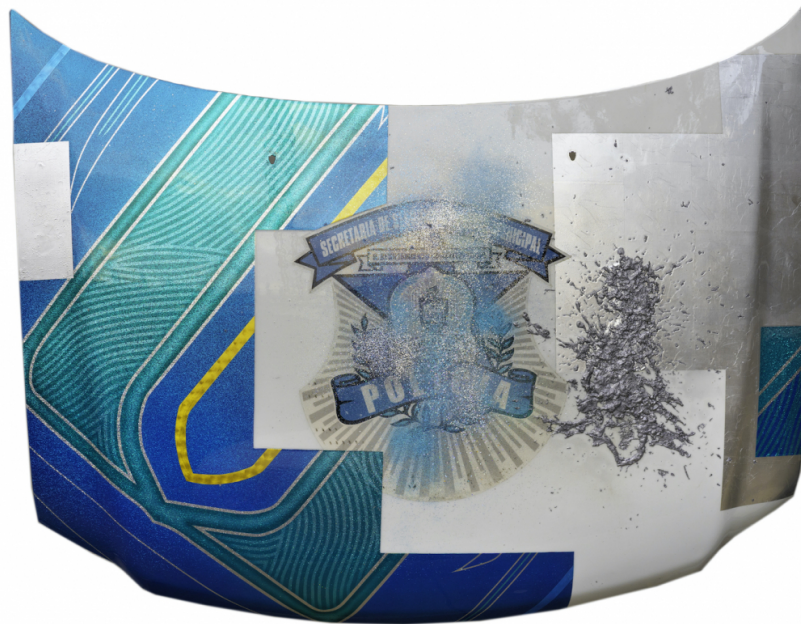


HYPERALLERGIC

Artist Encrusts Tijuana Police Cars With Glitter

Rubén Ortiz Torres gathered decommissioned patrol vehicles damaged in altercations with cartels and then bathed them in midnight blue and millennial pink.

Rosa Boshier - March 10, 2020



Rubén Ortiz Torres, “Chota, Cholos, and Narcos” (2020), silverleaf, urethane, lead, candy paint, and flake on decommissioned Tijuana Police car panel, 48 x 62 x 5 inches (all images courtesy the artist and Royale Projects)

LOS ANGELES — “Plata o plomo.” This phrase, credited to the famed Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar, has been used to describe the recruitment tactics of the Drug Wars. “Plata” means silver and “plomo” translates to lead bullet, sending the message that compliance with the drug trade will be rewarded, while disobedience results in death. Women have increasingly been caught in the crosshairs of drug violence, with an estimated seven women killed every day in Mexico. Though Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador has positioned himself as a victim of feminist

activism, women-led protests continue to demand accountability for femicide — with glitter as their weapon. The protesters call it the *revolución diamantina*, the glitter revolution.



Rubén Ortiz Torres, “Glitter Protest on Door” (2020), urethane, candy paint, flake, and holographic flake on decommissioned Tijuana Police car panel, 56 x 31 x 13 inches



Installation view of *Plata o plomo o glitter* at Royale Projects

The artist Rubén Ortiz Torres has named his exhibition at Royale Projects *Plata o plomo o glitter*, for which he gathered decommissioned patrol vehicles damaged in altercations with cartels and then encrusted them with glitter. Bullet holes are still visible on “Witness Protection Program” (2020), a cop

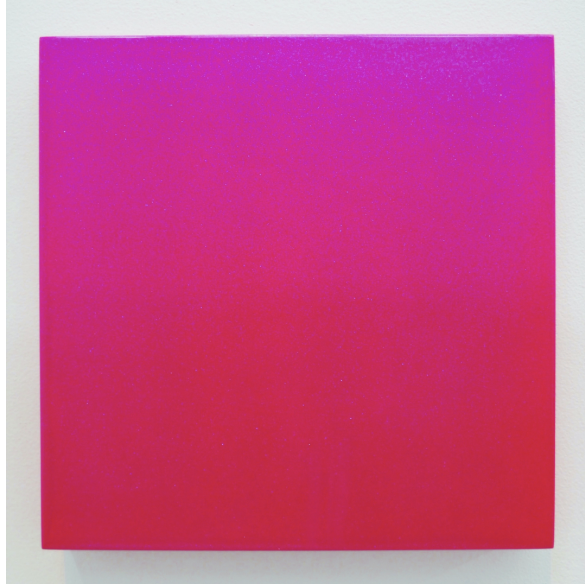
car bathed in midnight blue, millennial pink, and lavender candy paint. Bombs of pink glitter obscure the logo of the Tijuana Police on works like “Chota, Cholos, and Narcos” (2020) and “Glitter Protest” (2020). Artifact by artifact, Torres indexes the remnants of border violence, offering them up as evidence of militarism and government control. Torres’s bilingual titles allude to the joint responsibility that the US and Mexico hold in addressing brutality at the border.



Rubén Ortiz Torres, “Y La Culpa No Era Mía” (2020), silver leaf, candy paint, urethane, chromaluscent flake, holographic flake, and flake on aluminum panel, 52 x 114 inches

The beauty of these objects is almost disturbing. Torres’s eye-popping palettes are what initially attract us, until we begin to comprehend their critique of gender violence. We come for the colors and sparkles, but stay for the message. In other words, the art is a hook.

In addition to honoring the protestors, the exhibition is also dedicated to murdered activist Isabel Cabañillas, who became a symbol of the Mexican femicide epidemic. By shoehorning a third option into Escobar’s ominous phrase, *Plata o plomo o glitter* refuses these polarized fates of border violence. Instead, Torres evokes the glitter revolution’s demand and potential for change. Glitter is invasive. It gets everywhere.



Rubén Ortiz Torres, "Pinkish Protest" (2020), urethane and chromoluscent pearl on wood panel, 12 x 12 inches

Rubén Ortiz Torres: Plata o plomo o glitter *continues at Royale Projects (432 S. Alameda Street, Downtown, Los Angeles) through April 11.*