

# NO DICHO

VOL. 01



## UNTOLD LATINX NARRATIVES



COVER BY BIANCA GONZALEZ-MARRA

### CONVERSATIONS

Katty Huertas  
Bianca Gonzalez-  
Marra

### CULTURE

Significance Behind  
Nameplate Jewelry

### STYLE

Brands to Support  
That Are Celebrating  
Latino Culture

### TRAVEL

Puerto Rico:  
Photo Diary

Hi there, I'm glad we've finally met,

I'm a proud Puerto Rican woman with a Hispanic last name and a thick Boricua accent who's tired of people telling me I'm not Latinx enough because of my white skin or "good English." "Wait, you're Latinx? You don't *look* it!" are words I've heard regularly for as long as I can remember. Many people don't just doubt my Latinidad—they deny it.

No Dicho is a response to everyone who's tried to force their stereotypes and caricatures of Latinxs on me. This publication showcases Latinx talent spanning across a variety of art and design mediums that highlight the beauty and diversity that the Latinx community brings to society. Coupled with compelling stories revolving around identity, this publication serves to tell untold narratives about Latinxs.

This is my journey to define for myself what it means to be Latinx.

yours truly,

Zuli Segura

Katty Huertas -04

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CONVERSATION WITH

# Katty Huertas

Ready to take what's hers.

Colombian painter, illustrator, designer, and knitwear artist based in Washington, DC, Katty Huertas has a style that is unmistakably intentional, authentic and deep. Working in a variety of mediums, her work explores issues of female identity, double standards, and animal rights. Katty received her BA in Arts with a Minor in Art History from FIU (Florida International University) and is currently completing her MFA in Graphic Design at MICA (Maryland Institute College of Art).



I traveled to Baltimore to meet Katty in her home in Odenton, outside Washington, DC. We sat on her living room couch, sandwiched between her cat throw pillows. While Gerry and Larry, her actual two cats, lounged nearby, we talked for over an hour about duality in one's culture and the driving force behind her identity-based work.

Story & Photography  
**Zuli Segura**

**You've talked about always having been creative and curious from an early age. Was there a moment when you realized this would be more than a hobby? Did you get any push-back along the way from family, etc.?**

So I think I always wanted to draw and create. I didn't know it could be a career. It wasn't until I was older and went to a museum and saw a painting. That's when I felt like OK this could be a career. That's when I changed immediately and knew I wanted to be an artist. Yes, there definitely was push back. When I was in school I used to get really good grades, good test scores, and excelled in math so my professors and parents pushed me to play it safe but then after a bit, they knew there was nothing they could do but be supportive.

**You're Colombian, born and raised. How does it inform your**

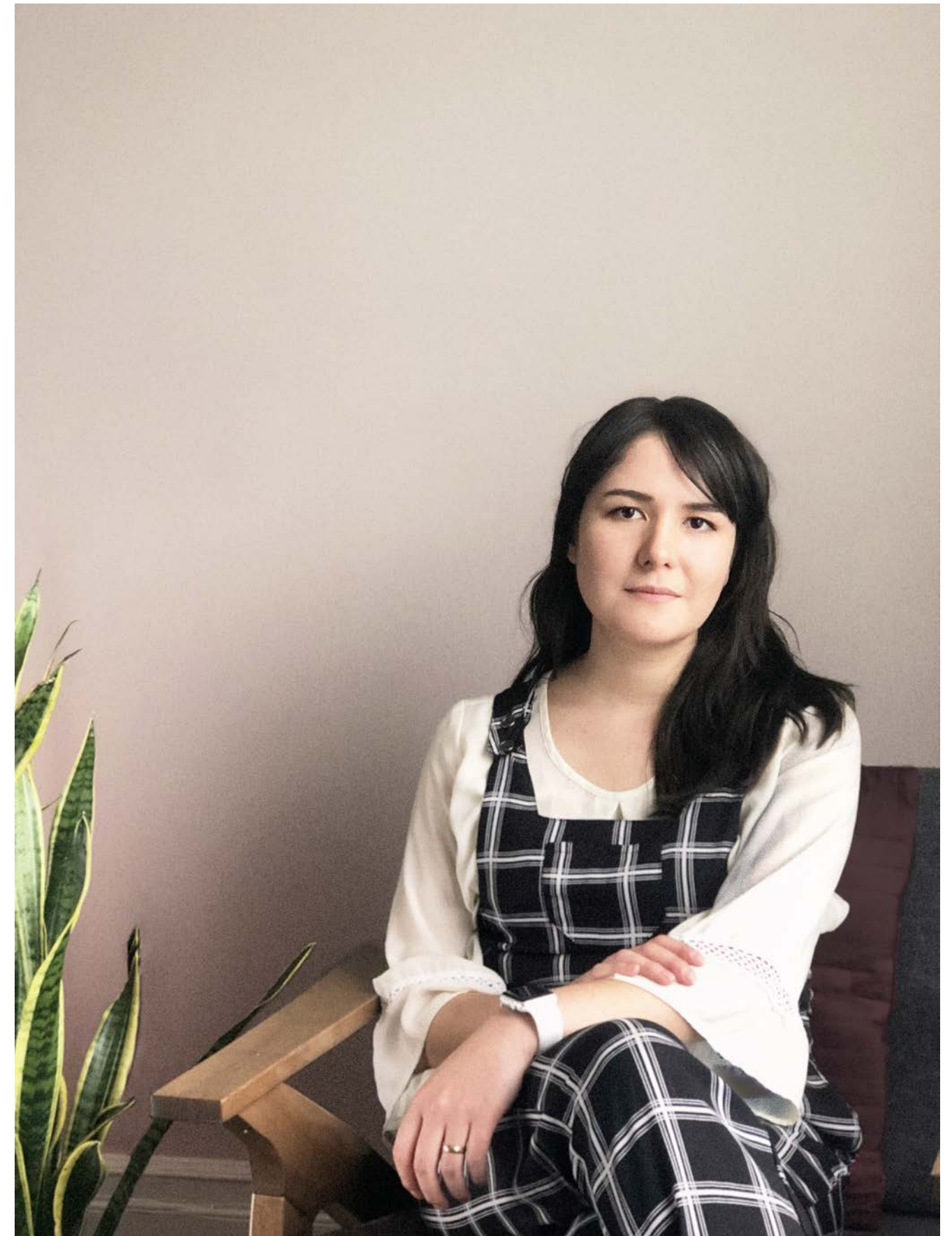
**perspective on identity and approach to design.**

My upbringing was pretty normal. Good family, parents still married, and an older brother. None of them are artists and both my parents didn't graduate from college. It explains why they were hesitant with me pursuing a career in the arts. My dad dropped out of, from electronic engineering, I believe, like five semesters in to start his business but also for financial reasons. In Colombia, student loans work differently. The Colombian government doesn't offer that much aid. It's very limited. Either your parents pay for your school and the government pays for half or you pay out of pocket. It's really complex. It's hard to go to school in Colombia. Because you don't know exactly what aid you'll get but it's also expected of you to attend college. And as far as being Colombian, I think many people

can relate to this, but I never truly felt that I was Colombian until I left because when you are home, everyone's like you. In the US, you realize 'Oh I'm not like them, so I'm something else' which caused a lot of my work to change when I moved here. When I transferred to FIU in Florida and then here to MICA, that's when I got it-like OK I'm a minority here and it's gonna be hard because I'm not going to be a hundred percent from here or from Colombia. I'm in the middle.

