



LORENA OCHOA | RUEGOS Y DESIERTOS
MARCH 9 - APRIL 13, 2024

LORENA OCHOA

RUEGOS Y DESIERTOS

Charlie James Gallery is pleased to present *Lorena Ochoa: Ruegos y Desiertos*, a multimedia exhibition that explores parallels between the romanticization of bygone cowboy culture and present-day realities of migration, segregation, and immigration. Ochoa brings the stuff of everyday life into the work, and through that summons both the unique spirit of the immigrant neighborhood and the heavy weight of history. Found-object combines and sculptural assemblages juxtapose the familiar and the fantastic – deserts and dreams – in works that incisively critique the mythos of the American west through the lens of the Chicax experience.

The cowboy epitomizes a certain American self-conception, one of self-sufficiency, ruggedness, and strength in the face of the vastness of nature and perceived threats both animal and human. Ochoa riffs on the visual signifiers of cowboy culture, reminding us that the first vaqueros hailed from Mexico. *El la fr(ente)ontera* can be read as a manifestation of this historical erasure. A potted paddle cactus has been covered in Vantablack paint, rendering it “invisible” – like the vaqueros, a desert history hidden in plain sight. Meanwhile, *Burros hablando de orejas* rejects this assimilation, reclaiming and modernizing the idea of the “ride” by transforming a sawhorse and saddle into a slick lowrider. By merging the cowboy’s most essential tools with a style synonymous with Mexican-American car culture, Ochoa simultaneously explores the exclusionary erasure and the celebratory visibility of immigrant communities.

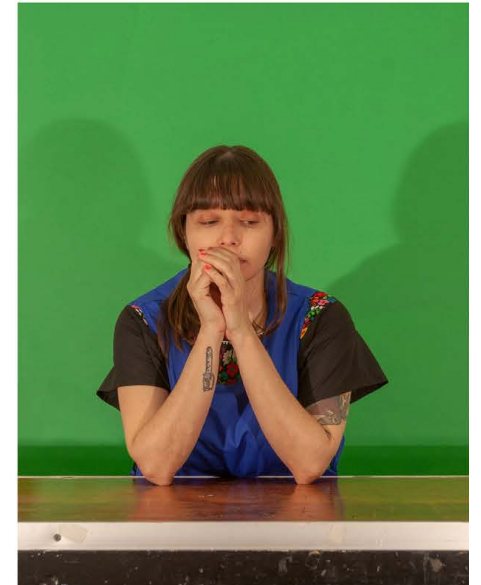
The dream of migration undergirds the culture that birthed the American cowboy. Westward movement fulfilled a great manifest destiny, yet when that dream takes root below the southern border and spurs migration north it is vilified and criminalized. Ochoa calls out this hypocrisy in works such as *Evaporations*. On one side of the piece, monarch butterfly migration patterns are etched into a rich blue plexiglass panel. This sits behind a white iron window covering, on which a horseshoe hangs for luck. The monarchs spend their winters in Mexico, and their annual journey northward is a highly anticipated entomological marvel. Abutting this tableau is a vintage Toyota truck tailgate, the sort that might be used by migrants on their own arduous trek north. Sinister reminders of what may meet them at the border dot the exhibition: zip ties and traffic cones, and the cheery yet ominous appropriated signage for “ICE Bait and Tackle.”

The ice freezer is a staple of the liquor store and mini mart, the proliferation of which contribute to impoverished food landscapes in marginalized communities, including the artist’s hometown of Santa Ana. Surrounded by the affluence of Orange County, Santa Ana is bounded on all sides by concrete: hemmed in by intersecting multi-laned highways and the channelized basin of the Santa Ana river. Ochoa’s wall-based assemblage works such as *House of Spirits* reference real-life locations while also evoking the more ephemeral and accumulative nature of rasquache. These works are also rooted in art history, with foundations in Robert Rauschenberg’s Combines, 20th century assemblage, and minimalist painting.

