

The Creators Project

Mexican Art Collective Turns LA Gallery into Cult Headquarters

Andrew Nunes — Sep 9 2016



Los CHEECHICHONGS, Gabinete H-E, 2016. All photos by Carry Whittier and courtesy of Páramo

In some ways, an art collective functions similarly to a religious institution: various individuals with a singular, unified end goal come together to create and support something they unabashedly believe in, an artistic “greater good” of sorts. The eight members of Mexican art collective Gabinete Homo-Extraterrestre (The Cabinet of Homo-Extraterrestrials) seem to take this metaphor to new heights in their latest exhibition, *Destroy All Your Humanity*, recently on view at Los Angeles art space The Mistake Room and presented by Páramo Galeria. Through a fusion of unworldly spirituality, and cultural dysmorphia, the collective produces a multimedia installation which incorporates the “transfiguration, power-imbuing, and ritualization of art objects,” in the collective’s own mysterious words.



Destroy All Your Humanity Installation View, Gabinete H-E, 2016.

The ~~Mistake~~ Room

Throughout the expansive warehouse space, surreal and almost horrifying photographs hang upon the walls, accompanied by a series of sculptural objects hoisted upon various pedestals, like altars to the collective's quasi-religious cult. *Chacmole*, a carved stone sculpture on a fragmented pedestal, consists of two masked, seated individuals jointly holding an enigmatic bowl while directly staring at the viewer. The piece inhabits uncertainty and ambiguity, falling somewhere between a depiction of street beggars, an idol to unknown demented deities, and perhaps a scene from an adapted Stephen King horror flick.



LEFT: *Chacmole*, Gabinete H-E, 2016 RIGHT: *Destroy All Your Humanity Installation View*, Gabinete H-E, 2016

Los CHEECHICHONGS, another work erected upon an altar, rudely asks the viewer to “pay attention @!!*#@f...er!!!” and “spare some change?” for the busts of two skeletal figures adorned with cigarettes, bulging eyes, and awkward headwear. Sliding a coin into the pink pedestal leads to the animatronic movement and aimless chatter of the zombie heads, a small gesture, but one that rewards the devote worshipper with something, unlike the pay-to-pray scams that seem to run wild in other religious centers. Gabinete H-E ensures that its devotees aren’t left in the dark. But perhaps the most spiritually taxing work in *Destroy Your Humanity* bares the least resemblance to any religious institution ritual. A large wall covered in barbed wire in the spirit of a penitentiary cuts through the exhibition space, adorned with quotes by anti-fascist Spanish poet León Felipe. Interspersed around the wall of poetry are small circular slits, the portal holes to Gabinete H-E’s harrowing performance.

The collective placed “six pairs of holes for six pairs of arms painted black and holding the pages of Leon Felipe’s poetry translated into English. On the other side of the wall were the blindfolded, t-shirt and underwear clad but otherwise naked bodies of people imprisoned, perhaps waiting for execution,” José Luis Sánchez Rull, a member of Gabinete H-E, tells The Creators Project. “There were also images caught by a security camera which recorded all as the eye of a false God.”



LEFT: *Destroy All Your Humanity Performance*, Gabinete H-E, 2016 RIGHT: *Destroy All Your Humanity Installation View*, Gabinete H-E, 2016

The ~~Installation~~ Room

The other part of the performance included two other characters, 'the Tyrant' and his latex-adorned 'Consiglieri,' sitting on a bench while smoking, drinking mezcal, and chatting. Esteban Aldrete, another member of the collective, adds that "the Tyrant would pick up his golf club and play a game with his Consiglieri which consisted in hitting a plastic face across the room. The sound of the mask hitting around would sometimes make people come in again and the moment someone entered, we would flash the light on their face and then move back to our original, bored position. The light was really blinding, and when they stretched their hands to cover themselves from the blinding light, the Tyrant would flip out his phone and take a picture of them."

Floating between a meditation on the maliciousness of authority figures and the enactment of a bizarre ritual of the Gabinete H-E cult, the performance materializes the aforementioned artistic 'transfiguration, power-imbuing, and ritualization' described by the collective, allowing the art in the exhibition to function both as pieces of prolonged contemplation as well as portals into uncharted spiritual dimensions.

Although *Destroy All Your Humanity* concluded its run at The Mistake Room on September 3rd, documentation of the show can be found here.



Destroy All Your Humanity Installation View, Gabinete H-E, 2016