**We've talked a lot about duality and what that means to people like us who struggle with where we come from and where we're living. Can you talk a little bit about having that sense of duality and how it affects your identity?**

I think this is not only for Latinxs but for immigrants or those who have shared cultures trying to fit into a space that's not that accepting of





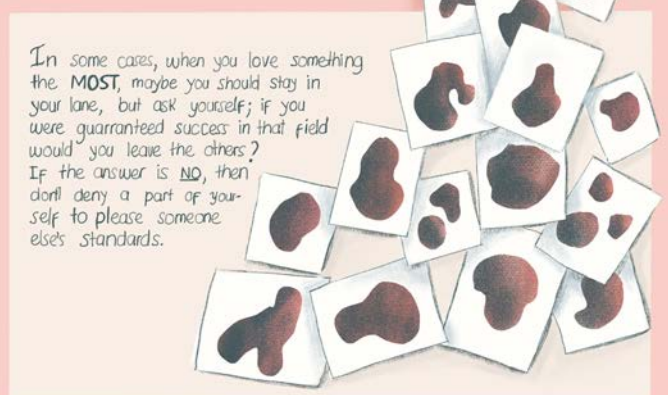
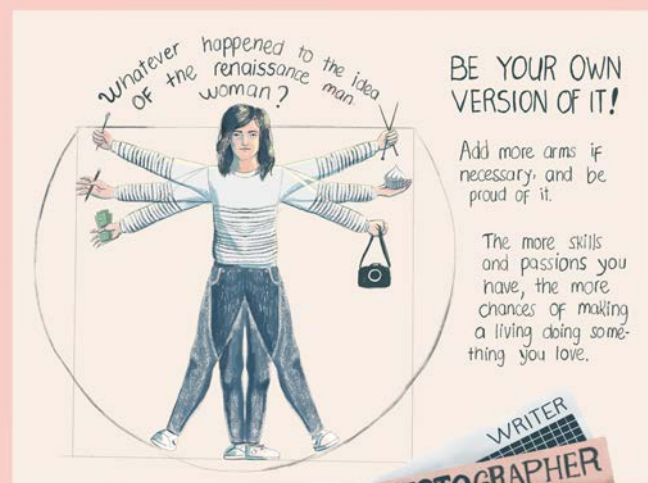
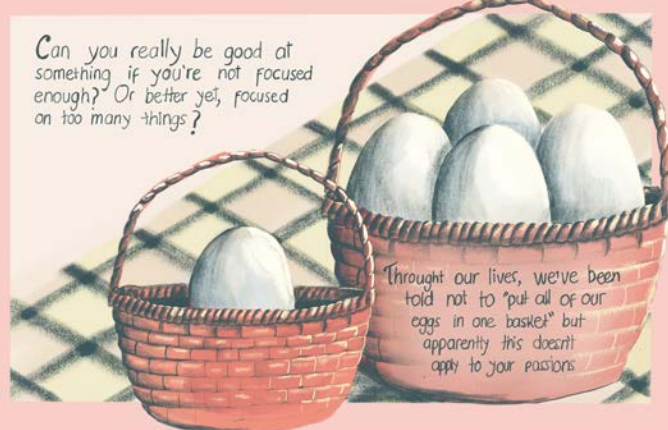
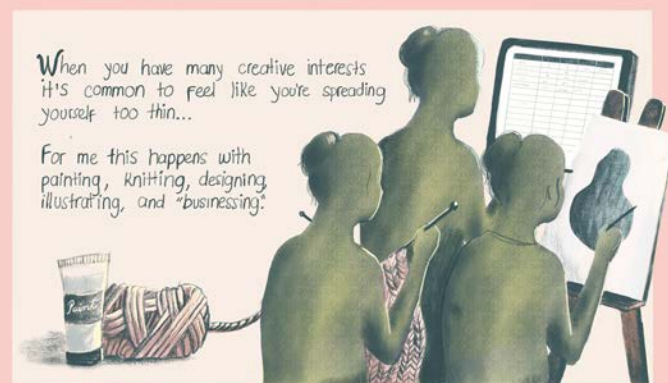
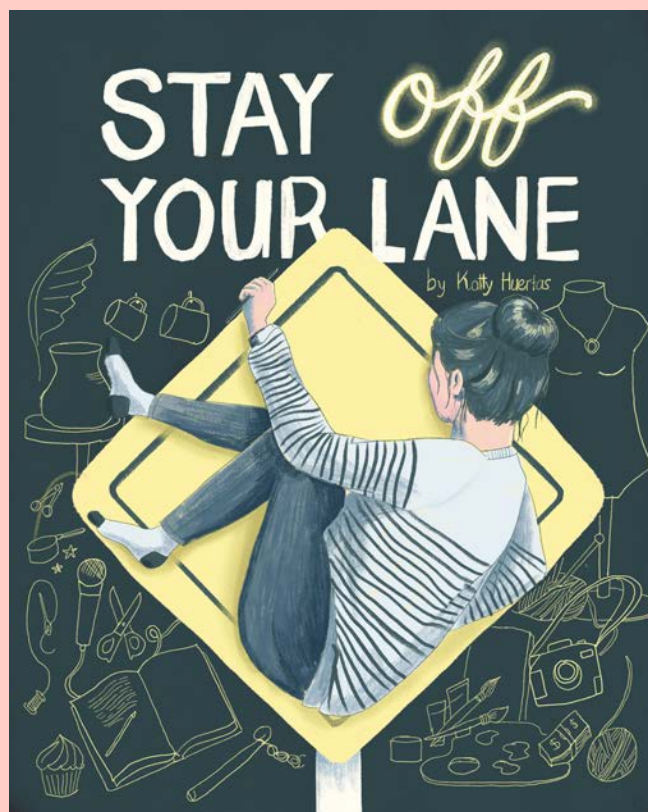


**HYPHENATED IDENTITIES**  
Project for LAND Studio, RTA and  
the Cleveland Foundation about  
hyphenated identities.



“there’s not a  
**prescription**  
to what a Latinx person  
looks, sounds, or acts like.”





#### STAY OFF YOUR LANE

Comic about staying out of your lane and the pressures of choosing one creative path.

“My experience migrating here has been smoother compared to others because of the way that I look. That’s privilege.”

your culture. I came here when I was 18 so I wasn't a kid but I was young enough to adapt. When I moved here I realized that even when I become a citizen I'm not going to be a quote unquote true American. I'm going to be American on paper but for people that are born and raised here I'm always going to be like "another." And as a Colombian, I left the country and moved to the US when I was relatively young. I feel like I'm missing out on a lot of the culture that goes on there. So if I go back I'm never going to be 100% Colombian. So it's this limbo kind of like in-between.

#### Growing up in Colombia, what narratives of Latinx people were you consuming on a daily basis?

It's funny because even though everyone's Colombian, the media tends to show only one type of Colombian. All the TV news anchor, actors, they're all light-skinned. There's a lot of colorism in the Latinx community and I didn't see it first hand growing up just because

I was young and unaware. I knew I had privilege because I'm white passing until I start speaking. I felt that privilege in Colombia because people would be say "Oh my God you look European" and that would be the highest compliment you could ever receive.

#### And when you moved to the US?

But then when I moved to the US, it's as if we all become one minority discriminated by the majority and their ideas of Latinxs.

#### What are people's reactions when they find out you're Latinx?

People will tell me that I don't look like Latinx or that I'm not Latinx enough. But there's not a prescription to what a Latinx looks, sounds, or acts like.

#### You're about to get your citizenship right?

On April 12th!