Fresas embodies the *domesticana* spirit of finding beauty in the everyday. At the work’s core is a white plastic patio chair, a common and unremarkable object. Yet the chair aspires to be something more – more comfortable, more elegant, more beautiful. To that end it has been dressed up in strawberry-dotted vinyl upholstered in the manner of a plush armchair. This aspirational embellishment is at the heart of *domesticana* aesthetics, which is characterized by abundance despite an environment of scarcity. This body of work holds close the dreams necessary to set out in search of a better life, as well as the hard-won pride, pain, and beauty that come from living between two cultures.

LORENA OCHOA

RUEGOS Y DESIERTOS



Lorena Ochoa's (b. 1983, Santa Ana, Ca) practice is an act of defiance—defiance of binary thinking, of art-historical hierarchies, of political borders that separate cultures and families. Ochoa received their BA in Visual Arts with a minor in Chicana/o Studies at the University of California Los Angeles and their MFA from the University of California San Diego. Ochoa has been awarded the Cota Robles Fellowship, the Oceanids Fellowship, UCLA Undergraduate Award in 2018 and 2019, the Hoyt Memorial Scholarship, the Weissman Travel Fund and the Michael Coomes Memorial Award. Lorena Ochoa was also an Artist in Residence at the Guapamacataro Hacienda in Michoacan in 2022. Ochoa's work was recently included in ICA San Diego's NextGen 2023 exhibition.

Artist Links:

<https://linktr.ee/elochoa>

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LORENA OCHOA RUEGOS Y DESIERTOS

Lorena Ochoa

EVAPORATIONS

Toyota truck tailgate, Lone Ranger book,
American Pride cassette, wooden cowboy,
sick boombox, acrylic, wood, and intaglio
on plexiglass

58 x 43 x 3 inches

2024

Artist Note:

This piece layers the hostilities between the Texas Rangers and Mexican communities with the etchings of the Santa Ana River and paths of the Monarch butterflies which aim to highlight the beauty of such migrations. I have come to see my mother's migration as synonymous to the paths of the Santa Ana River or the migration patterns of Monarch butterflies. These paths meander through the land mimicking a winding river or the water-based blood in her veins.



LORENA OCHOA

RUEGOS Y DESIERTOS

Lorena Ochoa

milaGRITOS

Tegular ceiling tile, plexiglass,
decorative iron works, carpet
square, plaster cast, acrylic
on panel

48 x 48 inches

2023

Artist Note:

The Miracle Whip logo is layered over the name of a local market Carniceria El Milagro with the subtle but important change switching Carniceria to Carne-ceria to anchor the piece in miracles of the flesh. This invites the viewer to contemplate the slipperiness of the term in relation to food scarcity while the Spanish text references the miracle of migration.



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RUEGOS Y DESIERTOS

Lorena Ochoa

Salchipulpos

Duritos, plexiglass, reflexive glass beads, tubing, How to Feed Four for \$1 book, plastic frame, lava rock, pastel and acrylic on panel
34 x 40.5 x 3 inches
2024

Artist Note:

Duritos and salchipulpos are adolescent staples that reminisce of the gap between when school lets out and when parents come home from work. Hot dogs are sliced and cooked to resemble octopi and duritos are fried wheat snacks doused in chile y limón available from your neighborhood street vendor.



LORENA OCHOA
RUEGOS Y DESIERTOS

Lorena Ochoa
Bait & Tackle
Traffic barricade, ICE sign, archival
inkjet print on transparency, enamel,
and Kandy on metal panel
46 x 30 x 6 inches
2024



LORENA OCHOA

RUEGOS Y DESIERTOS

Lorena Ochoa
Chocolate Milk

Decorative iron works, ceiling tile,
Dancing Señorita wind-up toy, white
hat, cake mold, rope, popcorn texture,
pastel and acrylic on panel
24 x 48 x 6 inches
2024

Artist Note:

This is a joyful portrayal of the differences between Mexican and American breakfast practices. Although glassfuls of chocolate milk are a staple in America, vendors serve Chocomil in bags with straws in Mexico.

