



“,Citizen”



By

Yashly Rosado

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Sponsor: Katherine Gilmore

Second: Rachel Owens

In the following thesis, you are going to read about the journey of a young, 12 year old Dominican girl who moved and immigrated here to the United States. The ideas and the dreams of this girl were her idolizing to see how Americans lived their lives as what she saw on TV as she was growing up. After her arrival and adjusting to the American lifestyle, she was in a living situation of going from a small spaced attic to going to a small one bedroom apartment. This lifestyle was not of the one she saw on TV as she was growing up as she thought stuff was going to be different but she realized it was a long road and journey ahead of herself. She had to learn how to restart her life as she left her old life behind in the Dominican Republic as she came over to the United States. From being looked upon as an immigrant to seeking to trying to live the American dream, this is the journey in which she had to overcome.



(First picture when we moved to the apartment)

Over the past few months, I've been wanting to make my work about so many different phases of my life. I've been stressing about which specific "theme" to focus on because there's just so much to talk about—from my family's standards and my past in the Dominican Republic to my country's political and religious issues, my queer identity, moving to the United States, my possibly undiagnosed mommy issues, and my decision to become an artist. After overthinking it, I realized I should start from the beginning, where everything started to unpack for me.

As I grew up in the Dominican Republic, myself alongside other children who were out of the United States and immigrants grew up watching American television shows like



Hannah Montana, Lizzie McGuire and That's So Raven. As I was watching these shows, my mind became filled with a vision of how it was to live in the United States as it could be seen as the land of endless opportunities and excitement would fill up my body and soul as this is what I saw growing up. I grew up with a vision of living in a big and beautiful house with my family, being able to be in my own room and space so I wouldn't have to share a room with my siblings as I saw in these shows that these characters weren't doing this as everyone had their own room. My dream of having that two story bed frame with a slide to go down in the morning, have posters hanging all over the walls and little things like trinkets on my dresser for me to look at and play with was part of what I had growing up. I saw the United States being a place to have a life in which would be better, easier and full of money and didn't just see it as a country to be living in or just "nue jol" be able to take pictures at Times Squares and with those people who dress up in the rundown costumes as can be seen today going there. it was the place where life was better, easier, and money!



This image of the "American Dream" became my guiding star as I prepared to leave everything behind in the Dominican Republic and start the journey to move to the United States. I really thought I knew what awaited me and would be coming my way in this new journey and I thought I had a clear picture of what my future would look like as I absorbed all those years of watching television shows of that "American Dream". Sadly when my family arrived, the reality of life in America couldn't have been more different than what was expected.



Our new life in the U.S. started with a shock as none of us were ready to endure. The highways, the buildings, the lights, none of this came across my mind as this wasn't shown in those television shows. My parents were able to rent their own space in an attic that had been converted into a cramped one-bedroom apartment. This small space was quite the opposite ideal to the bright, spacious homes I'd seen on television growing up back home. I quickly realized that the life I had imagined was not what I was going to find, at least in the beginning of moving over to this new country. My parents worked long hours, and with the struggles that they faced, this being financial difficulties, cultural barriers, and the exhaustion from working hard to make ends meet, I was really able to understand that the "American Dream" was not real and my dreams weren't becoming that reality.



This installation displays and explores the difference between the experiences immigrants discover when settling and moving into a new country, from the good to the bad. As you can see the large sheet hanging from the roof is acting as a thin wall to be seen. There is this 3D rendering piece of a bedroom of a teenager that has references to the 2000s. You can see the room in a messy state as most teenage's have their rooms as the mismatched "pieces" of furniture and decor are scattered, got posters from known TV shows back during this time hanging across the walls, and Hannah Montana's song of Star All Over can be heard playing as that was a popular song back then. This whole sequence is to show how happy the energy of a teenager can be in the morning as they are blasting their favorite tunes and getting ready to take on the day.





Walking behind the sheet, the viewer enters a much smaller, more intimate room, a cramped space made from found, second-hand objects from my own personal household brought from the Dominican Republic as can be seen as it brings that opposite aspect to this projection. This space is constructed from mismatched items and slightly damaged items .As well within the room there are two beds—a queen-size bed and an air mattress—symbolizing the lack of space and the shared sleeping



arrangements within my family. Each night my parents and siblings would rotate between the beds, trying to ensure that everyone had a chance to sleep with some comfort. This nightly routine reflects our effort to maintain balance and care despite the cramped conditions we were living in for the first 7 months when we arrived in the United states.



In the installation, three similar yet distinct sculptures are placed to expand on the themes introduced in the projected dream room. Made out of household or generic materials such as wood, metal, cement, fabric, beads, plastic and paint, these sculptures reflect an attempt to recreate the idealized aesthetic of the “Teen American Girl life.” Yet despite their effort to mimic a cool and everyday household design, each sculpture feels slightly “off”, a slight hint to the dissonance between reality.