#### Can you talk about your experience migrating to the United States?

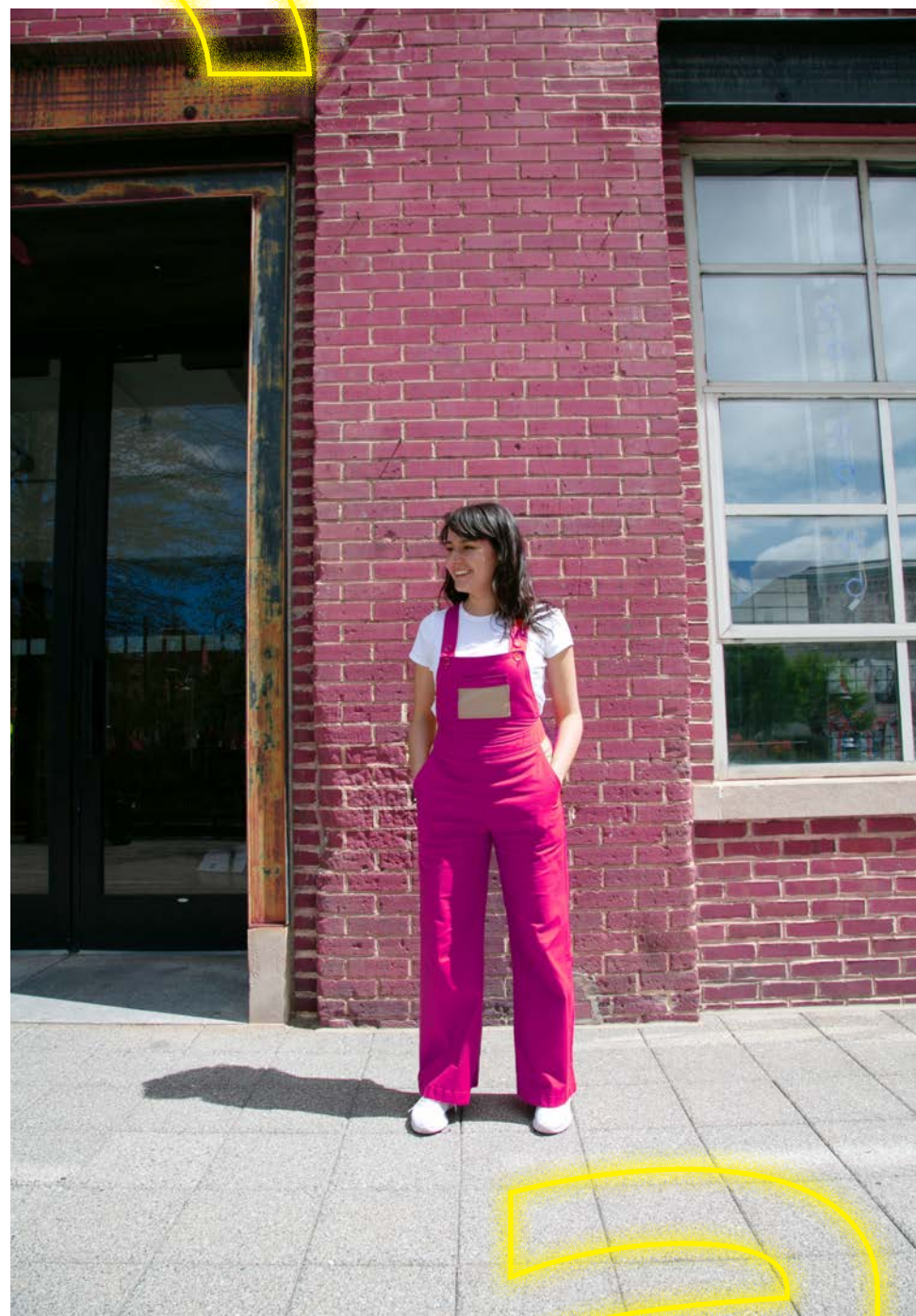
I first got my green card. I arrived to Miami. So the culture shock was not that big.

#### Miami-what I like to call Latin America.

Haha yes! Like North-Latin America. If you go into a store and speak English, they go get someone to help haha. Not much of a culture shock. But when I moved to Maryland two years ago, it was very different. There's not a lot of Latinx people here and for that reason every time there's an event or something that asks for Latinx people, I question if it's genuine or tokenism. And coming to MICA, it's the same. I haven't met a lot of Latinx people so I'm so glad that I met you in the program. I've been lucky to find Latinx people here and there, especially artists and designers, but we're in liberal-minded city so my experience as an immigrant hasn't been as harsh as other peoples might be, especially in different areas of the country in this political climate. And going back to privilege, my experience



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migrating here has been smoother compared to others because of the way that I look.

**Have you experienced strangers, acquaintances, colleagues, even friends make comments about the fact that you challenge their stereotype of Latinxs?**

Definitely. They'll generalize Latinx immigrants in a negative light and say things like "Oh yeah no but you're not like those Mexicans that come here." Like what? Now I'm making you feel better about yourself just because you're talking to me, like "Oh you're good, you're not racist for talking to a Latinx." It's like a safer space for you because I don't fit the stereotype that you have in your head about Latinxs.

**How does it feel to become a citizen now versus, let's say, becoming one during the Obama administration?**

I moved here during the Obama administration and it was a nice surprise you know. Student loans for everyone, so everyone can actually study even if you have to pay them, which is another huge problem. But at least you got the option. Yes, there's a lot of problems and I don't want to minimize those problems by saying that. But you had an African-American president, which would never happen in Colombia, people openly talking about gender equality and gay rights, and so I thought everything was moving forward. It's still not perfect but we're gonna get there. But then this happened. You know what's funny? Whenever I go to my appointments for this citizenship, I have to be reminded of who is President because all the offices have the presidential portraits and now the photo is Trump. It feels weird haha.

**Almost like, uh do I really want to do this?**

Haha yeah! No but I feel good just because you never know what

could happen until you have your citizenship, honestly. I'm hopeful because I like to think that a country is more than the president. And the fact that there's been so much resistance and people trying to subvert the narrative he's been telling, that's good proof of who we are.

**What is the biggest challenge you've faced as you've grown? As an individual, Latina, designer, woman, etc.**

One challenge that I face that has

**"I like to think that a country is more than the president."**

nothing to do with my ethnicity, it's more about my interests, is the fact that I'm interested in both art and design. It's, again, the duality we talked about but in a different sense. In the art world you have to be one hundred percent an artisan, only fine arts, and if you do some design, it's considered selling out. Even though I paint and illustrate, I can't be an artist because I'm a graphic designer on the side. In design school, I'm told, "Oh you're not that much of a designer, you're more of an illustrator or an artist." So again, I'm in the in-between. Why am I forced to choose? Why can't I be interested and excel in different things?

**It's really frustrating because people always want to pigeonhole. As if you have to be within this box and you as a person must be simplified. Dare to have one thing that sets you apart and people question it. This is a good segway into your work**

**because there's nothing simple about your work. What has been your most fun or interesting project to date?**

I have two projects. The first was what I did before graduating in my undergrad in studio art. It's a series of 13 self-portraits. It's when I first started dealing with identity after moving here but also dealt with how women are treated for taking selfies or being confident with our appearance compared to men. During my art history minor, I kept noticing we saw a ton of self-portraits by men – Rembrandt, Van Gogh, etc. And no one ever questioned them or were treated as vain or obnoxious. But when women take selfies or take pride in the way they look, it's perceived differently. They're considered vain or dumb or whatever. So I decided to do 13 self portraits.

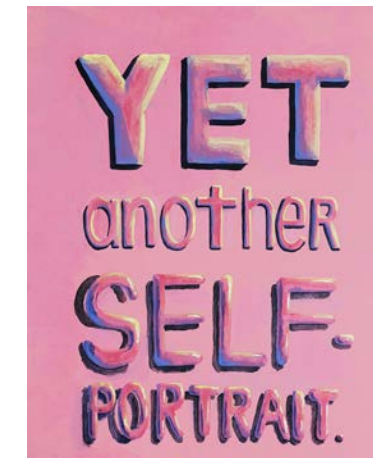
**And the second project?**

The Newspaper. Like our world into a world run by animals that actually treat humans the way we treat animals and so they say things like "human products." The newspaper deals with everyday news. One example of reporting is the section on how inter interspecies marriage was legalized. So yeah, a bunch of little things like that. I had a lot of fun with that project.

**You faced a lot of push-back on this project and very early on. It was also the beginning of the school year. How did you face that?**

If we're spending that much money on school, then we should be doing what we want to do. It's not to say that we shouldn't embrace and incorporate feedback because we should but when people are shutting down your entire idea, not just the typeface that you're using, but the entire idea then that's different.

**You're one of the hardest working designers that I know. How do you**



**SELF-ISH**  
A series of self-portraits exploring the female identity.



**THE WOOFKER POST**  
A newspaper from an alternate universe in which humans are not the leading species and animals have control of everything.



ESTABLISHED 1978  
VOL. 17.78

THE WOOFKER POST

CALTIMORE, AM

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2028

\$9.95

WEATHER



Caltimore Version  
Heavy wind and showers  
High 45F • Low 32F

POLITICS



The economy is stronger than ever

Kimberly Gardenas

Three years into President Choi's first term, unemployment is at a record low at only 2.5%. National student loan forgiveness may be one of the reasons the economy is thriving.

ON THIS DAY

Energy Agreement  
Today marks the 5th year anniversary of the signing of the 2023 Energy Agreement to transition from fossil fuel vehicles to electric ones. See how this has affected the environment.

EXCLUSIVE



Peter J. Fluffles  
Exclusive in-depth conversation with the richest cat on earth. Founder and CEO of Mim's talks about his humble beginnings, how he currently runs his business and how he plans to deal with the most recent controversies.

5 Missing Children Found Safe, Serial Kidnapper Still at Large

NEW MIAMI, SC • BY EMMA STRONG



The search for 3 missing children from Caltimore, AM has ended today in Deerami, FT. A Castor Alert was issued Thursday evening for the disappearance of 2 puppies and 1 fawn. Identified as 12-month-old fawn Veronica Heller, 7-month-old puppy Carlos Vidales, and 16-month-old puppy Jerry McClaren. The children were last seen at a PJ

Purmart convenience store in Caltimore, AM. One mother believes an 18-year-old male giraffe lured the kids to leave the store, however authorities were able to narrow down the suspects to a 15-year-old male pig named Donald Smith from New Miami, SC seen in a security tape walking away with the children.

