

How Does Mexican Artist Martín Soto Climent Feel About Donald Trump for President?

Brian Boucher, Thursday, September 17, 2015

"When Mexico sends its people," Donald Trump said during his July announcement of his presidential campaign, "they're not sending their best. They're sending people that have lots of problems. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists."

In the wake of the last Republican debate, aired on CNN on Wednesday, September 16, artnet News invited Mexico City-based artist Martín Soto Climent to offer his thoughts on the Donald. (Artist Pablo Helguera sounds off on Trump in the first essay in the series, which you can read here.)

"Every country has the government it deserves," wrote the French philosopher Joseph de Maistre. But I don't think that the US deserves Trump. The Americas, as a continent, don't deserve more division.

The only way I see a good future for all of us is for people to believe that the meeting of global cultures can enrich us all. Just because sometimes you can't see the richness of another culture doesn't mean there's nothing there. But the media is very powerful in spreading stereotypical perceptions of the Other.

Of course Mexico has its own problems, but I'm sure that in the US it's a moment of great tension and social division. I don't trust anyone that goes for division. We really have to try to understand one another better and to find possibilities to be different but to be together.

I don't think that people here have been following the US political process that closely, partly because Mexico is also in a complicated moment with our own president, Enrique Peña Nieto, who is kind of a joke. People respond to Trump news on Twitter and so on, and they make jokes, but we also have very extreme problems with people getting killed over the drug trade; it's very clear that the government isn't reacting sufficiently. So as far as Trump, I think many people feel like, "Yeah, whatever."

I also hear that there was much more reaction in the Latin American community in the US. Once Mexicans arrive and they're safe there, they don't want other Mexicans to come, because it's more competition! So some of those who support his statements may be Mexicans, which is shocking. But I guess it's just people trying to survive.

Mexico has so many layers of social difference, so the people who are much more aware of international news are those who move into more Western ways of living. But Mexico is full of so many communities that are still living in very old ways. They don't even know what's going on. Their lives can be affected by political movements but they are in different realities, though in the end the world is extremely linked.

When a phenomenon like Trump arises, for me it's always surprising. Somehow you have the hope that we are learning, so you can't believe these things still happen. We have many examples throughout history of how extreme positions like those articulated by Trump never lead to anything good. It's amazing that something that starts like a joke, the attitude of a clown, gets so much attention from the media that in the end the people making such statements become stronger.

Every culture and society is determined partly by its neighbors. Your personality in a family is partly defined by those of your parents and your siblings, and so it is with nations. The cultural differences between Mexico and the US are huge. But what they share in common is that both countries are the result of many kinds of immigration. In Mexico there were many Indian cultures, and then when the Spanish came, there were many kinds of Spanish people. Good dishes need many ingredients and a lot of time to cook.

I make art because I truly believe that it opens new sorts of reality, and new possibilities to build new realities. It's about the joy of contemplating a phenomenon. I'm completely against the ambition to destroy things in a selfish way. Trump is all about ambition and selfish attitudes. We have to learn many things, and we have to be more patient and less ambitious. Society needs to learn how to appreciate different values.

I really hope and believe that the US deserves much better.

Born in Mexico City in 1977, Soto Climent has exhibitions upcoming at Paris' Palais de Tokyo (in 2016) and the Museo Universitario del Chopo, Mexico City. In New York, he shows with Clifton Benevento Gallery, where a show earlier this year incorporated found objects like pantyhose, purses, shoes, Venetian blinds, and beer cans into lyrical sculptures that often explore sexuality and mortality.

In his ongoing work Delivery, a number of paper bags used for food delivery stand upside down on the floor, showing the names, usually Hispanic in origin, stamped on their bottoms. The artist envisions them as factory workers where the bags are produced, and continues to add to the piece.



Martín Soto Climent.
Photo Patrick McMullan.