



MANUEL LÓPEZ | STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT
SEPTEMBER 30 - NOVEMBER 4, 2023

MANUEL LÓPEZ

STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

In *Stepping into the Light*, Manuel López captures the vitality and beauty of the everyday, bringing together urban landscapes and intimate narratives in precisely rendered, idiomatic compositions that speak to the current moment. The paintings call upon personal and art historical sources as wide-ranging as David Hockney, commercial sign painting, the New York School, and Saturday morning cartoons; resulting in work that synthesizes the vibrating vital energy of López's native Los Angeles into his own aesthetic vernacular. These are his largest canvases to date and this new scale allows for freer, more painterly expression that seems to grow organically from the tightly controlled finish of his previous work. If the focused gaze of the near past was necessitated by the strictures of pandemic life, these new works embody a newfound freedom of movement and embrace of community.

López's paintings retain the proportions of the simple sheets of paper where the ideas originate. His compositions begin on paper, always drawn from life, and the artist compares these studies to pages from a coloring book or childhood sketches made on lined pads of paper. He plays with variations on a theme until the composition feels right, at which point the drawing is scaled up through successive preparatory stages: first, a color study at medium scale, then a full-scale drawing that is translated directly onto the canvas. Though the work of painting is slow, López strives to retain the immediacy of drawing alongside a growing interest in the quality and effect of paint as a material.

This new body of work relishes painting *qua* painting to a greater degree than ever before. López allows his mark-making to remain visible as he experiments with texture and layering, creating rich, velvety surfaces in some passages while letting the support show through in others. *Rasquache Picasso* in particular plays with both ends of this spectrum: the stacked books and cut-paper sculpture are richly painted in a manner that captures the soft book covers and the crisp lightness of paper, while the table and background are applied thinly, with glimpses of the canvas support coming through the deep black. The energy of the composition swirls around the central paper figures before concentrating in the eye of the figure at right, whose gaze shoots the viewer back across the canvas.

An encounter with Picasso introduced teenaged López to the possibilities and power of an abstracted view of the world. In *Rasquache Picasso* López recreates a Picasso sculpture in the same lined yellow paper that held his earliest doodles, an act of respect for the father of Cubism that also brings the two artists into direct conversation. The weight of the central still life is balanced by a thinly-painted background, alive with brushstrokes and glimpses of bare canvas. By incorporating the support as part of the composition, López invokes New York School painters such as Clyfford Still, as well as the idea of the wall in the tradition of Mexican muralism that undergirds much of 20th century modernism. López unites these three art historical moments in the spirit of *rasquache* – using what serves to his own artistic ends.

Time and Technology functions almost as a companion piece to *Rasquache Picasso*, trading the latter's painterly black for rich velvet and its re-created modern sculpture for the bright colors and hard edges of a Voltron figurine. Both paintings play with the psychological weight of empty space balanced against the idea of the hero figure. Voltron as a subject speaks to the artist's interest in popular culture and the visual language he was raised on, rendered here in precise painterly detail.

MANUEL LÓPEZ

STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

López builds worlds with often idiosyncratic linework and perspective, finding harmony in imperfection. *South Central LA corner (El Mago on Figueroa and 97th)* bristles with the energy of a Los Angeles streetcorner by capturing a palimpsest of colors and textures that is unique yet ubiquitous. López describes finding such corners as similar to having a crush – they linger in his mind, persistently pulling on his thoughts. The finished composition brims with life as each small passage stands up to the whole, able to function as its own abstract composition. The work retains small flaws, such as the bright yellow drip on the black street, that draw attention to the labor of painting. These felicitous mistakes never allow the viewer to forget the hand of the artist.

Like *South Central LA corner (El Mago on Figueroa and 97th)*, which places the viewer directly onto the rich blacktop, *My Father's White Shirts* bodily invites observers into the space of its wide brick patio – there is even an open chair at the ready. The familiar view of the artist's childhood backyard has been flattened towards the picture plane; only the small cinder block retains traditional perspective. Here López captures the quieter side of city life: laundry on a line, the wonky limbs of many trees, and a summer sunset refracted through stretched power lines. López also plays with perspective in *Sunday Afternoon 2:37 PM*, rendering the upturned milk crate, tabletop, and scattered beer cans all from different angles. The collective effect creates an obstacle course for the eyes that keeps the viewer constantly on their toes.



