



ARTIST

Laura Aguilar

TITLE

Untitled Diptych from series 'Clothed, Unclothed'

DATE

1993

DIMENSIONS

19 in H x 30 in W

MEDIUM

Gelatin Silver Print

IMAGE NOTES

Diptych Labeled 'A' (left) and 'B' (right)

CATALOGUE NUMBER

1993.007

CURRENT LOCATION

2024-6B

LAURA AGUILAR

BORN

1959

DIED

2018

BIRTHPLACE

San Gabriel, CA

GENDER

Female

CITIZENSHIP

United States

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Mexican-American

LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Artist-in-Residence, 1992
Kathleen O. Ellis Gallery, 2018
Be Strong and Do Not Betray Your Soul

LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

Contact Sheet 78
Contact Sheet 97
A Just Image: Selections from the Light Work Collection
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ESSAYS

Webster defines voice as "a medium or agency of expression" and "the right and opportunity to express a choice or opinion." While we all might have the right to express a choice or opinion, it is very much in question if we all have equal opportunity to do so. Laura Aguilar's recent photographic work speaks directly about the barriers she has encountered trying to express her individual rights in the process of finding opportunities and outlets for her art work. In this series of photographs to right Aguilar presents herself, alone and naked in front of the camera. She has framed each picture in size and height to look like they might have been taken from behind a bathroom mirror. The framing reinforces the private tone of the pictures as if Aguilar is trying to understand how to look at herself while being trapped in the grasp of an outsiders gaze. The pictures are private and nonchalant and Aguilar maintains an expression of neutrality throughout the series - waiting with uncertainty and anticipation for us to acknowledge the openness of her presence. Aguilar continues the private tone in the next series of four images titled 'Don't Tell Her Art Can't Hurt.' There are no subtleties in this series - straight forward text illustrates stark photographs of herself placing a pistol in her mouth. The text explodes with anger, drawn from her experience of finding doors closed to artists of color. Her anger is pointed in an oblique direction identifying her oppressors generally as 'they' and art as the source of her pain. While the text in this piece expresses anger, it is expressed in a way that suggests that anger is not the voice Aguilar is looking to put forth, but rather the one that she has found. Before she can build the bridges she talks about in the text, she feels she must first try to identify and then break through the barriers of prejudice and exclusions found between and among cultures. Jeffrey Hoone (c)1992 Laura Aguilar lives in Los Angeles, California and participated in our Artist-in-Residence program in May, 1992A Just Image As it plays out in the headlines, justice means equality, fairness, and the rule of law. Yet beyond the events broadcast on television and the news alerts flashed instantly to laptops and PDAs, there is a large realm of justice that eludes reporters. Throughout daily life - at home, in school, doing errands, tending children, making dinner, playing sports - perceptions of justice often float just below the radar. The Light Work Collection offered plentiful proof that photographers frequently make images of routine daily life and its relationship to a sense of justice. However, as members of the Fine Arts 395 "Art and Identity" class noticed, scholars seldom extend the concept of justice into aspects of living that are legal, but sometimes ethically questionable. Counselors, social workers, and therapists seem to take over where the justice system stops. Nevertheless, the line between the legal system's purview and personal life is not fixed. Class members were careful to insist that the law is often less subtle in its grasp of situations and unaware of complexities than are the images included in this show. Nowhere in the law is it written that by embracing a stereotype one can sometimes achieve influence skin to contesting the mold. Thoughts and feelings such as these coalesced as the subject of this exhibition. Work and family emerged as sites where what is fair is not always what is equal, and what is equal is not always fair. However fair or unfair, the triumphs and annoyances one experiences at work mostly fall below the threshold of the law. It is conventional wisdom, not the IRS, which suggests that wealth carries no guarantee of happiness. Creating this nuanced exhibition about justice in everyday life led the class into hearty and un-nuanced discussions about the slights, snubs, and rebuffs of an ordinary day. The students chose the title A Just Image for this exhibition before they read about the expression in Roland Barthes' Camera Lucida. With the phrase, he and they recognize that art coaxes the world of appearances to create symbols signifying ideas for which there are no words. Just an image becomes A Just Image. Mary Warner MarienA Just Image: Selections from the Light Work Collection is the result of a collaborative effort by thirty-one Syracuse University students enrolled in Professor Mary Warner Marien's "Art and Identity" course. The exhibition examines the Fall 2007 Syracuse Symposium theme of justice. The students chose images from the Light Work Collection, considering the personal and societal meanings of justice. They have created an interactive exhibition, where, as the students write in the exhibition catalogue, "ironically... the viewer is still judging."A Just Image invites viewers to explore the photographs and rethink their definition of justice. As the students of the "Art and Identity" course discovered, though justice is a universal concept, it does not necessarily carry the same meaning for everyone. This can be seen in the different perceptions of stereotypes, families, occupations, and leisure activities, which are some of the topics examined by the class. According to the students, "The Pictures we have chosen require more than just superficial judgment; they require the viewer to acknowledge their own stereotyped projections." Roslyn Esperon