The suspect is currently at large and authorities recommend anyone in the area to stay inside. "After questioning the children a little more,

they did not seem to have the right answers for the police officers" CMPD Detective Banny Fernandez said. "For us one missing puppy is one puppy too many" Detective Crowley said. Police have not said if the kids were found with anyone else and what could be charges in the case. The children are being reunited with their families next week after going through

medical examination. They show no reports of physical abuse, but two of them are refusing to speak and show signs of mental trauma.

Police reports the suspect has a record of domestic violence, substance abuse and was currently under parole. A reward of \$50,000 has been offered to anyone that comes forward with information on Smith's location.

OLD MUGSHOT COURTESY OF THE CMPD

COURTESY OF THE CHILDREN'S PARENTS

NO DICH0

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KATTY HUERTAS

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**BEING MARRIED  
AND AN  
ADVOCATE FOR  
FEMALE  
EMPOWERMENT  
ARE NOT  
CONFLICTING.**



**IT'S NOT GONNA  
MAKE YOU LESS  
OR MORE TO BE  
MARRIED OR TO  
HAVE A PARTNER.**



“All the women in the program—we are so supportive, always trying to raise each other up. It doesn’t feel like a competition.”

**How do you balance school, freelance, your Etsy shop, your cats, life?**

I don’t like wasting time! If I’m watching TV I knit and that’s what fuels my Etsy shop. So my “downtime” is watching TV or a movie and completing orders. Yeah. I feel it’s also because I have a very supportive partner. He pushes me. He always wants my work to be better. He’s like my harshest critic. A bit harsh sometimes haha but he makes me be better.

**Well now I just want to talk about you and Juan haha. It’s not often, especially with our age, that I get to see a hard working, successful, hyper-focused woman with a solid supporting partner. It’s refreshing because there’s that narrative of ambitious women never finding a man who can handle her success. Or a woman not wanting to settle down in fear of jeopardizing her career.**

It’s funny you mention that just because I find there’s this other

judgy side of it. It usually comes from women who are all about female empowerment and come off as being against marriage. I’ve been in situations before where I would reference my husband and be mocked by these women. Like being married and an advocate for female empowerment are not conflicting. It’s not gonna make you less or more to be married or to have a partner.

**So you’re currently wrapping up your first year in the MFA Graphic Design program at MICA. How has that experience been for you?**

Coming here was a great decision. I’ve grown a lot as a designer and I feel lucky to have found people like you and all the women in our program. We are so supportive, always trying to raise each other up. It doesn’t feel like a competition. It’s more like yeah I like helping each other. So it’s been great.

**In your own words, what does it mean to be Latinx? What does it mean to you?**

Latinas come in all forms, shapes,

and colors so it’s hard to narrow down one definition, even if it’s a subjective one. Being Latinx is not subject to race, but to ethnicity, to culture and that also varies from country to country. My own awareness and perception of being Latinx changed from when I was living in Colombia to when I moved to the USA. But, generally speaking, I think it’s fair to say we’re very diverse, warm and lively. We’re also very hardworking, but even with this drive our page gap is one of the biggest with Latin women only making a little more than a half of what white men do.

**What is the best advice you’ve ever received?**

I think the best advice. So my father. He used to say “No matter what you do, just be really good at it.”

**And what advice would you give your younger self?**

I would say to keep going, keep pushing. Maybe be more secure in yourself. Believe in yourself. And that everything’s going to be fine!







NO DICHO

CONVERSATION WITH

# Bianca Gonzalez-Marra

All hail the Mofongo Queen.

Born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Bianca Gonzalez-Marra is challenging the way society depicts Latin women. By day Bianca is a digital designer working in NYC, designing products that are beautiful, functional, and inclusive. By night (and weekends), she's one half Sonic Yonix, a creative duo comprised of visual artists Diandre Fuentes and herself, making comics and doodles inspired by their experiences and observations as (proud) brown girls.



I met Bianca at Madame Sousou, a little coffee shop in Astoria, Queens, where we caught up after almost a year of not seeing each other. While cars honked in the background, we talked about growing up in Puerto Rico, her sense of identity, and her thriving side-gig Sonic Yonix.

Story & Photography  
Zuli Segura



**You started out in animation at RISD but ended up in product design/illustration? Can you talk a bit about that?**

When I started out at RISD, I initially majored in illustration and I lasted about one semester. I knew right away—I can't do this. It's the largest department at the school and everyone has a completely different style so I found that it was really hard to get focused feedback. Also I was doing a lot of mixed media things, and usually the students that thrive are people that go into background design for animation shows, that are technically skilled, and everything's hyper realistic. So right away like I noticed my feedback wasn't great. And I said OK I can't do this. From there I wanted to pick a program. I eventually went with the film animation video department. So I went there and I did a lot of back and forth where sometimes I shot in black and white film. Other times I just did hands-on animation. So that's where I found my focus or as I like to call it, the lack of focus. That's how I see my practice.

**And after graduation?**

So I graduated and usually the path students are pushed in are becoming an independent animator, filmmaker that applies to residency. And you would submit your work to animation festivals. The problem with that is that most animation festivals are super competitive or super elitist.

**And expensive!**

Exactly! Most of the really good ones are. So naturally I graduated and didn't have a job. I didn't know what I wanted to do. I went to L.A. Without a car. Lasted for six months at this unpaid internship at a video production place. It was really bad. So then I decided I need to go back somewhere why I don't have to pay rent and just figure my situation out. I moved back to my parents who were in Canada at the time. And while I was there I think I

knew that I chose the wrong thing to study. I knew that I had to take a step back and re-evaluate things. So just before I switch careers I want to get one last little animation. I made a kickstarter. I went to a local animation studio spot in Toronto where you could go in use their space. I submitted to a few festivals, got into a couple which made me pretty happy. And it was more experimental and I felt like this the last time. At least for right now that I'll be able to do this. So after I got that out. I decided to move to New York. I didn't have a job lined up but I eventually got a few gigs where I animated for agencies, doing motion graphics. And I think from that point on I noticed that as soon as there was money involved and someone was really telling me what to do then I really hated it and it made me very unhappy. But things that were more graphic design based, I was like oh this seems, not that it's subjective but it just seemed like I was able to take in that feedback more. It seems like a more collaborative approach versus when you do something more experimental and abstract it just seems way too personal. So let's put that energy towards something that we have to do for someone else for money. Once I decided to go the graphic design route, I signed up for every tutorial web site, looked at all the Lynda videos, and immersed myself in that world. Then slowly that's how I made my way to this little agency. And then when I made my way to Kettle, I think that's where I really fell in love with just doing web sites because it's a mix. You're doing design but the end product is something that moves, it breathes, it's interactive.

**So it paid off?**

Oh yeah for sure haha.

**Hearing stories like yours is endearing because I think as individuals we always think we're alone in our experiences. Personally, when I was at Kettle I**





**I was cripplingly self-conscious. I thought since I didn't go to art school or study design, I'm never going to be on that level of good design. But the reality is that there are so many people like you and me who are working in completely different disciplines than what we studied. And they kick ass at it.**

That's something I wish they told us more about in school. Like it's fine, you're not failing if you end up doing something that you weren't doing in the classroom because what you learn in the classroom is just

relevant to that moment and maybe later you'll find like oh this is where it really clicks. It took a while to get to that moment of assurance. But there's also so many times where I get the imposter syndrome. All the fucking time haha. And that stuff never goes away. I mean I know there's people that are just born with that confidence. Mainly, men. That are able to just do anything with authority, regardless if it's a new trade or not.

**Can you expand on that?**

Yeah. I think as women especially in design – and girl – don't get

me started with animation. One of the reasons why I didn't like it as much was because it was very male dominated. I'm lucky that my guy friends from school were very nice and didn't hog all the projects themselves. But even in Los Angeles, where I was interning in that studio, it was very male dominated. But now I'm feeling a lot less apologetic being open about it. Like pointing out “wow there's more women here” or just encouraging someone to hire more women, just things like that where before I would hold myself back because I don't want to be alienated or alienating and do to

them what they were doing to us. But I think after a certain point until it balances out we have complete freedom to point out inequality when we see it.

