

RED DOT ARTIST INTERVIEW– GABI MAGALY
INTERVIEWED BY ÁNGELA GARCÍA ON JULY 8, 2020



Gabi Magaly
Yo Na Nací Para Aguantar A Nadie, 2020
Archival pigment print
34 1/4 x 46 1/4"
Edition 1 of 5
Courtesy of the artist.

AG: Can you tell me a little more about the artwork you submitted for Red Dot this year?

GM: The title of the artwork is *Yo No Nací Para Aguantar a Nadie*, which translates to *I Wasn't Born to Put Up With Anybody*. The reason why I created that image was because being a first generation Mexican-American, I always heard *aguántate* which means “put up with it.” Usually and unfortunately, only the girls are the ones that hear this saying. You just withstand it. I was just jotting down ideas in my journal one day,

and I came up with that saying “Yo no nací para aguantar a nadie” because I don’t think it’s fair to tell little girls that they have to put up with people, or put up with their dad, or put up with their cousins, or put up with male family members. That’s why I created this image. The statement is on a blanket because I remember having floral, pink blankets on my bed as a kid. I decided to have a little girl in it because I want to represent that she is the next generation that I made this statement for, that they don’t have to put up with anybody. I want them to know that at a much younger age than it took me, when I was 23, to realize.

AG: A lot of your work has to do with combatting *machismo* and *marianismo* in Latinx culture and Mexican-American households. For people that might not be familiar with these concepts, how would you define *machismo* and *marianismo*?

GM: So *machismo* is a toxic masculinity that is ingrained in Latino culture and is [the belief] that men are protecting or providing for their family, but in reality it’s mental, physical, and emotional abuse toward their family. It can be toward the wife, children, it affects everybody in their culture. Being a straight woman, I experienced a lot from my dad. My dad was [*machista*] and he always told me growing up that a woman’s place is in the kitchen, that I need to know how to wash dishes because what would your husband think of you [if you didn’t?], you need to learn how to provide, you need to have a kid by a certain age. So that’s essentially what *machismo* is. *Marianismo* is essentially the female version of that, it stems from the word *Maria*, [referencing] the Virgin Mary. She is the ideal savior, [the symbol of purity], and saving your virginity until marriage. That’s what [families will] tell girls to do. To be pure, to have kids, be a wife, cook, clean, provide for your children, and care for your husband [all] at the same time.

These roles were ingrained in me from my dad. My mom was the opposite. [She] didn't want me to depend on a man, [and wanted me] to make [my] own money and get an education.

AG: How do you feel that those experiences from your youth shaped the art that you make now?

GM: It has taken me a long time to get to the point that I am at now. I don't talk to my dad anymore because of how negative he's been in my life and how that's affected me and my mental state. When I stopped talking to him, that's when I started creating all this work because I was finally able to express myself. This work has been very therapeutic because as a kid I wasn't allowed to speak my mind or say how I felt. If I did, I was considered weak. Now that I haven't talked to him in so long, I've been able to [transform] all those past feelings toward him into a positive. We already know the negativity that's come from *machismo* and *marianismo*; I didn't want to talk about that anymore. I want my work to be a positive outlook as in "look, I've turned out to be a strong, independent woman. Much stronger than if I would've stayed under his control." By me cutting him off, I've been able to turn a negative into a positive.

AG: Can you remember any experiences with art that changed your life?

GM: I would say my blanket series *Mi Religion*. That series flipped how I made artwork after that. My first image [the portrait of myself as La Virgen de Guadalupe] essentially changed the course of everything, because I was making work that wasn't personal [before that]. I was making artwork just to make it, just to make it look pretty. Finally, I thought "let me make it personal" and when I [did], that's when everything just flipped,

and from that series I continued [making art based off] my experiences with religion and *machismo*.

AG: Do you feel your artwork commits itself to a specific style or a specific method?

GM: When I do create my artwork, I have to make sure that it's something that I remember [from] growing up. A lot of it has to reference my abuelita's house, but I have to do a lot of research when it comes to those memories. I have to call my sister or I call my mom [asking] "Do you remember this happening? Do remember that? How did you feel?" There's a lot of research that does go into [creating] my [work]. I want to make sure that it's accurate and that when I do make it, it's a positive that I'm putting it out into the world.

AG: What was the process of setting up *Yo No Nací para Aguantar a Nadie*?

