

Press Release: The Contemporary Art Modern Project

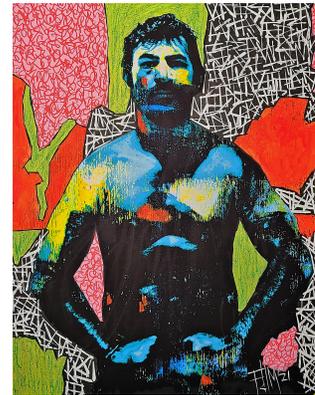
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CAMP

Franck de las Mercedes - A New Materialist Myth for *His* Being: No god, No Quetzalcoatl

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When reading about New Materialism, one of the key ingredients seems to be a strong move away from the dependence on traditional, foundational forms of belief. Gone are ideas of a higher power or social structure, and in its place, a melding of varied actions and realities that commingle to create realities more akin to experience outside of the European model that has influenced much of how the Western world thinks and reacts.

Artist **Franck de las Mercedes** has had to keep a proverbial foot in two identities, being the product of a Nicaraguan birth, and so, not constructed through the Eurocentric model, but growing up in New York, which places him in a cloak that Quetzalcoatl would never imagine. Both of his identities cannot fully come close to offering him, or other immigrants or first-

generation citizens, one thing to hold onto that will properly give them the foundation they need to actualize an identity that the surrounding society will tolerate. It is because of a still-present sense of otherness that those like **de las Mercedes** need to forge their own codex, their own language, and their own path towards a sense of wholeness that satisfies them and, quite possibly, beguiles the community around them.

In his series of Archetypes, **de las Mercedes** incorporates two contrasting philosophies: that of Jungian archetypes, and spiritual ideas affixed to tarot cards. In so doing, he entwines concepts of science and spirituality, and logic and emotion through his self portraits. This effectively makes him the vessel that both carries and acts on these variances, and at the same time he becomes, in his world, the ideal—the character that embodies not only the characteristics of the two conflicting worlds, but illuminates balance through a fundamental understanding of these dualities.

One result from this commingling is an abundance of energy best found in the artist's painterly manner, which often seems to mimic an attack on the canvas or the battle of birth. It becomes abundantly clear through the application of paint that not only is this innate to **de las Mercedes'** approach, but that in addition to creating his universe on canvas, he recognizes and welcomes energy—a sense of electricity, which is desperately needed for any entity to survive. There is a certain respect for energy in the many floral works and worlds that **de las Mercedes** scratches out and paints into existence. Interestingly, his interest in bouquets and floral arrangements preclude his archetypical self-research, allowing one to assume that as akin to any Creator, he looks to creation and discovery in the natural world and its struggle into existence.

This exhibition of works from **de las Mercedes**, in effect, becomes a creation myth of the artist born from a being forced to exist in two differing parallels that just will not come together, forcing him to look for an ontological sense of being, which only he can create, interpret, and express.

Melanie Prapopoulos