**Tell me about your personal background. What was your upbringing like?**

So I grew up in San Juan, Puerto Rico. This reminds me I was just thinking the other day, how I do believe that Puerto Rico is one of the best places to grow up as a kid. I don't know how it is to live there right now but I'm really fortunate for the upbringing that I had in my childhood.

**Ugh couldn't agree more.**

I guess my early years, up until I was like 6 or 7, we were more lower middle class and then at one point my parents started doing very well with their small businesses. Never rich or anything, but we were higher middle class. I guess one of things I look back on and I was telling my parents is we never went on a vacation. I only remember this one time when we visited my family in the Dominican Republic but never really traveled. And they were saying like, oh maybe to you it seemed like we have all this money but in reality we had just enough. They said we skipped out on a lot of luxuries so that we could live in a better central area, closer to the city. Because of that my upbringing was really great. I mean also with who my parents are, it was always really creative, always encourage us to take art classes in school. I think that helped as a kid, feeling free to kind of roam around and be this really

weird, quiet kid that was always with my watercolors or drawing in the corner. And my parents always really encouraged that. And it wasn't until I was in high school that I knew oh this is different. At home I was always really accepted for being a little offbeat and having I guess non-traditional interests. Even though I had my three really close friends, I felt disconnected from what the scene was in high school. I wouldn't say that I was bullied but I got the side eye all the time. Because you know– I dyed my hair half pink one time, wanted to wear leather boots and loved hot topic.

**And you went to an all girls, private school right?**

Right. So part of me is really thankful for going through that pretty brutal experience because I think it made me have very thick skin. Because even though I consider myself to be pretty introverted, I'm very picky with the people that I become friends with and let into my life. I think it's still kind trained me to put on this poker face or this survival mode where it's like just be nice to people because I just kind of wanted to avoid conflict as much as possible. And being in an all private Catholic all girls school, it can get pretty brutal. Only female teachers. All nuns. Women that looked like a character from the Golden Girls haha. It was around that time I started feeling very moody and angsty, like nobody gets me except my two friends. I often asked myself why do I live in a society where there's immense pressures of looking a certain way. And I have

these specific memories where I felt like every girl around me was really skinny. And usually in these Caribbean countries you normally get more thick, curvy girls but I just remember like there was more than a normal amount of girls who were naturally very thin. It really impacted me and the media I was consuming didn't help. You're watching TV and all you see is the same thin body type. Then I go to high school and I see the same body. So high school for me meant an insane insecurity. It was a mix of feeling better than everyone because of my brains but physically feeling so different and alienated. And so naturally I was like where can I go to the people get me. Art school yes haha. So that's what led me to apply to RISD.

**Tell us a bit about how you came to be one half of Sonic Yonix.**

It started as an inside joke between me and my friend Diandre Fuentes when we were at RISD, where we were RAs. So I met her because we were both in illustration. We were both miserable haha and we were in this figure painting class. She was maybe a few easels next to me with her friend–Molly. I remember they just really stood out to me. Both came over to me and asked “Are you enjoying yourself? Because we really hate this and we just looked over at you and you're the only other person that looks like is in the same boat as us.” I was like Yeah yeah you can say that. And then my friend Molly says “I have a feeling we're gonna be best friends” and then that's that.

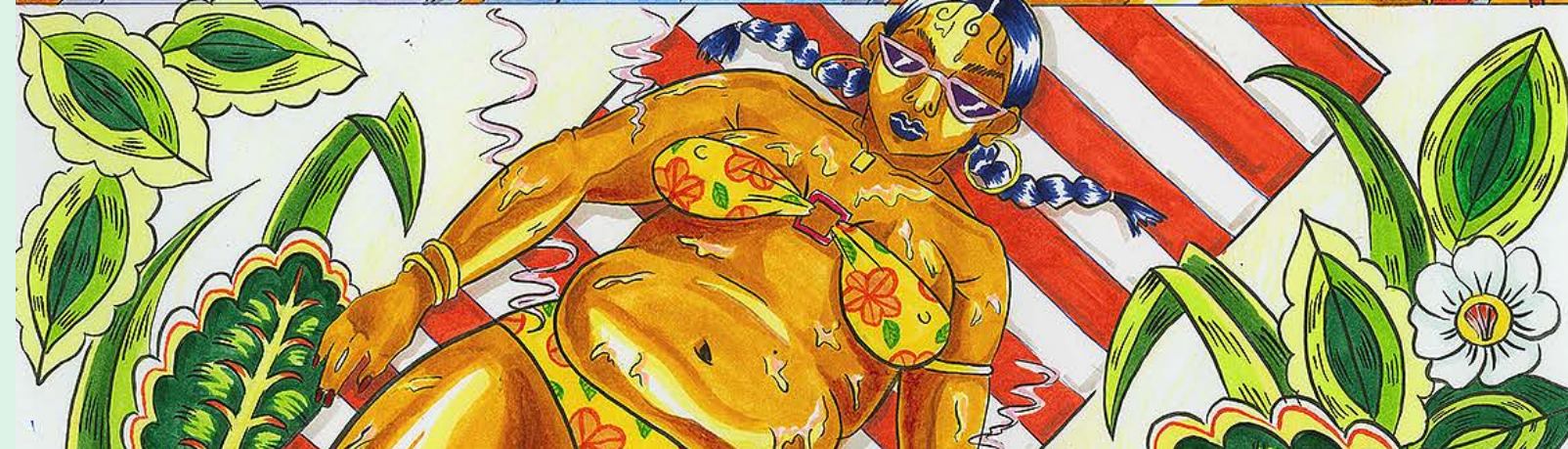
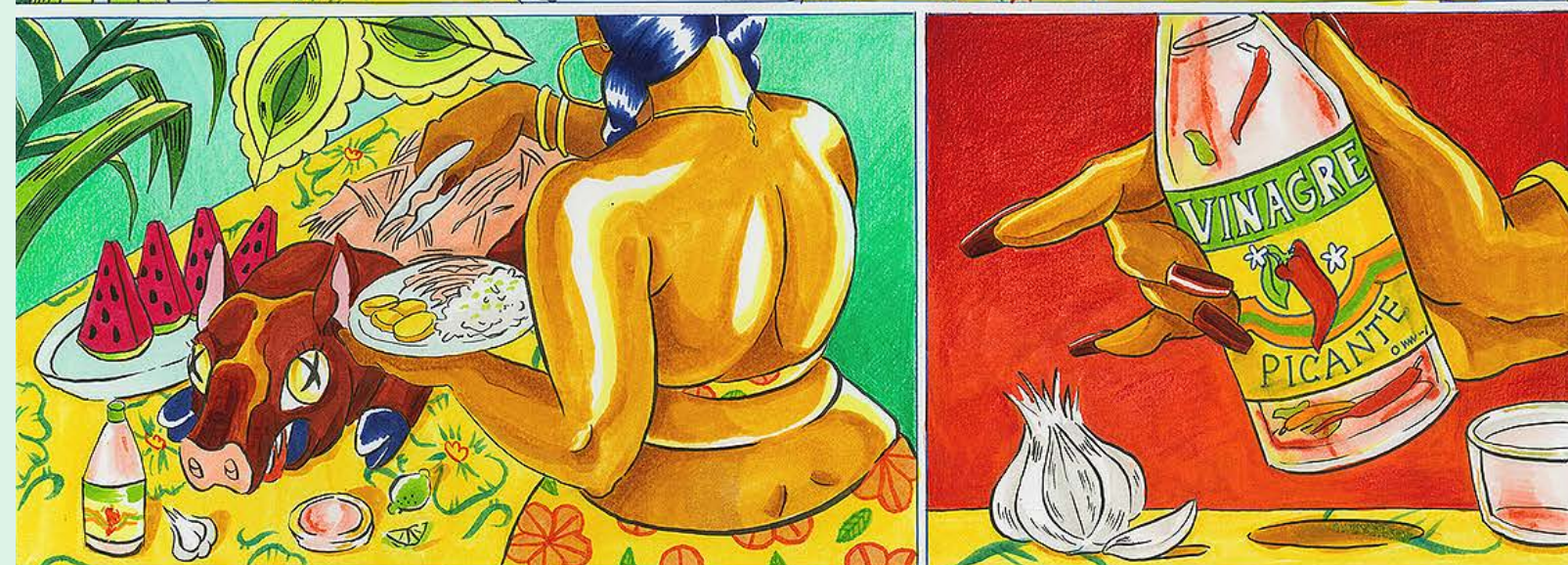
**Wait what's the meaning behind Sonic Yonix?**

“But I think after a certain point, until it balances out, we have complete freedom to point out inequality when we see it.”