GM: I created the blanket first because I knew it would take forever. I found out that I was going to go back to Bryan, my hometown and I [thought]: "I need to have this blanket created by next week." I wanted to [shoot] the image back at my abuelita's house because she still had the clothesline that I remember from growing up as a kid. For a whole week I had to let [the blanket] sit and dry because it [had] 7 layers of paint, gesso, glitter, and all this stuff. When I took it back to my hometown, I asked one of my really good friends if [her daughter] could be a part of the image. She said, "I would love for her to be part of the image especially with the message you're saying." I set everything up and the sun was already going down, it was already golden hour and I just was not liking any of the images. We had already been out there for two hours photographing. I told my aunt, she was the one just clicking [the shutter], [that] I just

wanted one more photo, and the last image that we took was [the chosen and printed] image.

AG: Do you feel that living in San Antonio has shaped your art in any way?

GM: Coming from Bryan, art is nonexistent and if it does exist, it's not the contemporary art that we're used to here in San Antonio. What you would see at Blue Star Contemporary you would never see in Bryan, so that to me was very exciting because I wanted to be a part of Blue Star since I got out here. Being out here has shaped my art tremendously, because I came out here to get my Master's and I've known for 3 1/2 years that I wanted my art to be [related] to my culture or my upbringing. San Antonio is like a mini Mexico, there's so many Latinos everywhere, so it's something I did want to experience. With a lot of Latinos around, I wanted to be surrounded by my people. I would have more input from them because they themselves were raised in that culture. San Antonio has most definitely exposed me to a whole different world of art that I'm very happy and thankful to be a part of.

AG: What would you say is the experience of having your artwork purchased for a private collection?

GM: I think it would be amazing for my work to be bought by somebody. They're buying a piece with a very strong message, and they're helping support me because I can continue making a lot of this work. I didn't see myself growing up in the art world. Even in undergrad I was never exposed to any Mexican or Mexican-American artists. It took me coming to grad school to have a Mexican teacher. I [was] 23 years old entering grad school and barely seeing a Mexican teacher, it shouldn't have taken me that long. To have somebody buy my artwork means I'd be tremendously honored because [*Yo No*

Nací para Aguantar a Naide sends] a strong message. It's something that needs to be put out into the world. People need to see this message and we need to raise our boys and our girls equally. We need to raise our daughters to know that they don't have to put up with anybody. That is the reason why I would love for this work to be purchased and put out in the world. Just to know that somebody supports that message is a big honor.

AG: Does your art respond to questions about the future or questions about the past?

GM: I think past, present, and future. I'm questioning the past. Being told don't put up with it, *aguántate*, that's the past. The present is that we need to now raise children equally, to fix our mistakes, and we need to question why we raised and are raising our kids to be like this. By fixing it now, hopefully our kids will not have to deal with it. Our future generations [will not have to] feel that they have to be submissive to their partner, to have kids by certain age, or to be married. They don't have to be in the kitchen cooking and cleaning just to show their love for their significant other.

AG: Where would be the best place to follow you for updates?

GM: You could follow me on Instagram at [@gabimagaly](https://www.instagram.com/gabimagaly) and then my website gabimagaly.com. Those are the two places you can find me.

ABOUT GABI MAGALY

Gabi Magaly is an emerging artist born in Bryan, Texas. Magaly received her BFA in photography at Sam Houston State University in 2015 and her MFA in Visual Arts at the University of Texas at San Antonio in 2020. Magaly has exhibited in solo shows at Satellite Gallery, Huntsville, TX; The Brick, San Antonio, TX; Presa House Gallery, San

Antonio, TX. Her numerous group exhibitions include at Luis Leu Gallery, Karlsruhe, Germany; and The Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, San Antonio, TX. She won Best in Show at “56th Annual Juried Competition Exhibition” at Masur Museum in Monroe, Louisiana. Magaly was honored with a Graduate School Travel Stipend to give an artist talk at SPE Conference at Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX. She has an art residency forthcoming in June 2020 at Casa Lu in Mexico City. She was also recently awarded two CAMMIE awards from Blue Star Contemporary and Luminaria Contemporary Cultural Center during Contemporary Art Month. She works predominantly in the medium of photography, but also employs other mediums like sculptural installation and embroidery. Magaly currently lives and works in San Antonio, Texas. More at www.gabimagaly.com

ABOUT ÁNGELA GARCÍA

Ángela García is Blue Star Contemporary’s Arts, Letters, and Enterprise summer intern from McAllen, TX. She is pursuing a BA in Art History at Trinity University, and plans to study architecture after receiving her undergraduate degree. García has also worked as a studio intern for Artpace San Antonio, a radio host for KRTU 91.7FM, and has done volunteer work at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, TX. She works in digital and film photography and analog collage.