

The Ultimate Boon

The Ultimate Boon is an introduction to five artists who have utilized their art to navigate various life-altering experiences to reach their boon. Boon (noun) is a thing that is helpful or beneficial. Joseph Campbell, who has written extensively on the hero archetype, describes the "Ultimate Boon" as the point at which the hero is enlightened to their limitless potential or achieves the goal of their quest. The featured artists have surmounted personal obstacles through discovering and honing their chosen mediums and practices. By uniting creatives who work across visual, sonic, and socially engaged disciplines, the exhibition motivates audiences to immerse themselves in these robust narratives that catapult them to reach their Ultimate Boon.

Portland-based artist and art historian Coltyn Cody says, "...obstacles are temporary, art is permanent. I have faced challenges of identity, family, great loss, and immense shame, and I have always navigated those periods of my life with the tools of inspiration and creation." Cody first learned to draw by tracing pages from coloring books and attributes his artistic expression to the unyielding support of his grandparents. Cody often pairs his detailed drawings with text and handwritten poetry that connects art history and mythology with his autobiography.

Lizeth Guadalupe is a first-generation college graduate and Mexican American artist who has dedicated her multi-hyphenate practice to honoring and preserving her family lineage. Guadalupe will present several mixed media works and a video work, *Tortillas*, which depicts the artist's mother preparing homemade tortillas, while recounting her journey of emigrating from Mexico to the United States while pregnant with her second child.

Xavier Hadley, musically known as Xavley, is a master's candidate at New York University, and grounds his diverse practice in the functionality of memory and building worlds in visual and sonic realms. He will screen his music video of his song "Apart," a track on his latest album *Xavier's Ensenada*. The song is a collection of soundscapes from 2020's COVID-19 lockdown. This visual poem conjures ideas of protection and rage, especially in the midst of relationship trauma.

Isaac Jordan Lee has been upcycling single-use plastic bags for over a decade to experiment with textiles and fabrication. He manipulates this ubiquitous material to create intricate weavings that adorn the spaces they're in. Lee's practice is supported by his community who gifts him with countless plastic bags. His piece *Midwest Reflections* utilizes Walmart bags and pays homage to his upbringing in Illinois.

Eduardo Vazquez is a self-educated artist and entrepreneur who emigrated from Mexico City to the United States as a minor. In 2022, he became a permanent resident of the U.S., granting him his first opportunity to travel abroad. Since 2008, Vazquez has been documenting his life experiences and practicing photography with various iPhone

devices. He says, "It's not about the tool in which real photography is captured. It's about the eye and the moment." Among his photographs, Vazquez will also present a timelapse of more than a decade's worth of his travels around the United States.

As organizers who are underdogs in the arts, we aim to create a nurturing ecosystem for those whose stories have been overlooked or rejected in many cultural spheres. This open approach circumvents ghettoization and allows for a spectrum of experiences to coexist, reminding us that our individuality is shared by simply being of/in this world. Themes of migration, acceptance, and perseverance present themselves in the artworks of all five artists as we honor their distinctive backgrounds and showcase the congruities in all their stories as they are integrated in the exhibition.

— Nadiya Jackson and Florence Blackwell