**INSPIRATION**  
This duo creates artwork inspired  
by their shared experiences and  
observations as (proud) brown girls.





Okay so it started as a joke, making fun of white feminism at the time without knowing it was white feminism. Basically at RISD there was barely any people of color. Barely. Diandre's from the Philippines but grew up in the states so we bonded right away.

Feeling like the other, not welcome there, we're not welcome here. So let's create a little safe space for the both of us.

Around that time we would joke about some of the girls, mainly in those painting departments where a lot of their work is like super kooky, angry, pink vagina's everywhere. Essentially white feminism. And maybe at the time it was a little problematic. But we have no regrets of how it started. We basically made this fake persona of being extra loud, making a caricature of what white feminism is and we googled the female equivalent to phallic and it's yonix. Then we were like oh what if this persona was in a punk band? They would be called like Sonic Youth- Sonic Yonix. And that's how it came to be.

#### **What was the uniting force behind Sonic Yonix?**

We both hated and loved of our respective cultures because there's so many intersections between Filipino and Puerto Rican culture. You know- the Islander colonized soul. Obsessed with nail salon culture. Not being afraid to depict girls in this sort of grotesque style. And that defined Sonic Yonix's aesthetics so much. We wanted to tap into these subjects, into our identity. We both felt safe enough that we could do it together. After we graduated from RISD, we were



like hey can we revisit the Sonic Yonix thing and do something we're passionate about as a way where we can keep in touch and keep collaborating. We both love to draw, it's cheap, so we decided that's it! We'll be able to just do it and maybe post it online. Those were our parameters. It was during a time when we had no money and we felt like we had to do something we loved and easy enough that we can send back and forth and see what we can do with it. And that was almost seven years ago!

**Girl, seven years later and thriving! Especially recently with all your merch and pop up events on both the East and West coast.**

That's another wild thing. Is that for

like three years we had an Instagram account with 200 followers. We would have meetings to strategize content buckets, posting deadlines, how often do we post, every week? It ended up turning into something that was not sustainable. We would like start really well, crash and burn, and then we'd go dark for a while. It wasn't until later on that we realized this isn't natural to how to just how we engage with social media. And some point along the way we said OK so we'll just create when it feels right. Basically, I would have a strange thought, a moment in the subway or notice something like someone's facial hair. Sort of like a "huh" moment huh. I'd quickly write it down or text it to myself and discuss with Diandre. Either we

would just draw a doodle or make a comic out of scenario. So almost every comic we've done is either something that has happened in real life or something or a scenario that we made up in our mind.

#### **Sonic Yonix was recently published, right?**

Yeah! Girls Squash. She reached out about an upcoming issue and we submitted. And we got published! They had a launch event for the zine with some panelists and invited us to have a table to sell merch. At the time we had zero merch. We always talked about it but it never happened. Maybe this is like the fire under our asses that we need. So in a few months, we had weekly calls of us brainstorming, a little bit

of research here and there. But we really tried to dig in from ourselves as much as possible because one thing that I noticed from working in an agency in the design field is that you're always kind of looking for inspiration on what's already been done by other people. So it's hard once you actually get an opportunity to do something that's just you. I don't trust my instincts at all. I always go "Oh wait let me just look up like what other people are doing," and then we wouldn't get anywhere because then I wouldn't be happy with anything that I was doing.

We began identifying patterns in our work. Garlic. Shrimp. Chubby girls. Body hair. We put some chubby girls with shrimp on a tote bag and called it a day. And it's crazy how much that resonated with people.

From that we got another pop up event! It's crazy how it's literally started as an inside joke for us coping with the lack of diversity at RISD and not only did it turn into a way for us to stay connected but also a solid side gig where we're selling a bunch of merch, resonating with people.

#### **As a Latinx, how did your upbringing and experiences inform your perspective on identity and approach to design?**

When I was in college, which is where I feel like people start to develop their taste and artistic sensibilities, I noticed that a lot of my work was really colorful. And

eventually I started to introduce literal elements that were very tropical like palm trees, the shrimp motif that we have in Sonic Yonix.

#### **Why shrimp by the way?**

It's my favorite food haha. The question comes up a lot and we straight up are like we love shrimp. We don't know what else to you haha. I would say I connected so much to Diandra's work and how our styles wove together so seamlessly. I think it's because we had a similar upbringing where our cultures just happen to be inherently very colorful. A lot of the colors that we're using now are earth tones, there's a lot of green, and we're leaning into that more versus before when everything was neon colors and low brow culture, like nail salons. This genuine admiration for all things low brow. And then also our upbringing. Both of us were raised in a very Catholic household and Catholicism has very specific imagery. Exaggerated. Intense. Women aren't depicted as delicate. The Virgin Mary with the blood tears. The kind of horrific imagery found in the Bible. Everything feels a little bit grotesque. So we pulled elements from that and brought them into the aesthetic of Sonic Yonix. Maybe from the outside it looks very beautiful, colorful, and airy but up close it's a grotesque messiness.

**One of my all time favorites of Sonic Yonix is the one with the girls and their boobs fighting with each other haha.**

We do a lot of stuff with boobs haha. But I'd say our personal experiences directly affected our subjects and we drew a lot of our themes from body image issues. Growing up I had insane crippling anxiety about my body and honestly, looking back now I'm pretty sure I had body dysmorphia. It's internalizing all this stuff that led to a lot of body insecurity especially with my body hair and weight. We kind of took all





“We internalized all these experiences that led to major insecurities with body hair and weight, and used it as our subject matter. When it started it was very much about body image, the grotesqueness of it all, because for much of our lives that’s how we viewed ourselves. Which is kind of sad but now we’re embracing it and the beauty of it while having a sense of humor.”





We kind of took all those experiences and then started using those as subjects. Sonic Yonix isn't so about that anymore and I think we'll probably revisit it at some point but we're drawing from what feels natural to us, what's happening in our current lives. But when it started it was very much about body image, the grotesqueness because for much of our lives that's how we viewed ourselves. Which is kind of sad but then we're embracing and trying to make it more beautiful while having a sense of humor.

**In your own words, what does it mean to be Latinx?**

This might be more particular to Puerto Ricans. You can say there's the stereotype of Puerto Ricans being the most hospitable people. And I think one thing I've noticed in my journey is asking what's more important to my identity. Is it being Latinx? Is it being a woman? What comes first? As I am approaching 30 is that I feel more connected to my Latinx heritage and my identity is, and again even though I'm very introverted, but once I establish connection with people I notice that I become very giving, very empathetic and very warm. I want to make people feel at home when they're with me. So usually when I have people over, they're like oh you're such an amazing host because I will go out of my way to make sure they're comfortable. When I'm with my parents, my mom does the same to me and I notice it's a very female thing to do, not to like attach it to domesticity or anything. But I think it goes beyond being domestic. I think it's just about being nurturing. I can look back and feel really proud of the connections and the friendships I've made because I've given a lot of myself to those relationships. Even in my romantic relationships, when I look back on my ex-boyfriend, I have no regrets because I literally gave everything to that person. And

looking at the different generations of women in my family, especially my grandmother, the further back you go and the poorer they are, the more giving they and selfless they are. Even when you don't have the means or the wealth to take care of yourself, Latin women still find ways to take care of other people and build a community.

**As you were answering the question, I realized that wow I'm**

“One thing I've noticed in my journey is asking what's more important to my identity. Is it being Latina? Is it being a woman? What comes first?”

**the same way haha. I never sit down when I'm hosting people. I'm always the one cooking, making drinks, asking if everyone needs anything. If people are on the couch I'm like here turn the TV on, do you want games to play?**

Yeah! You want to make people feel comfortable. Many people have pointed out—again it's very much the stereotype of like Latin women being a little bit more standoffish or maybe they're more intimidating—who have said that “Oh it's really surprising once I got to know you that you're this way because you come off like this other way.” And I know those people that are the nicest out front, so friendly but then they're flaky bitches like you can't count on them! And so I'm very proud that might have a rough exterior but I think that's also part of when you're a person of color in a place that's predominantly not. I think you're always—again not to speak for everyone—but in my case I tend to

be more guarded especially at work where you're trying to tone down a lot of the instincts that you have to act a certain way. And maybe I end up coming off a little bit colder. But I think once I feel comfortable enough with myself then I want to show you that I never want to let anybody down basically. Latin women might come off as a little intimidating but they're really all just the most caring and protective women ever.

