

# TATIANA GARMENDIA

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## ANOTATED IMAGE LIST

*Beforehand/Afterwards* 2015  
Pigment Ink on Archival Paper  
19" x 13"

*Beforehand/Afterwards II* 2015-2016  
Pigment Ink on Archival Paper, Wood Chair, Embroidered Military Blanket  
Dimensions Varied

The photograph documents a performance in honor of my father who was tortured by the Cuban G2 and died at 36 years old. Many of the techniques used against him by the Castro regime are now used in Guantanamo. I embroidered a list of these on a standard military blanket and wrapped myself in it as an offering of warmth to my father's memory and as a reminder of the uninterrupted use of torture in Cuba.

*Border Crossing, Pittura Infamante* (diptych) 2015  
Pigment Ink on Archival Paper  
13" x 19" each

Here I call on the archetype of The Hanged Man which is drawn from *pittura infamante*, a genre of defamatory painting displayed in public centers as a form of shaming and punishment for traitors. The dislocation of the self through corporeal and social punishment seemed especially resonant, given my family history and early childhood experiences. Lastly, the popular understanding of the Tarot trump, which includes models of sacrifice, suspension, conformism, and new points of view, proved a landscape rich in cultural metaphors.

*Border Crossing (Exposed Torso 2)* 2015  
Pigment Ink on Archival Paper  
13" x 19"

A parallel between the body and the landscape is drawn in the video by the same title. In this still from the film, a spotlight reveals the many international visas stamped on my skin.

*The Exodus III (Mariel Boatlift)* 2015-2016  
Stretched Polyester Film, Acrylic, Graphite, Inject on Folded Onion Skin Paper  
Dimensions Variable

Since January 1, 1959, more than 8,200 executions or disappearances are directly attributed to the Castro governments. Additionally, deaths at sea in exit attempts are estimated to surpass 77,000. Here a pile of hundreds of paper boats printed with the stories of the 125,000 Cubans who fled to the USA during the Mariel Boatlift allude to the Cuban government's systematic forced migration or removal of opposing political voices. Genetic maps escape the boats painted above the pile. How is this different from any other form of ethnic cleansing? This work draws a parallel between the flight of dissidents from my country and the current Syrian refugee crisis.

*The Exodus I (Mariel Boatlift)* and *The Exodus II (Mariel Boatlift)* 2015  
Pigment Ink on Archival Paper with Carbon Hand-tinting

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13"x 19"

Genetic maps escape the photographed boats caught in mid-air. The disappearance of opposing political voices from a population marks a new kind of ethnic cleansing.

*Fused, Fidel In Me (Contempt, Anger, Sadness, Disgust, Surprise, Happiness)* 2015

Pigment Ink on Archival Paper, six panels

19" x 13" each

As a child, I was initiated in Santería. A distinguishing feature of the Regla de Ocha is that the powerful orishas *ride* the initiate in trance possessions. In Jungian terms, the acolyte is rendered homeless in her own skin as the more powerful archetype takes over her movements and utterances. In the *Fuse* portraits, Fidel is conceived as a forceful political, cultural, even mythical personality who rides my identity as a Cuban born refugee. Here six of Paul Ekman's atlas of emotions catalogs recognizable facial expressions in self-portraits that are then *possessed* by Fidel Castro's renowned features.

*Exodus (Lunation)* 2015

Pigment Ink on Archival Paper

19" x 13"

*Exodus (The Mirror)* 2015

Pigment Ink on Archival Paper

24" x 22"

*Exodus (Akimbo)* 2015

Pigment Ink on Archival Paper

19" x 13"

*Exodus* uses photography to explore dislocation of the self as a woman of color in a white world. A map of my husband's handprints creates a kind of maze or screen over my body, protecting me from the viewer's gaze. Mirror imagery is symbolic of reflection and duality as I contend with my two cultures, languages, and races. Akimbo here refers to the act of leaving a Maze through a passage in the boundary wall, and then reentering it through another passage. The area outside of the Maze is treated as one giant cell and is another metaphor for the body.

*Double Entendre (Dear Homeland)* 2015

Watercolor on Paper

30" x 41.5"

I sometimes dream of returning to Cuba, despite the persecution that led my family to flee our native soil and seek asylum in the USA. The mercury glass skull reflects the tension between a past that's lost and a future that hasn't materialized. It is a vanitas that asks what dies in that space?

