

Compare and Contrast:

Rafael Perea de la Cabada + Tony de los Reyes

Art + Social Justice



Themes:

- Identity
- History of the Americas
- Citizenship
- Colonization
- Oppression
- Resistance
- Stereotypes

The following artworks are in the permanent collection of the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. Each work relates to the theme of art and social justice.

Explore their meanings, answer questions, and discuss together.



Rafael Perea de la Cabada

Rafael Perea de la Cabada
(Mexican, b. 1961, active USA)
Agua bendita (Holy Water), 2000
Acrylic and mixed media on canvas,
plastic bottles, cloth and metal

SBMA, Museum purchase with funds provided by the
20th Century Art Acquisition Fund, 2000.43.

© Rafael Perea de la Cabada



Rafael Perea de la Cabada



In *Agua Bendita*, Santa Barbara-based artist Rafael Perea de la Cabada blurs religious and cultural symbols of contemporary Mexico in an allegory to political change. The work's central image doubles as a bottle of Coca-Cola and the Virgin of Guadalupe, while also referencing the central emblem of the Mexican flag. Surrounding these intertwined icons are plastic Coke bottles filled varyingly with handkerchiefs emblazoned with the Mexican flag. Having created this work after former CEO of Coca-Cola for Latin America, Vicente Fox, was elected President of Mexico, Perea de la Cabada alludes to the polarities that make up Mexican society and the frequent conflation of politics, cultural identity, and consumerism.

Rafael Perea de la Cabada

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1. Name three icons and symbols that the artist uses in this work. What do they stand for?
 2. How does the artist mix the past and the present?
 3. The artist is making a cultural critique. If you were to make an artwork, what aspects of today's culture would you critique?



Tony de los Reyes

Tony de los Reyes
(American, b. 1960)
#1851 (#3), 2011
Ink and oil on linen

SBMA, Museum purchase, 2011.4
© Tony de los Reyes



Tony de los Reyes



The work of Los-Angeles based artist Tony de los Reyes focuses on reinterpreting historical, political, and literary works. #1851 is titled after the year California was admitted into the union, as well as the publication date of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*. Here, the American flag is depicted in reverse, positioning the viewer on “the other side” of the iconic image. The artist has also juxtaposed it against a dark, tumultuous sea, alluding to actual and psychological turbulence. The painting pointedly positions *Moby-Dick* as a metaphor for the country's historic and enduring quest for power.

Tony de los Reyes

1. Why do you think the artist paints the flag in tones of grey?
2. What connection does the artist make between history and literature?
3. What do you think the artist is saying about American history and culture?



Compare + Contrast



DISCUSS: What are the similarities and differences between these two artworks?

Compare + Contrast



DISCUSS: How does each artist reinterpret the flag?

Art + Social Justice



This presentation was created by the Education Department at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art in 2020 in collaboration with Santa Barbara-based high school teachers.

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