**What is the best advice you've ever received?**

The best advice I received was recently, from a friend of mine who, like me has issues with anxiety and not knowing how to manage stress. One thing she said that I've really been repeating is this mantra: “Don't anticipate a problem. Just wait til you get there and once you're there you'll figure it out.” Most of my life I think I've always tried to think ahead. I look back at my life and think a lot of it was me being upset for feeling like I'm not hitting these marks that I should be hitting or that other people are hitting. I was measuring my success based on where others were. Once I stopped doing that and just embraced like this tunnel vision, it helped me so much with my anxiety. But damn I got this advice like very recently and I'm 28 now. I really wish I heard that a few years ago haha. This piece of advice reminds me to live in the moment, not judge









because you might not experience things or you're limiting yourself because of problems that you're anticipating versus just taking it one step at a time. And it's made such a difference.

**And what advice would you give your younger self?**

Stop caring about what your body looks like. I'm fucking—I'm going to be 29 this year and I'm still on this shit. Yes I'm more comfortable with my body now but I can't believe it's taken me this long to be happy with what I got. All the money that I spent on my workout videos, hair removal products, dietary supplements—wasted. I love what Jameela Jamil is doing, in her crusade against Instagram culture. If Instagram would've been around when I was a teenager I probably would have been suicidal. I say that totally serious. If I had all those crippling body issues as a teenager with just MTV, imagine with all this social media.

**For real. We need more people like Jameela, to call out that**

**culture of appetite suppressant products, waist trainers. It's promoting a specific boy type and that's harmful.**

Absolutely. I'm so excited that she's doing this and I hope that it gets more traction. So yeah I would tell my teenage and college self to calm down, like you know dudes will still have sex with you. You don't look that much different with the light on haha. Also just how my relationship with sex and how uncomfortable I was with it, literally not until recently that I was able to actually enjoy it because for the most part of my 20s it sucked and I wasn't allowing myself to enjoy it. I realize now that part of it is like you just enjoying YOU and your body. I hate how much energy I spent on trying to change myself just from a physical standpoint. And I remember looking back I was convinced I needed to save money for a nose job—

**GIRL! That was supposed to be my Quinceañera gift since I was a baby, not even joking. That's all I**

**asked for when I was younger and for a while my mom was like okay, that'll be your gift. Fast forward to when I was 9 and my older cousin getting a nose job at 16 years old, seeing her post-surgery with all the swelling, bruising, red eyes. I immediately canceled that surgery dream of mine because I couldn't understand why would she go through so much pain to change something that's, truly, the farthest thing from a big deal.**

Holy shit! Yeah I had so many insecurities about my nose and once when I told my mom, she was shocked by it because I have my mother's nose. She was just like aren't you proud of this Dominican, Mediterranean little crumbs that we have. And so now when I look at myself in pictures I embrace parts of my body. It's a reminder that I'm my mom's daughter and that I'm this unique person. I just can't believe it took so long to get to this point, but hey, that's why I'm like my 30s are going to be ahmazing!



#### INSPIRATION

This duo creates artwork inspired by their shared experiences and observations as (proud) brown girls.





# Significance Behind Nameplate Jewelry

Story by Zuli Segura

Daniela and I were in sixth grade together. Every day in homeroom, I stared at her longingly. Her charismatic personality and sense of style were insanely enviable. But it was what hung from her neck—a giant, hollow, diamond-studded plate—that really made Daniela stand out to me. Daniela wasn't the only girl I knew who rocked a nameplate necklace. All the Puerto Rican, Dominican and black girls wore them, and each had their own special take. Kristina had one with bubbly script but no diamonds. Another girl from class had a heart decal in her nameplate, and nearly all the girls had a thick squiggly line underneath—a clever decoration to emphasize the importance of what sat above.

Nameplates, typically gold necklaces that announce the wearer's name in elaborate script, have always leaped off the chests of black and Latin girls. If not necklaces, gold rings. If not the wearer's name, nicknames given to them by close ones. They're an undeniable and proud proclamation of individuality, as well as a salute to generations before them. With names like *Marisol*,

*Isabela*, or *Janice*, it means never finding your name at the keychain section of stores. Nameplate jewelry is a response to gas-station bracelets and department-store mugs emblazoned with names like Kelly and Courtney. But most of all, they're a flashy and direct rejection of the commonality of white culture. It's common for girls of color to grow up dreaming of their custom nameplate necklace, waiting for the day to proclaim their presence to the world. It marks a coming-of-age moment for many girls. Yet the meaning and power behind these nameplate necklaces are lost on the fashion publications that write about it as a "current trend" or the "next big thing."

A search for the history of nameplates won't turn up many stories that contextualize its significance and personal significance to girls of color. Instead it turns up references to Sarah Jessica Parker's *Sex and the City* character, Carrie Bradshaw, who famously wore one on the show after Parker's stylist saw "kids in the neighborhood" around her New York City shop sporting



“The enduring idea that Sarah Jessica Parker popularized the style perfectly exemplifies how white culture is the gatekeeper of “the mainstream.”

the style and decided to put one on the white TV character. Deemed the “Carrie necklaces,” many consider the show an origin point for the style becoming popular despite its complexity and dating back much further. “It’s not that the history doesn’t exist,” says Rosa-Sales, “but it hasn’t been canonized by academia in a way that validates it as a cultural product worthy of study.” In an attempt to begin filling that gap, Rosa-Salas (an NYU doctoral student in cultural anthropology) and Flower (a photographer, writer, and former *Art Forum* editor) started #DocumentingTheNameplate, a project that uses oral history methods to piece together the origins and evolving cultural significance of the style. The project began in 2015 when Flower and Rosa-Salas launched the podcast they currently cohost for *Top Rank* magazine with an episode on nameplates (highly recommended), after having bonded over their mutual affection for the adornments. Then, in 2017, they co-wrote the academic journal essay *Say My Name: Nameplate Jewelry and the Politics of Taste*. The duo’s essay and podcast episode both dig into the ways nameplates can be used as a case study to

understand how race and class intersect to shape the idea of taste; for instance, why in some contexts the jewelry is considered “cool,” “trendy,” and in others considered “tacky” or “ghetto.” On the most personal level, wearing one’s name opposes the homogenization and cultural alienation experienced by immigrants, low-income groups, and communities of color in the United States by making the wearer’s unique identity visible to everyone. The enduring idea that Sarah Jessica Parker popularized the style perfectly exemplifies how white culture is the gatekeeper of “the mainstream.” “In our writings and our studies, we were pleasantly surprised at how the nameplate is a really interesting theoretical vessel for looking at a lot of these larger cultural systems or structural mechanisms in place for how information moves around or how it becomes legitimate or not,” says Flower.

Culture sharing is inevitable and can be a great thing. But it helps to know the history and significance behind what you’re wearing. Just think twice about calling it the Carrie necklace.

Tatiana



Marisol



Estefanía







NO DICHO

FASHION + BEAUTY

# 5 Brands to Support That Are Celebrating Latinx Culture

Story by Zuli Segura

LatinX culture has inspired the fashion world for decades. Aztec-inspired prints made their way onto several pieces from Ralph Lauren's fall 2018 collection, while serape-inspired clothing and patterns never seen to go out of style. But, as evidenced by the numerous white-led fashion shows, non-Latinx owned fashion companies and white women that push trends onto the masses each year, these designs and inspirations are co-opted from the Latinx community. The dollars you spend – on food, entertainment, and clothing, among other things – declare who you support, and who you would want to have success and power (whether you realize it or not). If you think of it that way, shopping

becomes a bigger deal than merely buying what's trending. To celebrate the Latinx community, we rounded up our fave Latinx-owned brands. All of these are small businesses, too. So you can look and feel good when you support these brands. There are a bunch of cheeky tees that will speak to your inner *chingona* (bad ass woman!), statement earrings that are one of a kind, and cute dad hats that will hide the fact you're *despeinada* (basically, you didn't brush your hair this morning). Rather than purchase an appropriated design by a non-Latinx designer, shop these Latinx-owned fashion brands instead!