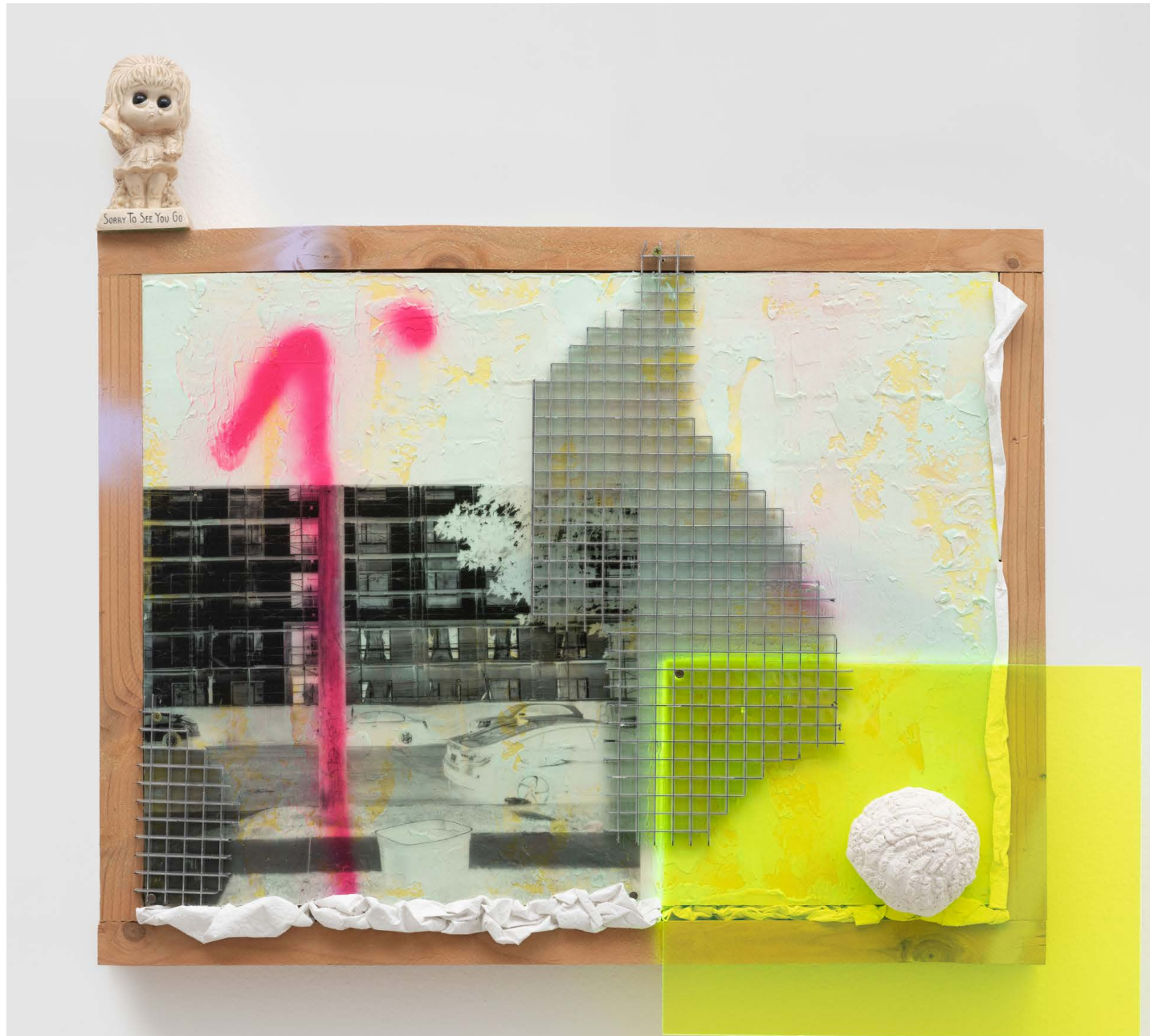


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RUEGOS Y DESIERTOS

Lorena Ochoa
Sorry to See You Go
Ceiling tile, Berrie sillisculpt
figurine, plaster, archival inkjet
print on transparency, spray paint
and acrylic on wood panel
32 x 36 x 4.33 inches
2024

Artist Note:
This work embodies the tensions
building in the neighborhoods of
Santa Ana. The photograph is a
negative taken from the modest lawn
of a low budget apartment complex
and depicts the massive construction
of luxury lofts.



