

Soy de aquí y de allá: The Selfie as Queer LatinX Representation in Digital Landscapes

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Abstract

Exploring the power of self-representation in the form of selfies as an affirmation-based practice, the artist transforms her frustrations with self-identification through a “trans*glitchⁱ performance,” and practices queer self-representation and self-portraiture through the use of selfies as a medium to challenge LatinX identity and representation.

Keywords: digital representation; LatinX; queer; selfie; transmigrant

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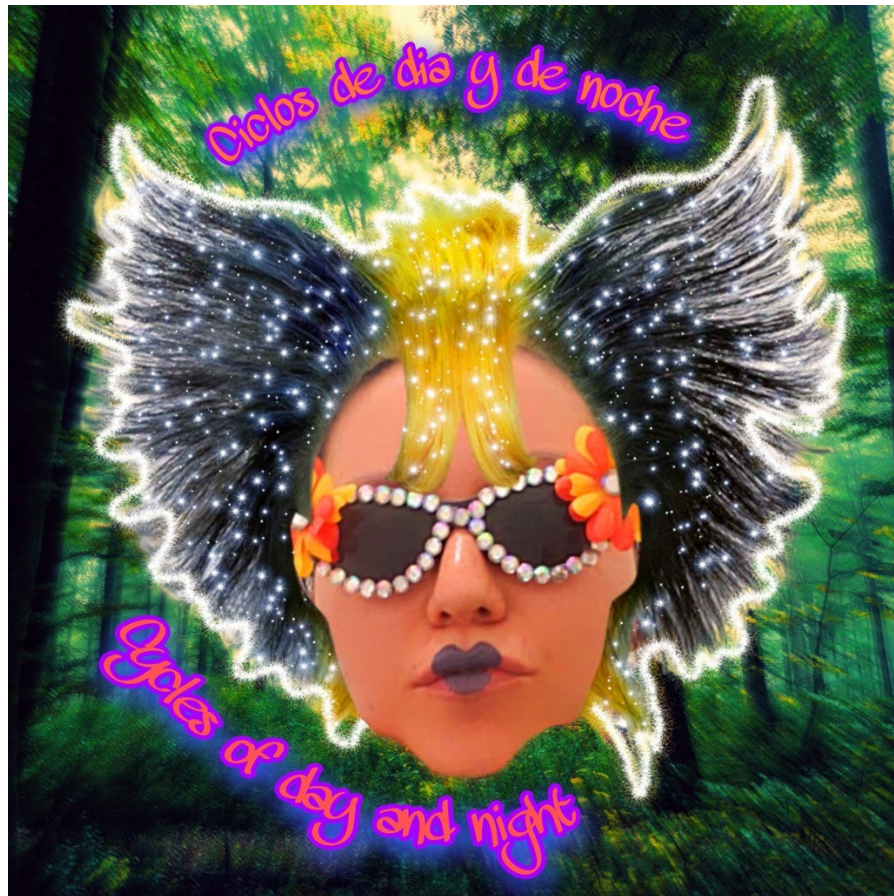
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The effects of growing up bilingual, bicultural, and binational had always been a source of anxiety and differentiation since I never felt like I belonged neatly to one category. Crossed by so many cultural, geographic and historical divides constantly left me feeling that I was *ni de aquí ni de allá* (*from neither here nor there*). Not seeing others like me present in online spaces prolonged this discomfort. Digital landscapes within social media are built on normative algorithms that censor bodies that do not fit neatly into white, cis, hetero expressions of the self, bodies that aren't deemed “desirable”. It was then that I discovered the power of self-representation in the form of selfies that prompted me to embark on a journey of an affirmation-based practice, allowing me to transform frustrations regarding self-identification. Through a transglitch performance, I practice queer self-representation intentional self-portraiture and more specifically, use the selfie as a medium to challenge identity and representation.

Online communication platforms have allowed me to build towards a representation that isn't readily accessible. So little is recorded about my family history, given that they didn't have the resources to document their lives on their own terms, but I do. Specifically, through this sharing of the self online, I have been able to forge digital communities with other LatinX and queer folk, demonstrating the importance of personal and community archives for those of us that are usually left out of history.

As a first-generation child of Mexican immigrants, who chose to move to Mexico after college, this journey to self-documentation has allowed me to develop a memory and record of my experiences as a queer LatinX transmigrant. A transmigrant, taken from Nina Glick Schiller's concept, since I am living within a diverse set of social expectations and cultural values that are shaped by both the United States' and Mexico's social, economic, and political systems.

My practice is not just artistic, but cultural and historical as well, given that my practice enriches and calls attention to the type of visual culture that people are creating and sharing online. Much of my journey has been a rebellion, a resistance to what a good immigrant daughter should be, what a devoted American citizen should be, what a culturally Mexican person should be. Yes, social media can be banal, but for individuals like me, it is an opportunity to share ourselves and represent our version of geographic belonging, and allows us to generate a record of presence, transcending real and imagined borders. We are just barely starting to see the implications that social media is having on our lived experiences as individuals within a physical and now virtual presence. By making the selfie intentional within my practice, I am able to hold space for multiplicity, seeing this transient sentiment no longer as a hindrance but as a portal for possibility, no longer bound by physical and virtual borders.







Endnotes

¹ An edited selfie that departs from normative representations of the self. A digital representation of queer liquidity.

Works Cited

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