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Meet Ramiro Gomez, The Street Artist Exposing the Invisible

BY Eva Recinos | PUBLISHED: Wednesday, July 24th, 2013



A typical drive down Beverly Hills means sparkling window displays filled with stylish objects that would make any die-hard shopper drool. It means tourists snapping photos of sleek sports cars glimmering in the California sunlight, while others pose near the Beverly Hills Hotel, happy to take a souvenir back home of their visit to this wealthy oasis.

But some of those shutter-happy explorers might notice something different in the background of their hotel photographs: a cardboard figure. This life-size cutout depicts a man with a tan complexion wearing a white mask over his face and holding a leaf-blower; unlike its real life counterpart - the worker laboring over the hotel grounds to keep it tidy for tourist pictures – the painting is harder to overlook.

Only moments before, **Ramiro Gomez** carefully placed this creation near the hotel for all to see. Since April of 2011, the Los Angeles artist of Mexican descent has spent most of his time crafting similar figures and depositing them throughout Beverly Hills and West Hollywood. But the message translates to any location that recognizes the class differences that permeate the city and our country at large.

“In my work, I’m reflecting a community – especially in Beverly Hills – primarily an immigrant community that comes in to work in the day and transitions back home east at night,” said Gomez. “That’s a story that’s very universal.” In fact, despite giving the figures tan skin, Gomez leaves them without facial features – they are the everyman, the people behind the manicured lawns and spotless homes.



The artist beside one of his pieces

Gomez's work is grounded in his personal experience – after dropping out of Cal Arts, the 25 year old artist worked as a live-in nanny. It was then that Gomez began painting faceless workers into the glossy pages of lifestyle magazines, work which would eventually inspire his street art.

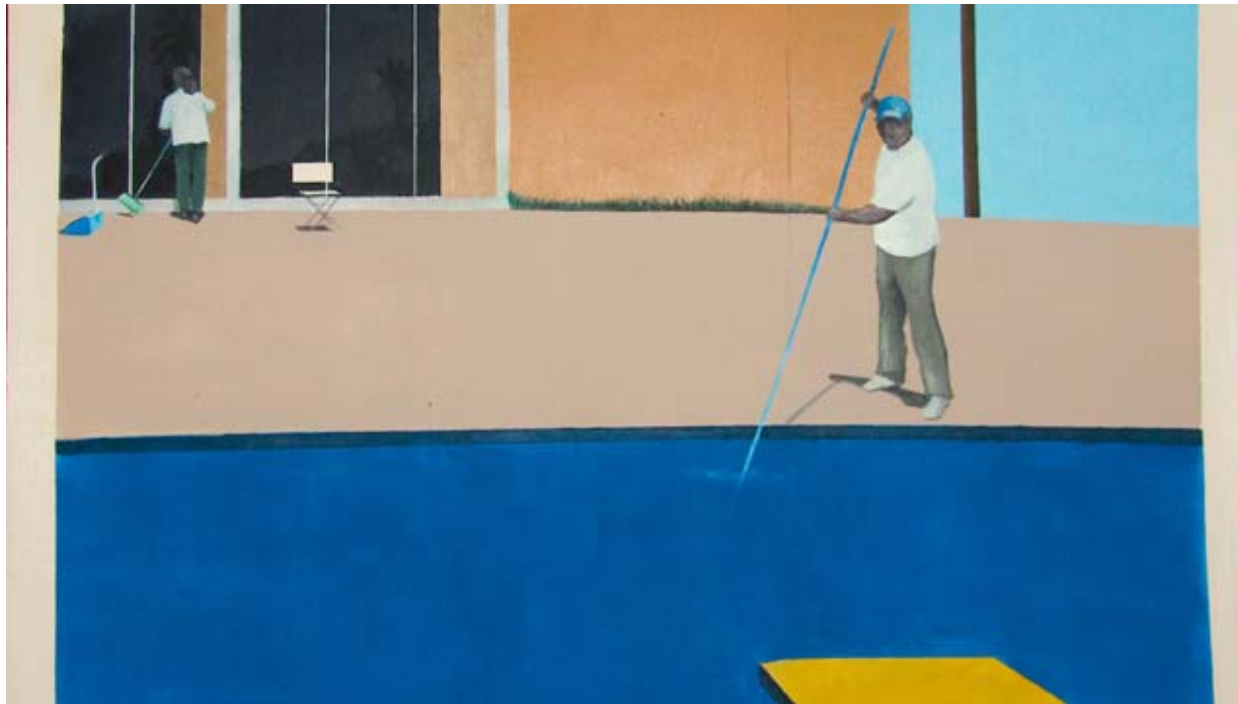
“I just jump onto the bus and hear two women talking about their jobs and I don't have to be involved myself in the conversation to understand,” said Gomez, of taking inspiration from the people he's surrounded by daily. “I can hear, I can feel, I can connect. Hearing them talk about their jobs is enough to take that little knowledge into the things I'm creating. The next time I'm in the studio I remember that.”