*Legend of the Fall (Dear Homeland)* 2015

Watercolor on Paper

30" x 22"

My granduncle, Carlos Prio Socarras, was president of Cuba until Batista ousted him in a military coup. Fidel Castro ousted him in turn. Revolution! One party falls, another swings into power. Differences in political processes between my native and new homelands aside, is power a form of vanity?

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*Taste Of You (Dear Homeland)* 2015

Watercolor on Paper

22" x 30"

The sense of voice and taste that define my identities as a Cuban-born refugee and a naturalized American since early youth. The mouth opens to speak Spanglish– the patois in turn defines my thoughts on the reflective skull. My tongue reaches out and tastes the memory of frijoles and apple pie.

*Disappeared (Dear Homeland)* 2015

Watercolor on Paper

30" x 22"

I was confined in an internment camp for political dissidents as a young child. There I met Toni, an orphan whose parents had been taken by the Castro government. Although viewed as an act of defiance by the camp soldiers, Toni braved beatings and danced with a skull to entertain us younger kids.

*Tasty Totem (Dear Homeland)* 2015

Watercolor on Paper

30" x 22"

In Chinese alchemy, mercury is akin to the thought process because it takes the shape of what contains it yet reflects the world like a mirror. I taste myself on a mercury glass skull, savoring the reflective space between my cultural identities.

*Candy On My Tongue (Dear Homeland)* 2015

Watercolor on Paper

30" x 22"

The terms "lengua" or "tongue" refer to both my taste organ and spoken languages. Both of my cultures/tongues/homelands are conceived here as a skull, consumed by licks. It all becomes memory and ephemeral.

*The Big Drink (Departure)* 2016

Mixed Media on Stretched Polyester Film

48" x 36"

I meditate regularly on a mercury glass skull. Here I reflect on all those who have braved the seas in search of freedom but have drowned instead.

*Wet Feet Dry Feet Dancers, triptych* 2016

Mixed Media on Stretched Polyester Film

40" x 94"

*detail-* left panel (40" x 30")

*detail-* center panel (24" x 40")

*detail-* right panel (30" x 24")

*Dancing Splashdown* 2016

Mixed Media on Stretched Polyester Film

40"x30"

Personal memories as a refugee are conflated with larger historical narratives, here referring to the US Wet Feet Dry Feet immigration policy in which refugees found on the water are summarily returned to their country, even if death awaits them.

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## *Border Crossing* 2015

Video

2:32 mins

The human body becomes contested territory. A spotlight tracks movement across my body like a homeland security searchlight over borderlands, revealing international visas stamped on my skin. The spoken litany repeats and distorts verses from Reza Mohammadi's poem *You Crossed the Border*, creating a disorienting intonation.

## *The New Colossus* 2015

Video

4 mins

As the child of dissident parents, I was denied entry in the Movimiento de Pioneros (Pioneer Movement), the juvenile wing of the socialist party. Kids denied the pioneer scarf were marginalized and segregated from the general population of school age children, sometimes pulled from regular classes to sort coffee beans. Here I sort coffee beans, using this image as a surrogate for the gaps in cultural continuity that locates immigrants and other *outsiders* on the peripheries of the social order. I also play with the language of political rhetoric to explore how it differs from bureaucratic praxis.

## *Mi Patria Querida (My Dear Homeland)* 2015

Video

3:39 mins

A popular *son Cubano* becomes a marker for the nostalgia countless refugees experience. Choked with homesickness, many exiles openly dream of returning to their native soil. Layers of longing and loss blend in this single channel video, in which Garmendia dances with death. In remembrance of Toni, a childhood friend and his *desaparecidos*.

## *GTMO The White Rose* 2015

Video

2 mins

Drops of red, white, and blue acrylic paint, the colors of both the Cuban and American flags, reveal an aerial map of Guantanamo Bay. A translation of José Martí's poem, *Cultivo Una Rosa Blanca*, forms the soundtrack for this abstract 2-minute meditation. It is joined by the insistent sound of water dripping— an allusion to water boarding. In the language of flowers, a white rose symbolizes eternal love and innocence, as well as secrecy and silence.

## *Mi Fidel (My Fidel)* 2015

Video

6:56 mins

Ambivalence and contradiction forge the heart of this video. I appropriate all of Fidel Castro's impassioned gestures and speech patterns during a 7 -minute performance, functionally becoming the statesman. Despite a terrible record of human rights violations, the retired Fidel remains one of the most charismatic political brands around. Famous for his oratory prowess, the content of this UN speech is nearly universally appealing. Simultaneously, my allegiance to dissidents who protest the Castro government's suppression of opposing voices is displayed across the performance, a silent march shifting through time and space, seen but not heard.

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