Together, these sculptures live within a space between the idealized projection of a dream room. The dirty pink rug cutouts unify the installation while highlighting each sculpture's individuality. Reinforcing the idea that each piece exists within its own imperfect but meaningful perspective. The projection is going to exhibit how an idea can be seen as an unachievable ideal, while the sculptures, with their rough materials and imperfections, ground the viewer in the lived experience of displacement.



In this first sculpture, it is mounted here on the wall and starting with its base that is made of wood that has been painted with pink paint and has that leopard print design on top of it. A layer made out of cotton balls which have been dyed with a pink color can be seen around the focal point. There is black colored yarn in rounded shapes sticking out and then neon colored plastic pieces, charms shaped as stars and different colored





In this second sculpture, You can see it is mostly painted with this in a gleaming purple color with metallic and gleaming mosaic-like pieces. The top extending arm has flat and purple disc-shaped strings that are in place vertically as the tiny orange beads are attached at the end of the strings. All Alongside textured decorations like stars and swirls, are scattered across the piece. The yellow star beads are scattered across various sculpture sections, most seen on the base's curved extensions.





The third sculpture base of the composition is a cube-shaped form covered with orange fabric intricately decorated with flowing red and pink wave patterns. These patterns are enhanced with aspects of glitter and clear beads that are scattered around. Moving up above the cube can be seen a three-legged metal tripod that is made out of light blue colored poles as this is providing support for the ornament that is coming down from the center of the tripod. This ornament has different colored beads, different geometric shapes and a glass star that can be seen through as it has a pink shade to it.





I can name many people across various fields and their works that have influenced me, including performers, singers, and fine arts artists in different fields and materials.

However, these are the artists whose work has had the most impactful influence on me in making my work: Shayna Klee combines mature and significant topics with a childlike curiosity. Playful yet meaningful work explores themes of body, identity, and transformation. Her focus on how people shape their identities in response to society's expectations inspired the use of mismatched elements in the sculptures. Klee's mix of humor and deeper meaning influenced the approach of combining familiar and unsettling materials.

Lucia Hierro is an artist that influenced my installation. Her work reflects on her experiences as a first-generation Dominican-American; She explores consumerism and digital culture by using household objects to analyze and talk about the immigrant experience. Hierro uses lively, saturated colors which challenge romanticized portrayals of success and privilege. For example her series "Mercado" and "Bodegones" highlight items commonly found in Latinx households, from grocery store bags to household products, emphasizing cultural identity and the intersection of tradition and modernity. Her work shows the difference between the dream of success and the material limitations of everyday life, which are portrayed in the sculptures.





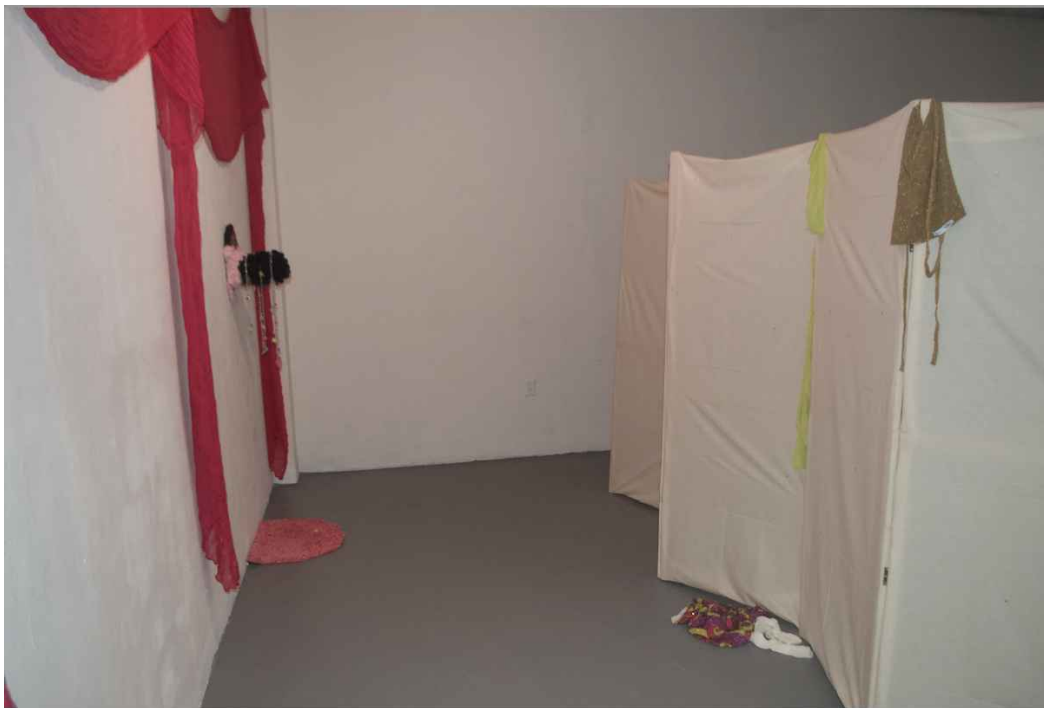
My installation “Citizen,” addresses the realities faced by immigrants, the romanticized citizenship status, and the myth of the American Dream. Every sculpture symbolizes the struggle of facing hopes and imperfections while blending into an ideal. Viewers are challenged to consider survival, belonging, and the promises of a system which frequently fails by its very nature.



