

Related Events:

All events are free and open to the public.

Artist's reception:

Sunday, March 20, 3 - 5 pm

Talk with the Curators:

Wednesday, March 23, 6:30 pm

Curators in Residence:

March 18 - March 26, 2011

About the Curators:

Born and raised in Los Angeles, **Mario Ybarra Jr.** is an artist whose work operates as examinations of conflated and excluded social norms underlining environments, histories and narratives. His work has been featured in the 2008 Whitney Biennial, the Tate Museum in London, the California Biennial at the Orange County Museum, and at LACMA among others. **Karla Diaz** is a writer, artist and educator. Her work encompasses a multi-disciplinary, pedagogical approach to art-making through collaborative practices and the interaction of social-public spaces. Her work has been exhibited primarily in Los Angeles at MOCA, LACMA, the Getty Museum, and REDCAT Gallery in addition to the Serpentine Gallery (UK), Instituto Cervantes (Spain), and the Zocalo (Mexico City). She is a former co-director of exhibitions at the New Chinatown Barbershop gallery in Los Angeles and with Ybarra, co-founded Slanguage Studio, an artist collective and art space founded in 2002 in Wilmington, CA.



Arnoldo Vargas, *In Memoriam, Bike Misdemeanor leads to Post-Injunction "Officer Involved Shooting" II, PCH and Eubank ave.*, 2010, lightjet print, 30 x 20 inches

Hyde Park **ARTCENTER**

Gallery 4

February 13 - May 29, 2011

Police and Thieves

Featuring work from Gusmano Cesaretti, Meg Cranston, Los Angeles Poverty Department Collective, Amitis Motevalli, Ray Noland a.k.a. CRO, Ben Stone and Arnoldo Vargas

Curated by Karla Diaz and Mario Ybarra Jr.



Installation image

Hyde Park **ARTCENTER**

5020 South Cornell Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60615 773.324.5520 www.hydeparkart.org

The Hyde Park Art Center is a not-for-profit organization that presents innovative exhibitions, primarily work by Chicago-area artists, and educational programs in the visual arts for children and adults of diverse backgrounds. The Center is funded in part by 3Arts, Alphawood Foundation; a City Arts III grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and the Illinois Arts Council; Harper Court Arts Council; The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; The Leo S. Guthman Fund; The Irving Harris Foundation; Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; JPMorgan Chase Foundation; The Mayer & Morris Kaplan Family Foundation; The MacArthur Foundation; The MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; The Orbit Fund; Polk Bros. Foundation; The Clinton Family Fund; The Wallace Foundation; and the generosity of its members and friends.

This show is inspired by the reggae song *Police and Thieves* by Junior Murvin which describes the struggle between cops and robbers from both sides. The subject is something that we have been thinking and researching for a long time. It's a prominent subject in a city like Los Angeles, which has a history and a strong relationship to police and policing institutions. We know that this is a subject true to different cities all over the world. And we wanted to explore that and how we can have a conversation about it with other artists in different cities. With curator, Allison Peters Quinn's help from Hyde Park Center, we have been able to create an exchange by bringing artists from both L.A. and Chicago together in this exhibition. The idea is to initiate dialogue and explore images of heroism and criminality, or how both ideas can be blurred. The exhibition *Police and Thieves* includes film, sculpture, drawings, and photographs. This selection of works by Gusmano Cesaretti, Meg Cranston, Los Angeles Poverty Department Collective, Amitis Motevalli, Ray Noland a.k.a. CRO, Ben Stone, and Arnolde Vargas surveys the complex relationships between police and criminals, providing a sometimes intimate perspective that questions notions of power, freedom, community, cultural narratives, and civic engagement.

Starting with Italian-born artist based in Los Angeles, **Gusmano Cesaretti's** installation of photographs printed on copy paper, *Before the Revolution* is a collaged-mapping into his artistic practice as a photographer for different film locations in Los Angeles and all over the world. Gusmano's immersive interest in taking photos of places perceived as dark and criminally infested brings about a new, intimate perspective of the life and the people that live there. He articulates a gray area between the idea of the bad guys being the heroes and the good guys being the bad. In his images, both can happen simultaneously. The images included in the exhibition are from Los Angeles, Chicago, and Panama. The idea of cops and robbers is blurred, translated, and re-interpreted in different settings, but also in the way the artist prints the images. Cesaretti makes a color print on copy paper, without risk of damage and the preciousness or prestige often associated in handling photos, he crumbles each paper and smoothes it out flat to generate texture, and question the functional role of the image.