MANUEL LÓPEZ

STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

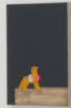
Manuel López's (b.1983, East Los Angeles, CA) drawings and paintings are informed by his immediate surroundings. Each piece is a careful examination of elements found around his environment: books, records, boxes, houseplants, various elements from his home, his neighborhood, and studio. López relies on observation, memories, materiality, touch, and presence to evoke a feeling of familiarity in the compositions. Manuel López grew up in Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles. He attended East Los Angeles College, transferred to The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) where he earned his BFA in painting and drawing. He has been included in numerous group exhibitions in institutions, galleries, and museums nationwide including Ni de Aqui, Ni de Alla, Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, Youngbloods; Quotidian, Los Angeles, CA, Gardens; Last Projects, in Los Angeles, CA; Now(n) person, place, or thing; Tiger Strikes Asteroid, in Chicago, IL, Dark Progressivism; The Built Environment, at the Museum of Art and History, in Lancaster, CA; Vincent Price Art Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Friends Do Not Fear, at New Image Art, in West Hollywood, CA; Dia de los Muertos Exhibit at Self-Help Graphics, Boyle Heights, CA; Surface Place at Abrazo Interno Gallery at The Clemente, New York, NY; Spill at the Betty Rymer Gallery, Chicago, IL SAIC Undergrad Exhibition, at Sullivan Galleries, Chicago, IL, Solo Exhibition- So Mundane and incomplete (Some drawings and paintings); at Eastern Projects, Los Angeles, CA. He lives and works in East Los Angeles and is represented by Charlie James Gallery.

Artist Instagram: @meaunl_lpoez

Photo © 2023 Rafa Cardenas
Photo credit @rafa.la Rafa Cardenas



MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT



MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT



MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT



MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT



MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

Manuel López
My fathers white shirts
(Line drying)
Acrylic on canvas
84 x 60 inches
2023



MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT



MANUEL LÓPEZ

STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

Manuel López
South Central LA corner
(El Mago on Figueroa and 97th)
Acrylic on canvas
72 x 60 inches
2023



MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT



MANUEL LÓPEZ

STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

Manuel López
Time and technology
(Casio and Bandai)
Acrylic on canvas
72 x 60 inches
2023



MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT



MANUEL LÓPEZ

STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

Manuel López
Rasquache Picasso
Acrylic on canvas
60 x 48 inches
2023



MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT



MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

Manuel López
Sunday afternoon 2:37pm
Acrylic on canvas
60 x 48 inches
2023



MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT



MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

Manuel López
Ocelotl figure with labels
(Mexican clay figure bought at
Placita Olvera)
Acrylic on linen
20 x 16 inches
2023



MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT



MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

Manuel López
Diego, plant, and door
Graphite, watercolor, and color
pencil on paper
Sheet: 24 x 18 inches
2023
Framed



