The words don't wash away that easily and the clothes will eventually come off.

Second, you're left to let yourself be exposed. There is no way around hiding the words and the impact your experiences have on you. The violence you have endured either as a someone who is biracial, queer, female or some other label that has yet to be attributed to you, can no longer be hidden. How do you own an experience you don't want to deal with when it feels like all eyes are on you?

The artwork I've created up to this point deals exclusively with myself and my experiences as my point of research. It's about attempting to tell my own narrative when it feels like the story has already been told and broadcasted for everyone else to see. For me, it's necessary to make art that reflects an experience like waking up to a gun pointed at you to then learn that the reason that police were in your house in the first place was because your brother was stabbed outside of home. How do you reflect this experience? How do you reflect years of panic attacks and PTSD whenever you felt in danger? How do you take something so negative and make a change from it? Particularly, how do you confront others with this issue when you're the only one to see, firsthand, the lasting effects of something the media just passively glances over?

This work I just mentioned, *Does your city look like this?* (2018), was the start of my attempt to answer these questions. In essence, it was my way to handle these emotions that came with the experience and situate myself in a world that was falling apart before me. Thus, my experiences as my concepts has been the only research I've needed and with that came an intuition for the choice of materiality.

For example, my work *GRINGA* (2019), an installation piece, was about what it is like to be biracial. How do you deal with being half-Spanish and half-white when you feel like neither? How can you visually show your shame for not being able to say your Spanish or white because others have told you, you don't qualify as either? For me, choosing to write "GRINGA" in large, bold letters on the floor and wall with an acrylic medium that was translucent, peeling and falling apart like a sunburn, felt like the appropriate option.

The choice to use words as my part of the execution of my artwork with both *Does your city look like this?*, *GRINGA*, and every other work since, has been deliberate to my method.

Being explicit and determined with my choice of words, combined with the use of revision, repetition, and narration is the only way to ensure that something is left with you, dear viewer. These words ensure that I'm not hiding my experiences the way I used to and at the same time, not letting myself be exposed without my permission. For you, dear viewer, it's letting you know to look closer at what is happening around you that if your worst experiences were written forever on your skin, you'll most likely find someone else whose had a similar one.