(Rest of installation)

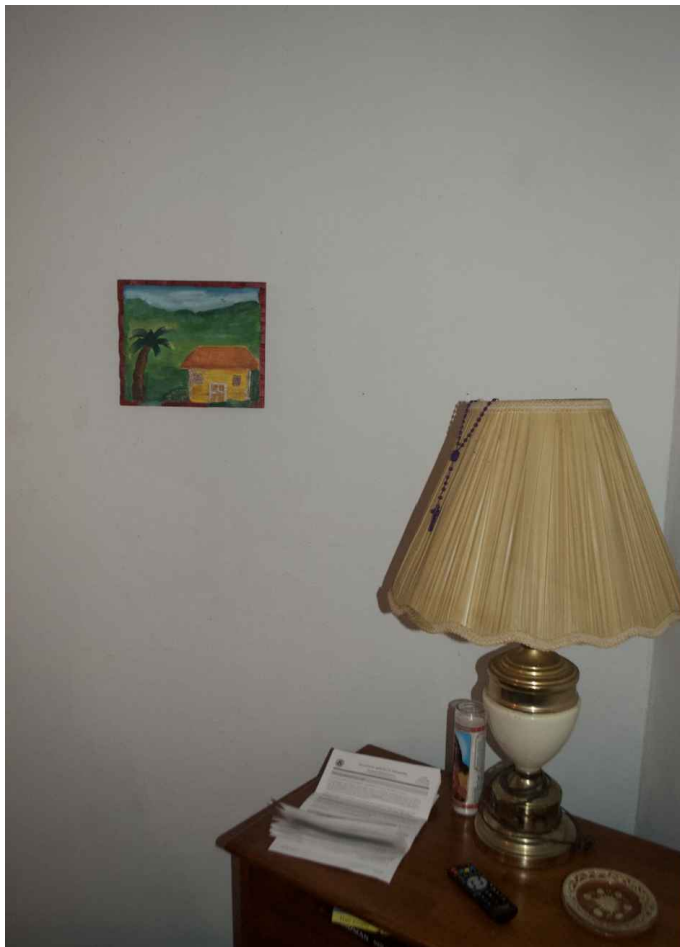


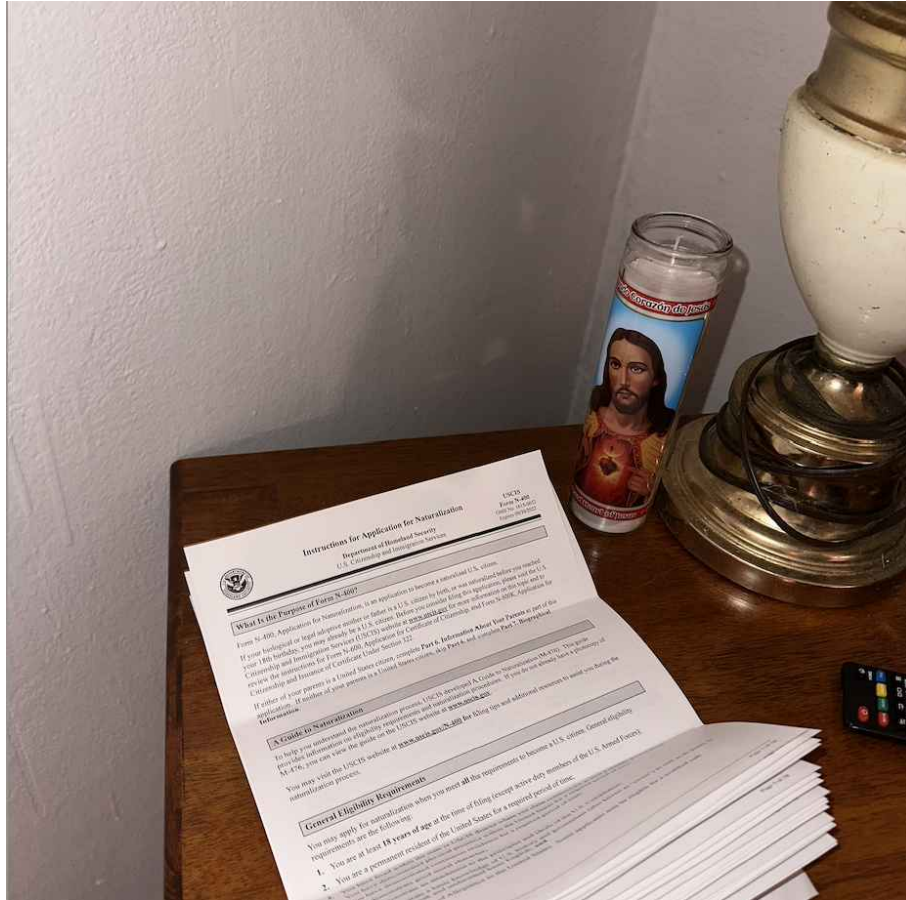












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