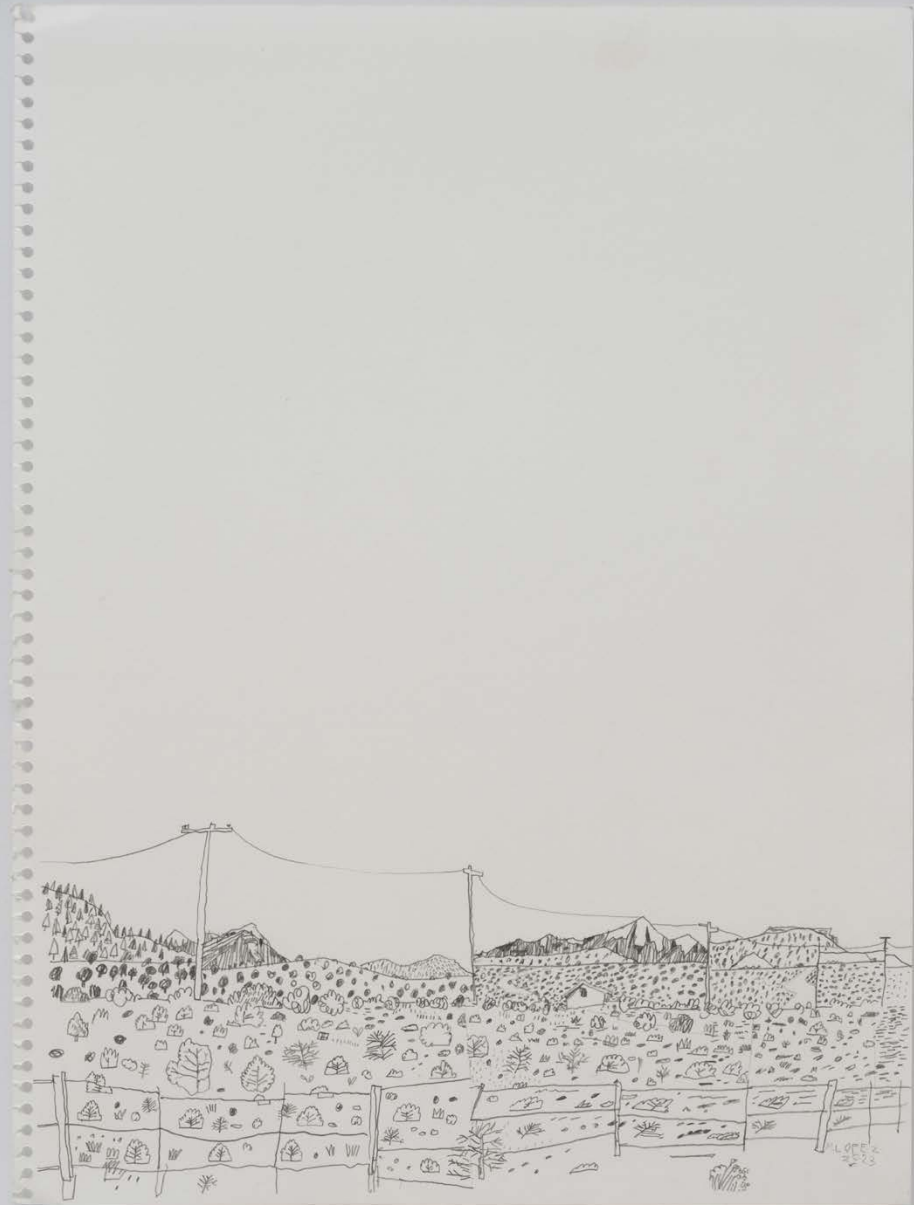
MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

Manuel López
Tlaloc vessel with nopal
Graphite and color pencil on
paper
Sheet: 24 x 18 inches
2023
Framed



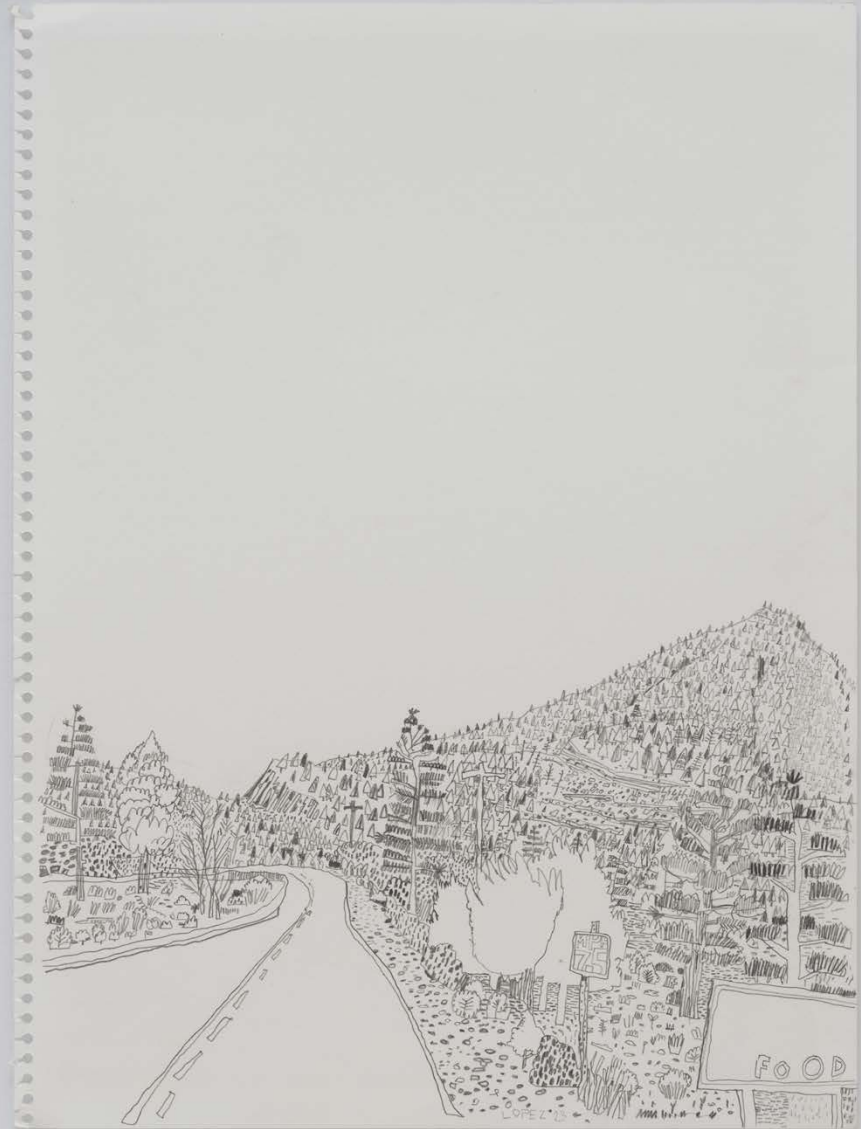
MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

