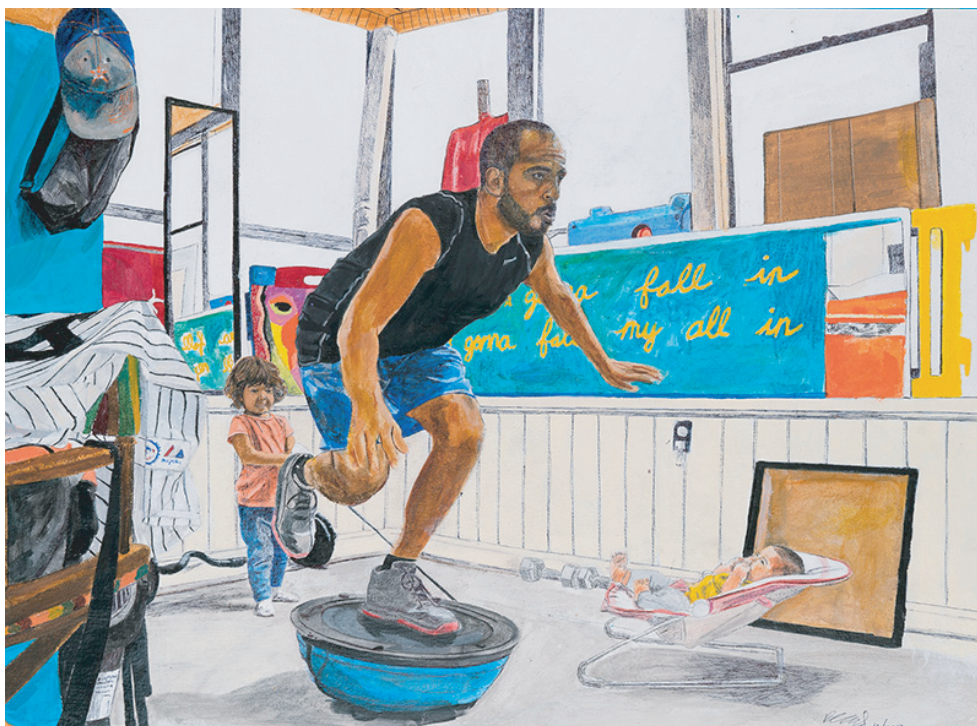


## “Raul Gonzalez: Doing Work” at grayDUCK Gallery

The show's images of construction work and fatherhood challenge expectations of masculinity, domesticity, immigrant work, and art

Reviewed by Melany Jean, Fri., Dec. 1, 2017



Strength and Balance Day in the Studio With the Girls by Raul Gonzalez

A few workplace settings: a roadside; a rooftop; home, with the kids. All are explored by artist Raul Gonzalez in his solo show "Doing Work." The exhibition is comprised of two series, each colorful subversions of expectations of work and workers – men's work, manual labor – on their own and by nature of being alongside one another.

One series features various mediums on bits of construction material: concrete slabs, reflective tape, printmaker paper. These often concern the theme of manual labor. Inspired by Gonzalez's father, who has worked construction throughout his life, the pieces show the landscape of a construction site. These temporary settings are animated by people too often dismissed as just another part of the scenery passing by, a scenery often derided for its vulgarity or inconvenience. But Gonzalez sees these spaces differently. The irregular-shaped pieces are split into geometrically blocked spaces washed in bright colors – reflector yellow, hazardous orange, piercing blue – often used by construction workers to aid visibility. They explore and play with patterns: of color and shape, of communication and companionship, of necessity and exploitation. They show drawn and painted tableaux of moments on-site, scenes of men working mid-crouch, a crew taking a break in the back of a pickup, or a roadside with flashing signs.

The show highlights other work, too, that of raising children, running a home, and maintaining an art practice. This is the work of Raul Gonzalez's day-to-day life. He shows it in tender, vibrant drawings and paintings that reveal the intimacy of small moments from his life as a stay-at-home father and artist. Pieces like Strength and Balance Day in the Studio With the Girls, done with acrylic, ballpoint pen, and Prismacolor marker, provide a glimpse into Gonzalez's daily balancing act, here literal as he wavers hands-outstretched on top of a bubble-shaped balance trainer, accompanied by his daughters, whose singular gestures and presence in the works underscore the artist's paternal love.

The physical nature of both construction work and parenting is sublimated in Gonzalez's exuberant dancing, on full display in a video of him moving throughout a city and occasionally at an in-gallery live performance on a kaleidoscopic dance floor installation. Joyful, corporeal, and catching, it's a touch of cool slyly in keeping with Gonzalez's visual style and thematic concerns.

Gonzalez's incorporation of the construction worker's materials and color palette – hyper-visible neons – and the patterns found in road signs and symbols we instinctively follow daily, is smart and effective not only for its visual stimulation, but also in punctuating the emphasis the very existence of his work provides. By showing this work, these moments, these people, as foundational as they are often overlooked, Gonzalez proves his own point that they have value and are worth examination. Their display and juxtaposition – domestic duties performed by a dad in a basketball jersey across from a small group of outfitted construction workers – at once challenge expectations of masculinity, immigrant workers, domesticity, and contemporary art.

**“Raul Gonzalez: Doing Work”**  
**grayDUCK Gallery, 2213 E. Cesar Chavez**  
**www.grayduckgallery.com**  
**Through Dec. 3**