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RUEGOS Y DESIERTOS

Lorena Ochoa
La Migra(ción)

Cigarette vending panel, ratchet strap,
upholstery tacks, archival inkjet print on
transparency, orange peel texture, acrylic,
and pastel on panel
28 x 31 x 3 inches
2024

Artist Note:

The hypocrisy between the romanticization of westward migration and the vilification of northbound migration is highlighted in this assemblage while the product slogans “come to Marlboro country” and “make a run for the border” are compressed together by a tool used to secure material usually for travel.



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Lorena Ochoa

Aguas

Mickey Mouse, candle
espiritual, tarp, poly strap,
yoke harness, furniture tacks
archival inkjet print on
transparency, acrylic
and pastel on panel
24 x 37 x 2 inches
2024

Artist Note:

A contour map of El Aguaje, Michoacán mimics the lines created in the panel's wood grain while the photograph of the train speaks to migration all which create beautiful line work in their own right. In the forefront an altar is created inside a horse's yoke to aid travelers. The work is anchored by the word *¡aguas!* a cautionary exclamation to be careful yet forge paths like the water in rivers.



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Lorena Ochoa
Zapatito Blanco | Zapatito Azul
Train Case luggage, rope, mop heads, burro milagrito, horseshoe, and enamel on ceiling tile
Diptych
16 x 12 x 2.5 inches each
2024

Artist Note:
The title of the work is a children's game that determines who is "it" in a game. The diptych itself has the train routes of Transcontinental Railways in the US and of La Bestia railways of Mexico pinstriped onto train case covers and situated in a way that makes them look like they are both moving in the same way.



LORENA OCHOA RUEGOS Y DESIERTOS



Lorena Ochoa
American Pride
Hard Shell Suitcase, Crocheted Blanket, Granny Square
Jacket, Gas Can, Acrylic on Boom Box, and American
Pride: Songs of God and Country Cassette
14 x 18 inches / each
2023

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Lorena Ochoa
Wage Poverty
Train set model of a factory, ratchet strap,
and foam
10 x 6 x 4 inches
2024



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Burros Hablando de Orejas

Genuine Burro sawhorse, tooled saddle,
enamel, metal flake & Kandy on metal
panels

36 x 25 x 11.5 inches

2023

Artist Note:

The title of the work derives from a saying that is similar to the English saying "pot calling the kettle black." In this iteration it is used for its literal translation to mean a donkey talking about something it knows about, ears. It is meant to reference vaqueros as the first cowboys and how the idea of a "ride" has changed from horses to lowriders.



LORENA OCHOA RUEGOS Y DESIERTOS

Lorena Ochoa

Me Vale

Panaderia rack, plexiglass, plastic
shipping and receiving warehouse
on Ameri-Vent gas cap, heavy
duty SOS box, plastic church box,
spackle and sugar
39 x 21 x 26 inches
2024

Artist Note:

The title of the work is a play on words. It derives from the slang phrase meaning "I don't care" but is used for its literal translation meaning "it costs." Found objects, such as an Ameri-Vent gas cap are turned into cakes signifying the struggle of choosing between two costs such as keeping the gas on or having money for food.



LORENA OCHOA RUEGOS Y DESIERTOS

Lorena Ochoa
Me Vale

Panaderia rack, plexiglass, plastic
shipping and receiving warehouse
on Ameri-Vent gas cap, heavy
duty SOS box, plastic church box,
spackle and sugar
39 x 21 x 26 inches
2024



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El la fr(ente)ontera
Frito-Lay tin can, weather-worn
stool, supply line hose, Santa Ana
dirt, and vantablack derivative
on synthetic cactus
68 x 13 x 13 inches
2024

Artist Note:
El nopal en la frente is an old dicho
or saying used as a demeaning way
of telling someone that they look
indigenous or Mexican. This work
simultaneously confronts how BIPOC
communities wrestle with western
beauty standards while addressing
the erasure and violence of these
communities in academic histories.



LORENA OCHOA
RUEGOS Y DESIERTOS

Lorena Ochoa

Pe(s)cados

Wood, rope, casters, and metal flake &
Kandy on Filet-o-Fish playground rocker
34 x 26.5 x 26.5 inches
2024

Artist Note:

McDonalds is the first and last major fast food chain you see when entering or exiting the US through the San Ysidro border. In this assemblage, the filet-o-fish spring rider is transformed into a lowrider as a point of celebration and contention for the behemoth.