Based on the attention he received from his installations, Gomez was recently invited to show his work at UCLA. His piece, “Luxury, Interrupted,” reinterpreted one of the most recognizable and iconic works by **David Hockney**, “A Bigger Splash.”



"A Bigger Splash," by David Hockney

The original painting, which depicts a luxurious home framed by a blue pool and two palm trees, became “No Splash”; where the original featured a large splash of water in the middle of the pool, Gomez’s interpretation features tan man cleaning a splash-less pool.



"No Splash," by Ramiro Gomez

“When i was getting ready for the UCLA show, I was thinking ‘Am I ready for this?’ said Gomez. “It came naturally. The fear slowly subsided and confidence kicked in, especially when I got to that point when it wasn’t about the splash at all — it was from the get-go about no splash.”

Yet Ramirez continues to make a splash with the people who encounter his pieces. Some of them stare at his cardboard figures with curiosity, others with understanding. Gomez has even noticed that some of the people walking by look almost like the cut-out figures. It’s an effect much like that of other street art in Los Angeles — the idea of causing people to stop their usual transit and look at their surroundings more closely. But for Gomez, his work does not fall into that category so easily.

“I don’t have a crew. I work from West Hollywood. I don’t go out at night,” said Gomez. “I don’t spray paint. I don’t necessarily stencil. I don’t poster. I don’t vandalize, if you will. It’s a very different way so I’m confident the route that I’m doing ends up being my route. It’s not anybody else’s route per se.”

He takes inspiration from some street artists like **Swoon** but has also begun to branch out to locations off the beaten path, with the intent of highlighting specific issues. In one of his favorite pieces, “Los Olvidados,” Gomez traveled to Arizona, where he used multiple cardboard figures to re-enact a grim reality. The figures, some holding their hands over their faces, another covering her mouth and holding her pregnant belly were left in the desert, surrounding a white cross.



"Los Olvidados," by Ramiro Gomez

"It's a compositional piece, one of the only compositional cardboard cutouts," said Gomez. "I have done mostly single cardboard figures ... compositions are harder. There's no real framing device used. I mean, once it's photographed it's limited by photos in this lens, so it becomes a photographic work. But in public it's like I'm trying to get the painting away from the wall and onto the street and instead of the painting I'm trying to take the subject."

The cutouts, then, become much more than just street art or traditional art. They straddle the line between traditional and new, linked to today's contemporary art scene and textbook art history by one important thing — the need to communicate something.

"It's all cardboard that is transient and easily disposable, commenting on what is usually viewed [by society] as easily disposable workers," said Gomez. "It's an important thing for me to get out of my system because I feel others can identify with what I am trying to say and the unique way I am trying to say it."

To learn more about Ramiro Gomez's work, you can visit his website [here](#).

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