## Hija de tu Madre

Hija de tu Madre has us dazzled with this sparkly homage to La Virgen de Guadalupe. Owner Patty Delgado created the brand to celebrate the beauty that is being Latinx, to create apparel that is the perfect depiction of her cultural intersection and celebrate the complexities of being a product of more than one culture. Because after all, often, *we are ni de aqui, ni de all*.

@hijadetumadre  
hijadetumadre.com



## Viva La Bonita

Rachel Gomez's Viva La Bonita is inspired by fearless women, and you can see it in the clothes. Feminist phrases are emblazoned in Old English font, roses adorn a pink jean jacket. It's the perfect balance of *tough chola* and *mujer bonita*.

@vivalabonita  
vivalabonita.com

## Valfre

Valfré is the self-named fashion brainchild of Mexican-born artist Ilse Valfré. From a collection of loteria prints, pins, totes, and shirts to a line of clothes dedicated to all things fruit-related, there's something for everyone at Valfré.

@valfre  
valfre.com



## Reina Rebelde

We buy makeup – a lot of it. So it's great that brands are coming out that represent us in the beauty sphere. Regina Merson started Reina Rebelde for the woman who "loves being Latina and Americana." She equally celebrated the beauty of her Reina and the fierceness and grit of her Rebelde." Who can resist makeup with color names like La Doña, Azteca, Chula, Coqueta, Atrevida, Fresa, and Xicana?!

@reinarebelde  
reinarebelde.com



## Selva Negra

The perfect blend of femininity and minimalism, Selva Negra collections are inspired by founders Kristen Gonzalez and Sam Romero's Latinx heritage. The ethically-focused clothing brand creates designs like bold colored pant suits and delicate patterned dresses that aim to inspire women to achieve their dreams.

@selvanegra\_  
selvanegra.us



# Preciosa

VIEJO SAN JUAN, PR  
Jennifer Rodríguez

*Yo se lo que son los encantos  
De mi borinquen hermosa  
Por eso la quiero yo tanto  
Por siempre la llamare preciosa*

*Yo se de sus hembras trigueñas  
Se del olor de sus rosas  
Por eso a mi tierra riqueza  
Por siempre la llamare preciosa*

*Isla del caribe  
Isla del caribe  
Borinquen*

*Preciosa te llaman las olas  
Del mar que te baña  
Preciosa por ser un encanto  
Por ser un edén*

*Y tienes la noble hidalguía  
De la madre escaña  
Y el fiero cantío del indio bravío  
Lo tienes también*

*Preciosa te llaman los bardos  
Que cantan tu historia  
No importa el tirano te trate  
Con negra maldad*

*Preciosa seras sin bandera  
Sin lauros, ni gloria  
Preciosa, preciosa  
Te llaman los hijos de la libertad*

*Preciosa te llaman los bardos  
Que cantan tu historia  
No importa el tirano te trate  
Con negra maldad*

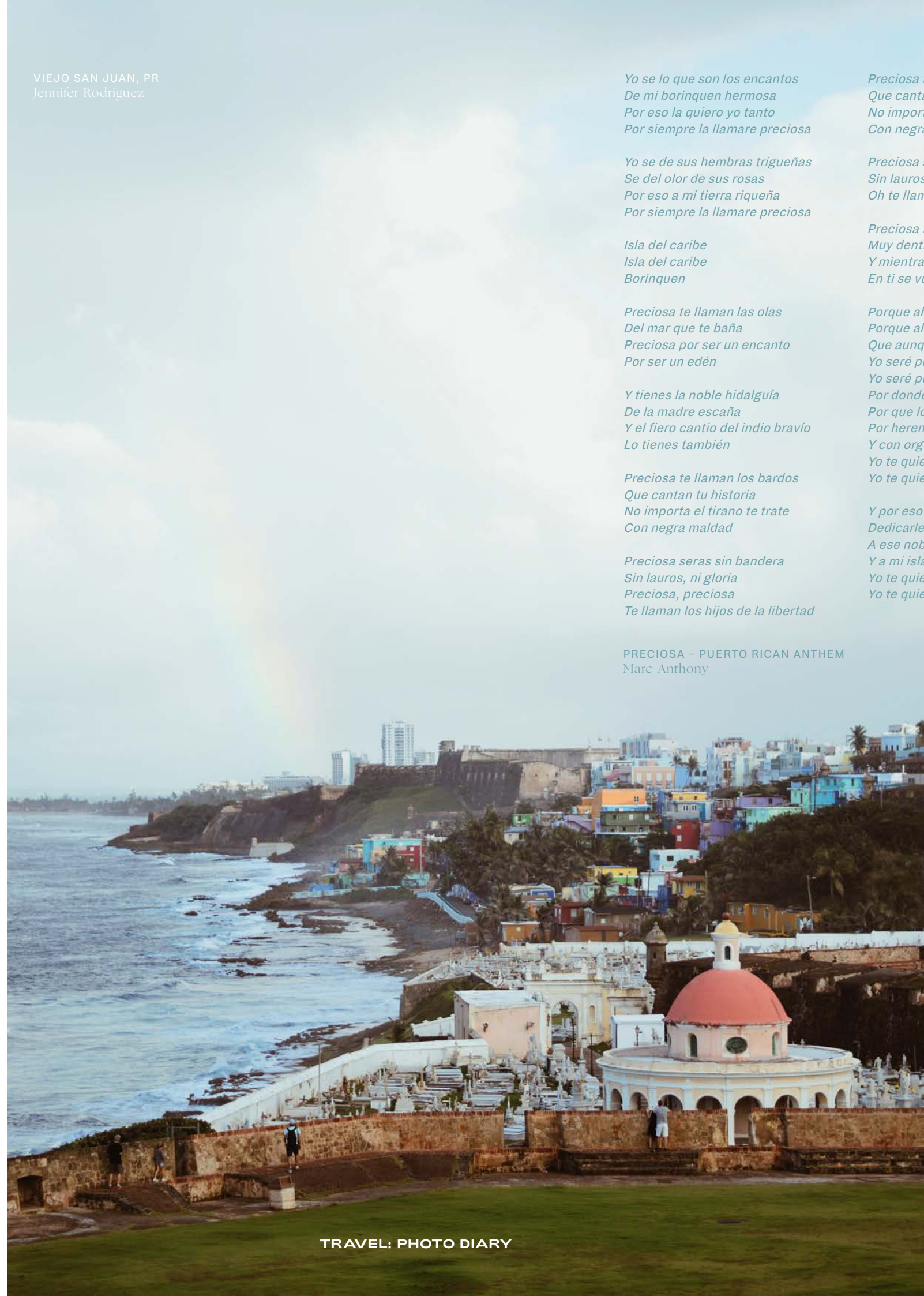
*Preciosa seras sin bandera  
Sin lauros, ni gloria  
Oh te llaman los hijos de la libertad*

*Preciosa te llevo dentro  
Muy dentro di mi corazón  
Y mientras mas pasa el tiempo  
En ti se vuelca mi amor*

*Porque ahora es que comprendo  
Porque ahora es que comprendo  
Que aunque pase lo que pase  
Yo seré puertorriqueño  
Yo seré puertorriqueño  
Por donde quiera que ande, oh  
Por que lo llevo en la sangre  
Por herencia de mis padres  
Y con orgullo repito  
Yo te quiero Puerto Rico  
Yo te quiero Puerto Rico*

*Y por eso es que me nace hoy  
Dedicarle este canto  
A ese noble jibarito Raphael  
Y a mi isla del encanto  
Yo te quiero Puerto Rico  
Yo te quiero Puerto Rico*

PRECIOSA – PUERTO RICAN ANTHEM  
Marc Anthony







VIEJO SAN JUAN, PR  
 Jennifer Rodriguez



EL MORRO, SAN JUAN, PR  
 Robert V. Ruggiero





SAN GERMAN, PR  
Jordan Barab



BAYAMON, PR  
Gabriela Perez





ADJUNTAS, PR  
Jose Oquendo



MAUNABO, PR  
Ishamari Drennan-Colón

CUEVA VENTANA, ARECIBO, PR  
Jose Oquendo







LA PLACITA, SANTURCE, PR  
Juan Gabriel García



CALLES SAN SEBASTIAN, SAN JUAN, PR  
Municipio Autónomo de San Juan









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**Dia** by Schick Toikka  
**Parasnis** by Shivani Parasnis  
**Harbour** by Gareth Hague  
**Amador** by Jim Parkinson,  
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