LORENA OCHOA RUEGOS Y DESIERTOS

Lorena Ochoa

Barritas

Traffic barricade, traffic light, archival
inkjet print on transparency, enamel &

Kandy on metal panel

52 x 24.5 x 6 inches

2024

Artist Note:

The work addresses the conocimiento, an unspoken knowledge of the way things are, of the limitations of marginalized communities. Houses hide behind cinder-blocked fences and security window bars, while its inhabitants enjoy Barritas for breakfast. The limitation is internalized and this work invites viewers to reassess.



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Fresas

Plastic lawn chair, embroidery thread, and
vinyl cloth

32 x 24 x 20 inches

2024

Artist Note:

Fresa is a slang term used to describe Mexican adolescents who dress or behave in a way outside of their economic and social status equivalent to the way people in the 80s and 90s dressed and spoke like valley girls regardless of socioeconomic status. While this slipperiness occurs at the forefront, the underlying reference to the politics surrounding strawberry farming and strawberry picking is still embedded in the work.



LORENA OCHOA

CV

Lorena Ochoa (b. 1983, Santa Ana CA)

Education

- 2024 MFA, University of California San Diego
- 2019 BFA, University of California Los Angeles

Solo Exhibitions

- 2024 Ruegos y Desiertos, Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2023 Se Busca, Grand Central Gallery, Santa Ana, CA
Se Busca, UCSD Main Gallery, La Jolla, CA
- 2022 Bodies in Motion, Far West Gallery, La Jolla, CA
SOMOS DE CALLE, Commons Gallery, La Jolla, CA
- 2021 Enter Through Courtyard, UCSD Main Gallery, La Jolla, CA
White Lies, SME Gallery, La Jolla, CA
- 2020 In the Dark, UCLA Gallery 2147, Los Angeles, CA
Consuming Consumption, UCLA Gallery 2147, Los Angeles, CA
- 2019 Autoretrato Retraction, Wight Gallery | Los Angeles, CA
Wish You Were Here, UCLA Gallery 2147, Los Angeles, CA
Vacancy, UCLA Gallery 1129, Los Angeles, CA
Dementia Americana, UCLA Gallery 1129, Los Angeles, CA

Group Exhibitions

- 2023 Next Gen, ICA Central, San Diego, CA
Ahorita!, Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Sites of Blood and Water | Vielmetter Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA
- 2022 Blue Lagoon, Phase Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Frieze: San Diego, UCSD Main Gallery, La Jolla, CA
Paws for Effect, Far West Gallery, La Jolla, CA
- 2021 Decifrando Terrenos, New Wight Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2020 Graduate Exhibition, Digital Show, Los Angeles, CA

- 2019 Undergraduate Scholarship Award Exhibition, New Wight Gallery, Los Angeles, Ca
Clitique Critique | Wight Gallery | Los Angeles, CA
Juried Exhibition | Curator: Andrea Fraser | UCLA Admissions Office
- 2018 Undergraduate Scholarship Award Exhibition, New Wight Gallery | Los Angeles, CA
Gleamer, UCLA Little Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Undergraduate Studio Walk, UCLA Broad, Los Angeles, CA
Are You Ready to Rock?, New Wight Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
The Dream, UCLA Little Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Undergraduate Juried Show, Curator: Lanka Tattersall, New Wight Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2017 Dyed in the Wool, UCLA Little Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Juried Student Exhibition, Curator: Luis De Jesus, The Gallery at GCC, Glendale, CA

Publications

- Original works published, La Gente Newszine, February 2019, Print
- Olsen, Katelyn, Art Exhibit to Display Student Works Exploring Topics from Anxiety to Oppression,, The Daily Bruin, November 2018, Online publication
- Zhong, Tiger, Art Exhibit Ties Students Together, The Daily Bruin, December 2017, Print

Awards and Residencies

- Guapamacataro Residency
Maravatío, Michoacan Summer 2022 Participant
- Cota Robles Fellowship
University of CA, San Diego 2020 - 2023
- Weissman Travel Grant
University of CA, Los Angeles 2019