

ARABIA

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# ART

ISSUE 38

## THE MIDAS TOUCH

ROWAIDA HAKIM'S  
DIAMOND WORKS

*What to expect  
from the new  
ART DUBAI  
programme*

ISSN 2225-0166



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INCLUSIVE OF VAT

AED 30 OMR 3 BHD 3 KWD 2.5 LBP 20,000



Clotilde Jiménez.  
*Always on Guard.*  
2020. Courtesy of the  
artist and Mariane  
Ibrahim Gallery

# Humble beginnings

*North Philly-raised visual artist **Clotilde Jiménez** unravels the deepest corners of his imagination to physicality through art. **Ayesha Shehmir** speaks to the artist about paving the right path in life and his first solo exhibition at Mariane Ibrahim Gallery*

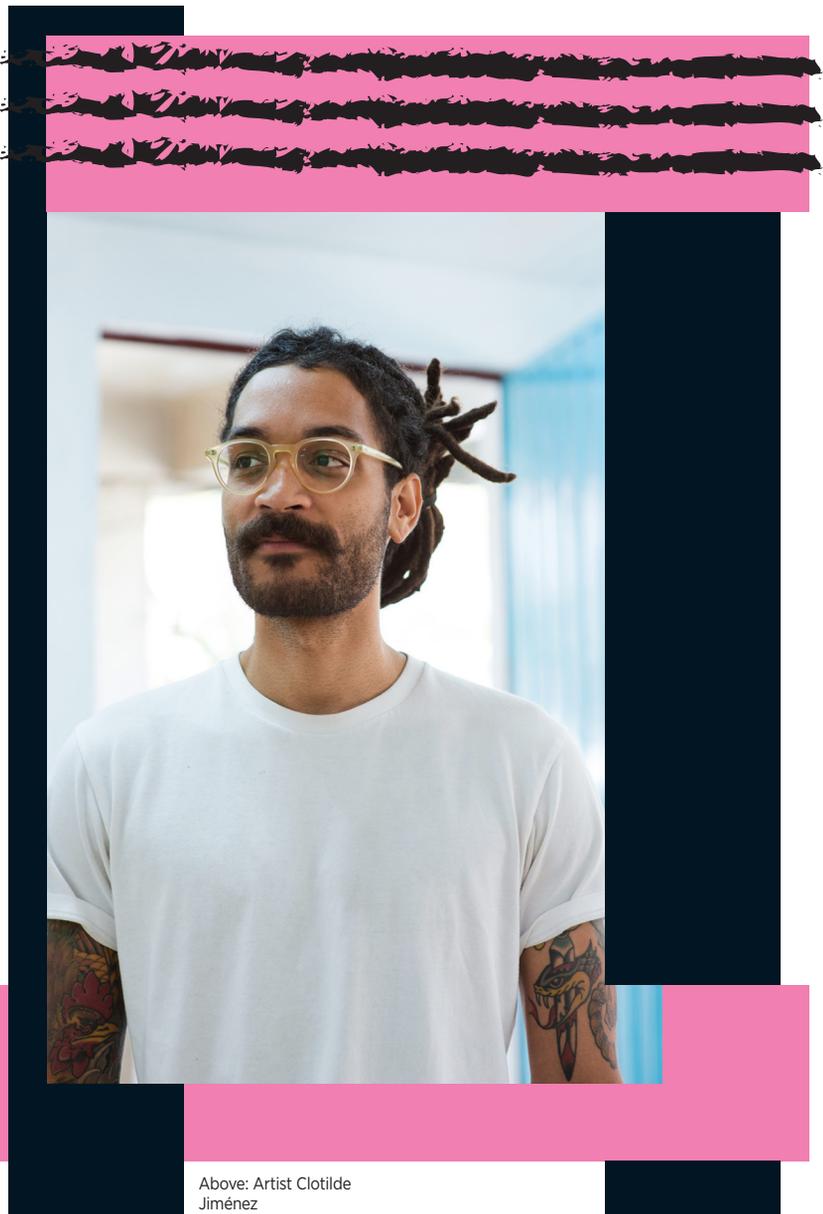
**H**onolulu-born, visual artist Clotilde Jiménez grew up in North Philadelphia, in an environment where he was constantly faced with the struggle of choosing the right career path to pursue. “Philly can be a rough city,” explains Jiménez. “To stay out of trouble and to keep busy, I would either box in the gym or draw characters from my comic books.” As a child, he was distracted by much of the negativity prevalent in life however, determined to carve the right path for himself, he would often discuss his future, particularly with his mother. “She made it very clear to me that I had only a few options because of the way things were; stay in Philly and run the streets or use my artistic talent and get out of the city and receive a college education,” he recalls. In a quest to better his life, Jiménez followed his passions and applied for art school at the Cleveland Institute of Art in 2008 and was, to his surprise, accepted.