Arnolde Vargas works similarly by presenting a unique perspective. He recreates memorials and photographs of street memorials dedicated to people that have been shot and killed by police in the predominately Mexican-American community in Wilmington, CA where the artist lives and works. In one of his works, the complete title of *Memoriam* is taken directly from a newspaper's headline, often presenting a one-sided perspective of the violence that happens in a community. By re-shooting the memorial and re-creating the memorial on sites where people have been killed Vargas's piece acts as a public intervention piece that asks audiences to reconsider actions of labeling and criminalization, often not addressed. His installation of high school student's photos and the police tickets issued to them for being late to school exposes a conversation of criminalizing youth at an early age.

Sharing a sense of humor for the way in which American culture stereotypes the law abiding and the lawless, **Ben Stone** created the impish sculpture *Neighbor*. The artwork's imagery is based on the popular symbol for crime nicknamed "Boris the burglar", featured on community watch signs posted in neighborhoods all over the country. The figure is neither menacing nor comforting and raises questions about what constitutes suspicious or acceptable social behavior.

The graphic stencil work of Chicago-based artist **Ray Noland a.k.a. CRO** often spotlights the embarrassments and successes of powerful political figures like the impeached Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich or the election of President Barack Obama. For *Police and Thieves*, CRO's work adds urgency to issues concerning the inequalities of race and power within the city's handling of public safety. The provocative installation *Officer Frugoli* featured on the North end of the building, is spray-painted directly on the wall visible from the Art Center's main entrance. The artwork references the tragic 2009 homicide of Andrew Cazares, 23 and Fausto Manzera, 21,

by then 18 year Chicago Police veteran Joseph Frugoli. The off-duty officer crashed his SUV into a car stopped on the side of the Dan Ryan Expressway killing the two young men who were trapped inside the burning car. Frugoli left the scene and was arrested a few blocks away. The work aims to jolt citizens out of complacency over such shameful treatment by those hired to serve and protect.

Also, in the show, there is a concern for presenting a forum for the victims of violence, while revealing the power in hearing their own voice. Iranian-American artist **Amitis Motevalli's**, *Shohadha* (2007-2011), is a large 2D recreation of her original, installation/performance shrine previously exhibited in Los Angeles. The actual shrine celebrates the lives of the contemporary shaheed or martyrs who have been defiled in the news and media or simply not mentioned. The shrine is dedicated to those who have lost their lives in recent homicides at the hands of law enforcement, such as 27 year-old Darius Pinex, who was killed by Chicago police on January 7, 2011 after being pulled over and allegedly putting the car in reverse wounding another police officer. The figures chosen by the artist to define "martyr" remind us that there are two sides to the story often fraught with injustices on both sides.

Some of the artists included in *Police and Thieves* frequently reach beyond the limitations of traditional artistic roles, in search of greater public interest, engagement and resonance. **LAPD (Los Angeles Poverty Department)** is often confused to mean Los Angeles Police Department. This humorous confusion is often the start of a conversation with real political and social concerns headed by this eponymous theater company of people living and working in Skid Row Los Angeles. As explained in their statement for the performance, "Many of the creator / performers in *State of Incarceration* have been incarcerated. LAPD performances link lived experience to the historical and social forces that shape that experience." For this exhibition, LAPD has compiled a video/vignettes of some of this performance that is filled wall-to-wall with 30 bunk beds: same as in over-crowded California State Prisons. The performers and audience are inserted into this restrictive prison architecture. Developed in LAPD's workshops, the performance places the performers and public inside an understanding of how the prison system functions: the mental and physical challenges of incarceration and how to endure and recover from it.



Ray Noland a.k.a. CRO, *Officer Frugoli*, 2011, aerosol paint on wall, dimensions variable

A similar concern for engaging the public is seen in **Meg Cranston's** video and photograph, *Seated Smiling*, the only photo Cranston has of her friend, Steven Wong who has been imprisoned in Thailand on a drug charge since 2007 serving a 29 year sentence. Immersing the viewer in Wong's experience of being incarcerated, Cranston's video asks the audience to participate in Wong's waiting and attempts to shorten his sentence by making every day of his remaining 10, 585 days sentence 30 seconds long. This makes the piece 6 hours long which can be a difficult experience for an audience to bear and watch but an intentional, poignant part of the piece.

Whether it's a concern for addressing alternative spaces, institutions of power that imprison or restrict freedom, that serve and protect, or simply pose a question that unveil a concern for the criminal or the criminalized, with wit, investigation, a focus on intervention and exploration, the artists in this exhibition powerfully speak out to both dynamics of cops and robbers.

Karla Diaz and Mario Ybarra Jr.
Curators of *Police and Thieves*