Manuel López
Southwest landscape with a vast sky
(Arizona highway)
Graphite on paper
Sheet: 13.25 x 10 inches
2023
Framed



MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

Manuel López
*Southwestern landscape with
road signs (Colorado route)*
Graphite on paper
Sheet: 13.25 x 10 inches
2023
Framed



MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

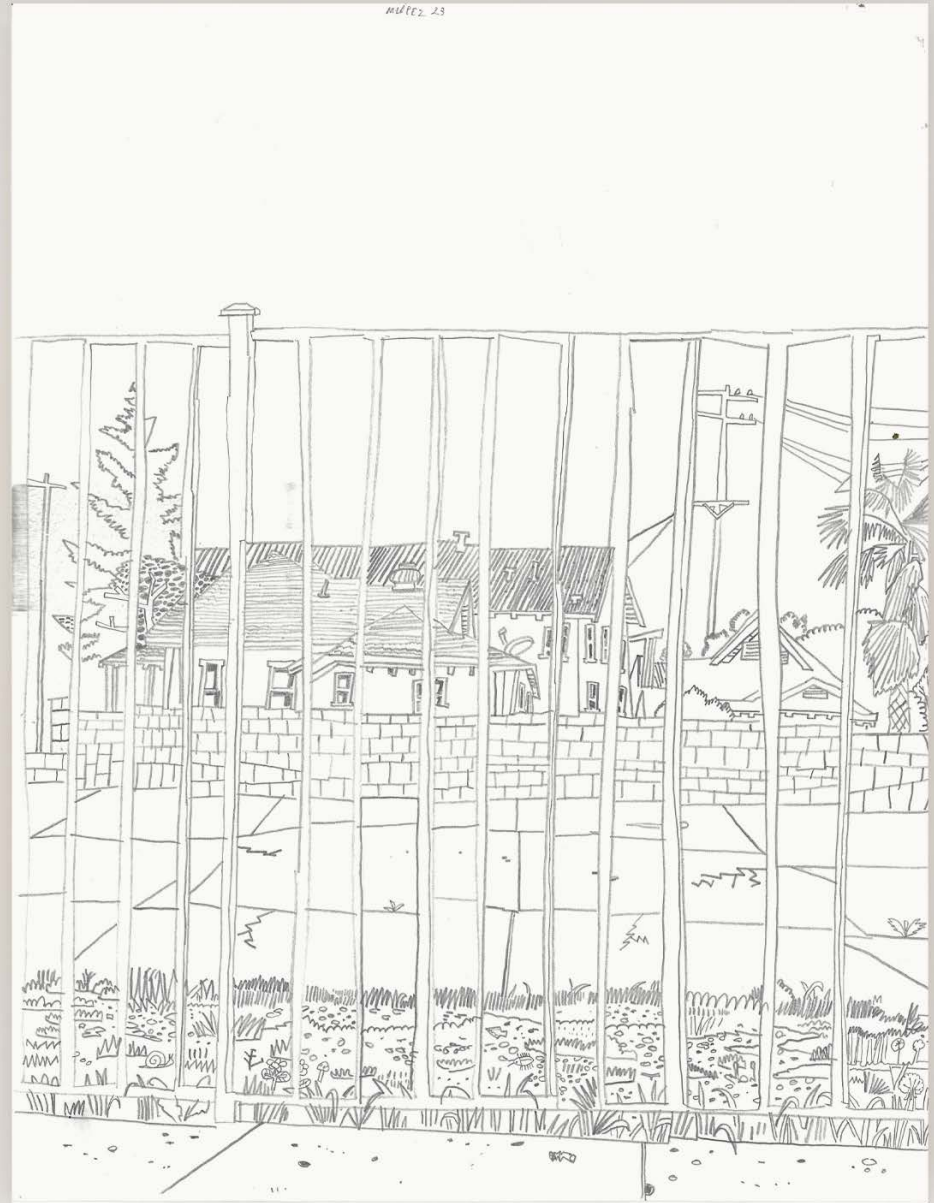
Manuel López
House on Echo Park hillside
Graphite on paper
Sheet: 11 x 8.5 inches
2023
Framed