Since then, Jiménez has successfully exhibited at The Mennello Museum of American Art, Orlando; Phillips, New York; the Slade School of Fine Art, London; and the Jacob Lawrence Gallery, Seattle. Most recently the artist has moved to Mexico City, a place where he is discovering new inspirations daily. On view from 4 April until 30 May 2020, an exhibition held at Chicago-based Mariane Ibrahim Gallery entitled *The Contest* will reveal brand new works by Jiménez, marking his first solo show with the gallery.

“*The Contest* is a kind of exploration and diary of my time in the gym,” he explains. “It is about the intersections of athleticism and how it relates to me as a Black man and practitioner. A lot of my work is very personal and autobiographical but I think there exists a universal level of symbolism where people can enter the work and form their own experience based on the histories they bring to the table. It’s a kind of exchange.”

Works of note by the artist such as *Dem Boys* (2019) *Squat* (2019) and *Xóchitl Fights Back* (2019), address various conceptions; particularly athleticism, Jiménez’s deeply personal relationship with his father which was once estranged, the underlying theme of race and the realities associated with being a Black male.

The colourful ‘boxer’ and ‘bodybuilder’ seen in his works are indicative of early ideas surrounding limitations placed on the body, a topic which Jiménez explores in most of his pieces. “I think everyone’s body is politically charged and different depending on



Above: Artist Clotilde Jiménez



Clotilde Jimenez. *I Had a Dream I Took an L.* 2020. Mixed media collage on paper. 152.4x152.4cm. Courtesy of the artist and Mariane Ibrahim Gallery

where and who they are,” he says. The artist’s love for the beauty of colour is evident in each of his works, and the marriage between the bright hues and hidden expressions exudes a type of melancholic joy. Ultimately, the artist hopes to reconstruct the societal *idée fixe* of the Black body by celebrating the nuances of being Black, particularly in popular culture.

While living in Brixton, South London in 2016 for three years, Jiménez joined a boxing gym in a quest to fulfil his desire of body transformation. “However, I also was having new experiences that caused me to question gym life – from everything including locker room etiquette to the act of performing squats,” he explains. This has been the driving force behind the creation of *Squat*; the work is a way of documenting this experience and allowing his imagination to run free. On the other hand, *Xóchitl Fights Back* is a response to political injustices. “It’s about reclaiming power and doing what is necessary to survive and live a better life.”

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One of the main inspirations behind the artist’s work was realised when he moved to study art in London, coming to learn what it truly meant to be African-American. “But in between all of that there was an unhappiness brewing in my life,” he expresses. “It seemed the more I had grown intellectually, the further I moved away from the physical prowess I once had as a kid in Philadelphia.” Jiménez spent his nights initiating intellectual conversations on topics from gender to the latest exhibition at the Tate, however he couldn’t recall the last time he engaged in physical training. He admits, “the need and desire to re-enter the gym and bridge the gap between both worlds has been an inspiration for me.”

The Contest exhibition will be home to large-scale collage works along with an installation of a brand new bronze sculpture comprising colourful boxing headgear.

Reused materials such as wallpaper, clothing brand names, amate and magazine clippings have

Clotilde Jimenez.  
Pose No. 4. 2020.  
Charcoal, collage  
and acrylic on paper.  
149.9x162.6cm.  
Courtesy of the artist  
and Mariane Ibrahim  
Gallery



IMAGES COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND MARIANE IBRAHIM GALLERY

all been used to create the new works – a nod to popularised western culture and a representation of the changing perceptions of male beauty. “I use charcoal as a way to simplify and create a universal blackness that creates a hard Greco-Roman statuesque muscled figure that speaks to the objectification of Black muscle and the body in general that I might experience,” he says.

The artist physically cuts the materials and pieces them back together as a way of ‘reconstructing memories’.

The main message the artist wants to portray to the world is

simple and beautiful: “I want to be a storyteller for people who look like me,” he says. “The people whose stories have been marginalised and ignored. What I want to do is be the person that I needed when growing up – someone who depicts the complexities of Black life, what it means, and how it is okay. I aim to provide greater representation of my people within the art historical canon.” ■

[clotildejimenez.art](http://clotildejimenez.art)

*The contest is on show from 4 April until 30 May 2020 at Mariane Ibrahim, Chicago*