

AO

AO REVIEW: JAMIE MARTINEZ' 'THE SHADOW OF COLONIALISM'

June 10th, 2024



Jamie Martinez, *The Shadow of Colonialism* (Installation View) at Ghostmachine Gallery

The GHOSTMACHINE gallery, tucked away on the Lower East Side at 23 Monroe St., is currently hosting a politically charged exhibition by Jamie Martinez. Curated by Emireth Herrera Valdés, this show runs from May 10th to June 15th, 2024, and presents a stark critique of colonialism through a blend of performance art and sculptural installations.

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Jamie Martinez, *The Rise and Fall of Christopher Columbus*, (2024) at Ghostmachine Gallery

Central to the exhibition, titled *The Shadow of Colonialism*, is an imposing 15-foot inflatable sculpture of Christopher Columbus. This performative piece, *The Rise and Fall of Christopher Columbus* (2024), alternates between inflating and deflating, symbolizing the ephemeral nature of Columbus's legacy and the shifting perception of his historical significance. Throughout the exhibition, the effigy undergoes various indignities—collapsing, wedging into corners, and bouncing off the gallery's walls—highlighting the reassessment of the Columbus myth and questioning the appropriateness of honoring a figure whose legacy is increasingly scrutinized for his role in colonial exploitation.

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Jamie Martinez, *The Big CON-Conquistador: Hernán Cortés, King Montezuma, and the Last Stand of the Aztecs*, 2024

Martinez's critique extends to other facets of the colonial narrative with *The Big CON-Conquistador: Hernán Cortés, King Montezuma, and the Last Stand of the Aztecs* (2024). This piece transforms a recently published book into a sculptural object, encased in non-fired clay, acrylic paint, polyurethane, and natural green fluorite. By physically altering the book, Martinez emphasizes the brutal realities of conquest and the erasure of indigenous voices from historical records. The addition of fluorite, which causes the book to glow in the dark, symbolizes the enduring and haunting presence of these untold histories.

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Jamie Martinez, embellished crosses (front), covered Knife (real knife inside,) and avocado (Top Left – avocado replica inside)

Another striking work in the exhibition is *Embellished Crosses* (2024), featuring green aventurine on wood. The six embellished wood crosses poignantly signify mourning and loss. This piece metaphorically creates a graveyard for indigenous cultures devastated by colonial forces.



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Jamie Martinez with his performing sculpture

The Rise and Fall of Christopher Columbus, 2024, at Ghostmachine Gallery

The Shadow of Colonialism is on display at [GHOSTMACHINE](#) until June 15th.