MANUEL LÓPEZ

STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

Manuel López
Empty lot (Boyle Heights)
Graphite on paper
Sheet: 11 x 8.5 inches
2023
Framed



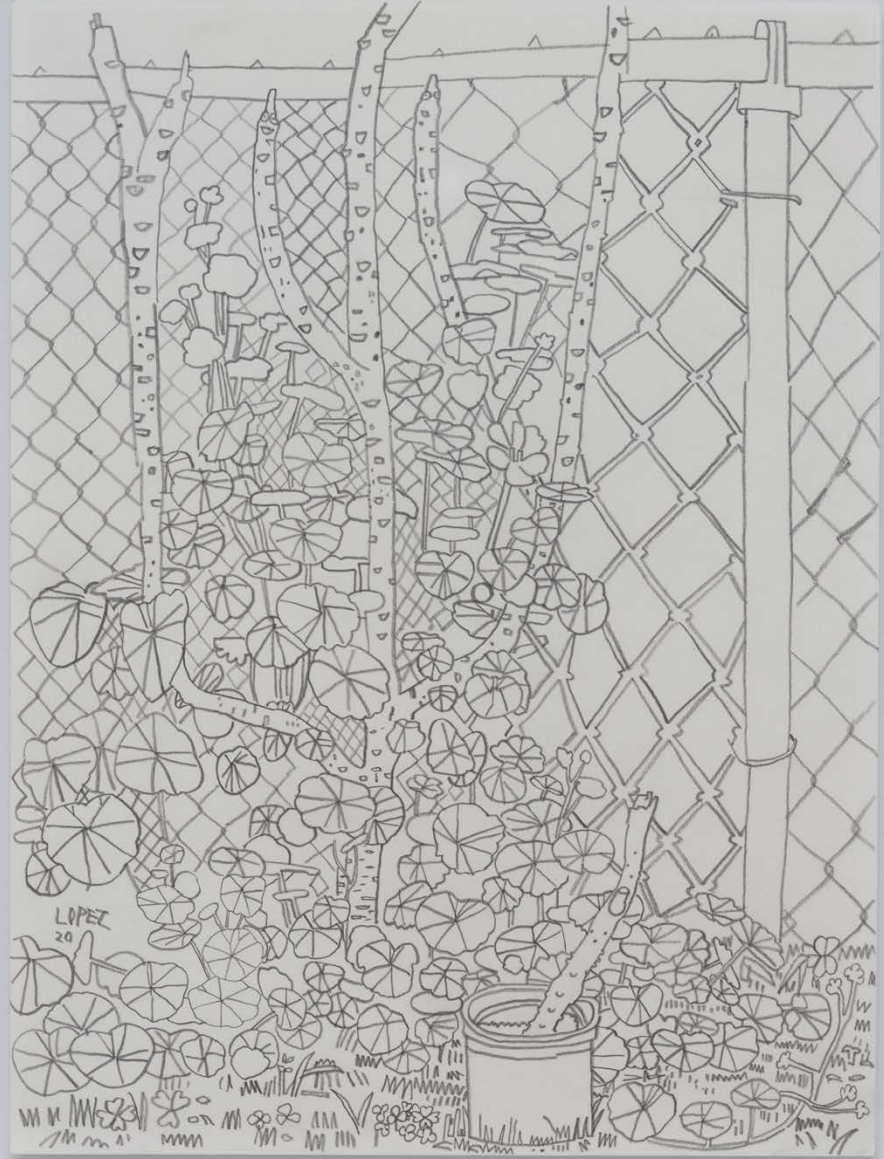
MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

