

ACE GALLERY LOS ANGELES

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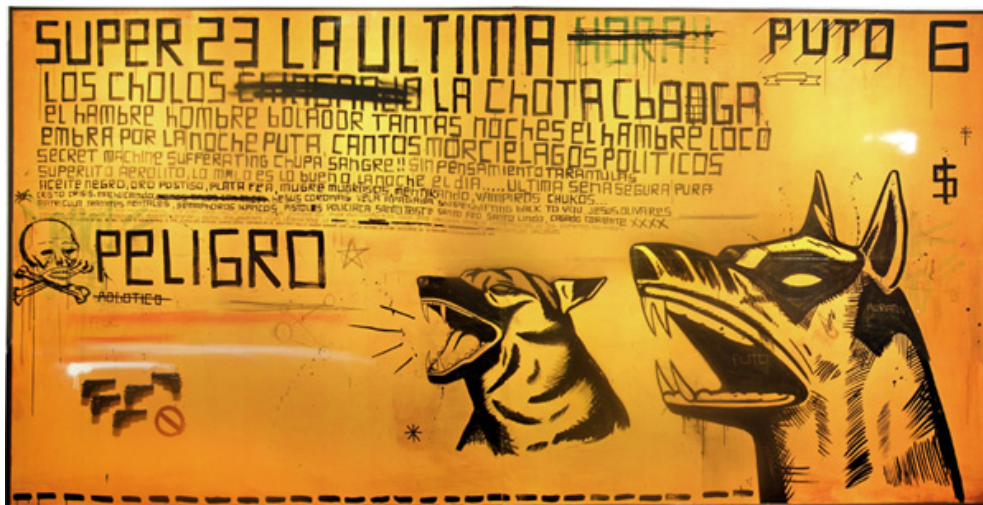
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THE DATE FARMERS

¡EL SEGUNDO!



EXHIBITION ON VIEW THROUGH DECEMBER 2011

The second phase of the Date Farmers' exhibition is an accumulation of their ongoing process developing the installation of their recent paintings and sculpture at Ace Gallery Los Angeles. Since the first stage of this exhibition that opened in December 2010, the gallery has literally become their studio working space for the last three months as they have had 24-hr access to the gallery, adding new work and repainting others to better suit their conception with an overall installation aesthetic in mind. Their unique approach to making an exhibition has expanded boundaries of painting and flourished into a fully functional bar with furnishings and a "3D Club Video" theater made from recycled, customized corrugated iron, for their film collaboration *A Volta* directed by Logan and screened at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival.

The Date Farmers, consisting of Armando Lerma and Carlos Ramirez, coined their name early in their careers after joining artistic forces in 1998. Their paintings, collages, sculptures, effigies, installations, and videos are infused with both commercial references and political content. Rooted in their Mexican-American heritage and Californian pop culture, their work contains elements influenced by graffiti, Mexican street murals, traditional revolutionary posters, prison art, Oaxacan sign painting, low-rider and tattoo art, fused to create their own signature visual language. The artists often travel across the border into Mexicali and Oaxaca

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hunting for found materials such as discarded signs, wood, and corrugated metal that they reconfigure, often juxtaposing pirated images and text with their original artwork and collaged elements. In customizing found objects with a mordant wit, the artists place themselves into their work, both emotionally and pictorially, sometimes representing themselves in surrogate as ferocious black dogs. The Date Farmers have been given free reign in mounting their ever-evolving exhibition, morphing and customizing it into their highly idiosyncratic universe.

Originally from Indio, California, a desert region a few hours east of Los Angeles, the duo have been living and working on their art in the peaceful seclusion of the desert until recently when the two artists also took a studio in Los Angeles to assist them in creating their exhibition for Ace Gallery. The Date Farmers combine familiar pop iconography – ranging from Mickey Mouse, Darth Vader, and Spiderman – to ‘amended’ corporate logos with figures from comics, folklore, and Catholicism. In these paintings, desert creatures – such as tarantulas, coyotes, scorpions, and rattlesnakes – are hand-painted on top of seemingly incongruous found signs with collaged lettering, along with such items as stamps, bottle caps, comic strips, and advertisements. The duo use larger-than-life figures and ideas, like Jesus and brand names, in what they call “Super Loco” also expanding the use of words mixing English and Spanish titles and flaunting creative misspellings like “Servicios D.J. Pleyboy” and the “Superchango.”

In appropriating images from popular culture, the Date Farmers give viewers an entryway to their work then play with the characters to distort them to suit their own messages. The flat blocks of color and cross-hatching accentuate the strong two-dimensional and stencil-like appearance of the work, connecting the artists to urban art. At the same time, the Date Farmers often leave the eyes of faces and creatures empty, as Modigliani did before them, but these artists utilize this technique in a very different way. There is an absence present in the eyes, a vacancy left for the viewer like the discarded signs were left for the artists to draw upon. The artists’ primal drive for personalization and craft within the playground of soulless advertisements makes the work intellectually stimulating and visually compelling.

The Date Farmers have a history just as compelling as their artwork. Armando’s father owned a date farm where Carlos once worked, yet the two met at an art opening in the Coachella Valley in California. Carlos’ mother was a migrant who once worked with civil rights leader Cesar Chavez, an American activist and co-founder of the United Farm Workers, during the grape boycott of the 1970s. From the viewpoint of American-born Chicanos, the Date Farmers explore topical subjects with insightful simplicity.

For further information and visuals please contact
Ace Gallery Los Angeles at 323.935.4411 or email acegallery@acegallery.net
Gallery Hours: Tuesday through Saturday 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM