

For Immediate Release

Maria E. Piñeres
Deep Cuts

9 September – 28 October 2023

Opening Reception: Saturday, September 9, 3:00pm – 7:00pm

Walter Maciel Gallery is pleased to present the survey exhibition, *Deep Cuts* by Los Angeles based artist, Maria E. Piñeres including embroidery paintings made over the past 20 years. The show consists of work previously introduced at our gallery from her series *Palindromes*, *Libertango*, *Cheeky*, *Playland*, *Sittings* and *Primordial Chaos*, as well as older works that have never been shown in Los Angeles. Piñeres has been represented by our gallery since we opened our space in 2006 and this presentation is her sixth solo exhibition.

Piñeres credits her mother and grandmother for teaching her to sew, knit and crochet, but she taught herself needlepoint after discovering a book by Mary Martin, an actress and avid needlepointer. She often references unexpected subjects such as homo-erotic pornography, vintage pin-up models, actor mugshots, corrupt dictators, car crashes, female wrestlers and queer performers for her provocative imagery using both simple and complex embroidery stitches for her scenes. In all of her works, Piñeres explores a vivid palette with contrasting colors, patterns and shadows intermingling across the surface. The work is created on perforated sheets of paper or plastic that are mounted on wood panels with selected frames or simply floated on the wall to accentuate the texture of the threads.

Done in a small format, the earliest subjects in the show depict colorful shoes and are part of a series based on fashion. These works lead into several versions of different types of paid patterns, some reminiscent of designer labels such as Burberry, and all juxtaposed with posed nude models. Other works focus on the male nude shown both in a pop style with realistic body parts and as silhouettes with colorful tweed and checkered patterning. The male subject is explored further using retro designs with floral and paisley patterns as playful backdrops for gay sexual acts that evoke both humor and voyeurism witnessing the sultry play of the subjects. The scenes are carefully cropped to show close-up perspectives of the entangled bodies often enticing the viewer to look more carefully to reveal the intimate activity.

The exhibition revisits the first series shown at our gallery which includes images of nude models and celebrities as palindromes mirrored together from a central connecting point. Subjects include pin-up model, Betty Page, grunge musician, Pete Doherty and pioneering transgender model, Teri Toye. The nude subjects continue to be depicted in the series, *Playland* set within imagery and iconography of pinball machines. The series was started about ten years ago and displays memories of Piñeres's teen years spent as a pinball player at the historic arcade, Playland on 8th Avenue in New York City which was set within several blocks of peep-show arcades and XXX shops. Piñeres combines groping rent boys and nude pin-up girls within the contextual backdrop of a pinball machine. Their sexuality can be seen in a playful and sentimental light void of shame and smut while preserving the common pinball themes of luck and chance.

A group of portraits from the *Sittings* series depicts images of dear friends and new acquaintances who posed for Piñeres while she created their embroidered portraits set within interior or exterior environments. The strong palettes vary depending on the relationship and mood of the setting with a conscious decision being made on how to pose and where to crop each figure. One of the portraits captures Walter in full body profile sitting at his desk while typing an email. These individual portraits give way to a complex series of female wrestlers shown in the moment of their match with bodies entangled and twisted together. With obsessive craftsmanship and imagination Piñeres portrays her wrestlers with overt tension, intentional contrast and complimentary styles using camouflage patterns inspired by military uniforms from various nations and terrains. Her female wrestlers are stripped of their own identity and pitted against one another in a corporeal drama that parallels the relentless conflict in ourselves as well as nature.

Piñeres was born in Medellin, Colombia in 1966 and grew up in New York City exploring her passion and creativity as a young artist among other highly talented friends and peers. She studied painting at The Art Students League of New York and graduated from Parsons School of Design with a BFA in illustration. Piñeres lived in New York for many years until gentrification created the perfect opportunity for her to move to Los Angeles in 2006. She has exhibited throughout the US and most recently was included in the latest version of *Queer Threads* curated by John Chaich at the San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles. Important past exhibitions include *Interface* at the Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art in New York, *Stitches* at the Armory Center for the Arts in Pasadena, *Pricked: Extreme Embroidery* at the Museum of Arts & Design in New York, *Celebrity* at the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art in Arizona and *Wild Girls* at Exit Art in New York. Her work is in the collection of 21C Hotels and Museum as well as many private collections in the US. She has been reviewed in The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, Time Out New York, The New Yorker, Time, The Village Voice and V.