Manuel López
Garden in Mt. Washington late morning
Graphite on paper
Sheet: 11 x 8.5 inches
2023
Framed



MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

Manuel López
Plants along the fence
Graphite on paper
Sheet: 11 x 8.5 inches
2023
Framed



MANUEL LÓPEZ

STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

Manuel López
Classroom interior with still life
(Sonora, Chihuahua, planta, y Ehecatl)
Graphite on paper
Sheet: 11 x 8.5 inches
2023
Framed



MANUEL LÓPEZ
STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

Manuel López
Monstera and door
Etching
Image: 6 x 6 inches
Sheet: 13.5 x 13 inches
On Somerset white 300gsm
paper with hand deckled edges
Edition of 20
2023
Unframed



MANUEL LÓPEZ

CV

Manuel Lopez (b. 1983, East Los Angeles, CA)
Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Fine Arts, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 Stepping Into The Light, Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2022 Still Life Goes On, Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2018 So Mundane and Incomplete, Eastern Projects Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 A Rose Has No Teeth, Mollie White Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
The Angels, Baik Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
Black and Blue Fantasy, Dream Child, Los Angeles, CA
Material Art Fair, Mexico City, Mexico
- 2022 Rostro, Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2021 Ni de aqui, ni de alla, Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2020 In color, Quotidian LA, Los Angeles, CA
- 2020 CuatroXcuatro, Espacio 1839, Boyle Heights, CA
- 2019 Youngbloods, Quotidian, Los Angeles, CA
- 2019 Sur Biennial, Rio Hondo College Gallery, Los Angeles CA
- 2019 Quiet Please, Avenue 50 Studio, Highland Park, CA
- 2019 Gardens, Last Projects, Los Angeles, CA
- 2019 Now(n) person, place, or thing, Tiger Strikes Asteroid, Chicago, IL
- 2018 Dark Progressivism, Museum of Art and History, Lancaster, CA
- 2017 Day of the Dead Curated Exhibition , Self Help Graphics, Boyle Heights, CA

- 2017 Friends, do not fear, New Image Art, West Hollywood, CA
- 2016 Saints, Sinners, & Los Angeles, Avenue 50 Studio, Highland Park, CA
- 2015 Surface Place, Abrazo Interno Gallery at The Clemente, New York, NY
- 2011 Student Juried Exhibition, VPAM, Los Angeles, CA
- 2010 SPILL, Betty Rymer Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 2010 SAIC Undergrad Exhibition, Daniel Sullivan Gallerie, Chicago, IL

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Manuel Lopez, Manuel Lopez wants you to see the Tongva Land on which this handball court sits. Los Angeles Times Image Magazine, May 26, 2021
- Arlene Davila, Latinx Art Artist, Market, and Politics, Duke University, 2020
- Esmeralda Bermudez, In hills of East L.A., artist finds his muse, Los Angeles Times, April 14, 2018

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- 2019 Youngbloods artist panel talk at Quotidian, Los Angeles, CA
- 2019 Sur Biennial panel talk at Ace Hotel, Los Angeles, CA
- 2019 Professional Practices, Panel discussion at Cal State Dominguez Hills, Dominguez Hills, CA
- 2018 Talks at Google: Latinx Art & Culture, Panel discussion at Google Headquarters, Venice, CA
- 2018 Artist Talk with Getty Multicultural Interns, Eastern Projects Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2018 En Conversacion, Panel Discussion at Eastern Projects Gallery, Los Angeles, CA