



*Then, when the child of morning, rosy-fingered dawn appeared...*  
Homer, *The Odyssey*.

Praz-Delavallade Projects Los Angeles is pleased to present *U*, the third exhibition of Peruvian artist Sergio Verastegui from the trilogy *How R U* that explores philosophic deconstruction ideas of Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida through the prism of the artist's own body, life experience, and self-presence in the space.

It should be said that all the works presented at the exhibition have been delivered by regular post, and the artist himself will not be physically present during the preparation of the show in LA. These facts became an important part of the exhibition concept and artist's research.

Like in his previous solo exhibition *R*, Sergio Verastegui again refers to the body, and objects' physical appearance in the exhibition room. How can an object be present in the space? What does it mean to be present in a world of technologies, social media, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality?

Today, presence has become a multi-dimensional concept, encompassing physical, virtual, and emotional aspects. The advancement of technology has blurred the lines between physical and virtual presence, and how we define the "reality" of an object or experience can vary greatly based on context, perspective, and individual interpretation. In a world where technology allows for the augmentation and manipulation of reality, the consensus on an objective reality is indeed becoming more complex. Augmented reality (AR) and similar technologies exemplify how our experiences of reality are becoming increasingly personalized, interactive, and multifaceted. This shift prompts us to explore the implications, benefits, and challenges of navigating these fragmented realities.

P R A Z  
D E L A V A L L A D E

This leads to the conception of sculptural oeuvres where the concept of presence is never complete. The viewer completes it by being in the exhibition space, by his/her own fantasies, interpretations, and gadgets. The artist suggests that it is almost impossible to be 100 percent present in one space because you are always projecting yourself to another place, another circumstance thus creating (Insta)stories different from the present reality.

Verastegui sees this fragmented reality—consisting of remnants of the world, thoughts, things, AR, colours—as a crime scene where a detective always comes too late, and can only speculate the facts and make approximative interpretations of what have happened, linking the objects, trying to imagine what brought these objects to this place. Although each piece in the exhibition looks like a part of the whole oeuvre, it can also function as a separate autonomous unit in another space.

Reconstructing the reality out of fragments becomes a significant part of this exhibition, based on personal experience. Thus, the series of works *U* take the measurements of Sergio's wife's body. It is kind of an act of deconstructing a body. Following Jacques Derrida's statement that there is no absolute identity, that nothing "is itself" by virtue of its being, the visitor is faced with a divided identity. Made out of a fabric that the artist purchased in Mexico in 2016, by a Mexican tailor in 2023, these pink patchwork-looking works hang on walls and, possibly, evoke the question "Who R U?".

Following the idea of a deconstructed body, in the series *U (scream)*, Sergio Verastegui takes jaws from anatomical models and paints them pink using an encaustic technique. The artist sees them as a mask, that has also a dual meaning leading to the idea of becoming someone else, thus, decoding the Self. The jaws were not chosen by chance—they also evoke the "U" letter form and, again, leading the visitor to questions of identity and association.

Another important aspect that links all the objects in the exhibition is the pink color. The decision to use pink is inspired by Sergio's daughter's collages. It adds depth and personal significance to the artist's oeuvres. It creates a bridge between the artist's professional work and personal life, enriching the overall narrative and inviting viewers to engage with the artwork on multiple levels.

Throughout art history, the meaning and symbolism of pink have evolved, reflecting societal attitudes, cultural shifts, and artistic trends. From its use in traditional religious art to its role in modern and consumer society, pink remains a color that carries diverse connotations and a range of meanings, from femininity and innocence to irony and critique.

P R A Z  
D E L A V A L L A D E

Sergio Verastegui tries to work out pink color stereotypes, bringing them to the limit. He takes the subject of love and desire and looks at it through the prism of a capitalist world. In this capitalist world, the concept of love can take on various meanings and interpretations, often influenced by the economic, social, and cultural dynamics of this environment. In the body of works *U* (fiction vs reality), that consists of artist's poems and texts silkscreened on newspaper pages, Sergio reflects on the possibility of love in today's world, where consumerism and materialism influence the way love is perceived. He argues: "In my opinion the idea of love in capitalism must come from the outside, because it's not really a subject. If you link this question directly with pink color, it immediately becomes a cliché of love. But I am trying to reflect on different components of subjectivity that relate people with objects, images and, also, with themselves."

What is the meaning of love and desire today? How can love exist in a world where all the projections can be made into someone or something thus transforming things into objects? This leads Verastegui to the idea of fetishism, in particular to one of the most common stereotypes of a desire: a high-heel shoe. The *U* (*don't know what love is*) series appears out of this idea. The heels are cut off high-heel shoes. The act of cutting the heel from the shoe deconstructs the aesthetics of high heel shoes. By this, the artist emphasizes the heel as an element of fetish power in a consumer world.

Verastegui approaches discussions of fetishism and desire with sensitivity, with personal and societal implications. He states that "fetishism is more precisely linked to desire, but not immediately linked to love." The heels are presented in pink-coloured shoe boxes. Here, again, Sergio plays with pink, and its meanings.

In religious paintings, the pink color is used to depict images of Virgin Mary, or other female figures. Inspired by Hollywood atmosphere and the context of Los Angeles, Verastegui chooses an icon, a character that embodies a wide range of stereotypes of Pop culture, for his further artistic investigation: Madonna Louise Ciccone.

In his 7-minutes video *Madonna Cries*, Sergio records a short video of Madonna crying on stage from the Internet, and transforms it into a film, where the face of Madonna is barely recognizable, abstract, and rosy. It creates a multifaceted, and layered narrative that reflects the complexity of Pop culture influences, and encourages the audience to reflect on their own beliefs and assumptions, as well as on the body presentation in public space.

In the City of Angels, just a few steps away from Hollywood, the whole exhibition should be viewed as a poetic crime movie scenario, where poems become actors, Madonna cries, and visitors turn into deconstructed reality investigators, putting puzzle pieces together in their heads, or gadgets. Should this movie be seen through the pink glasses?

PRAZ-DELAVALLE LOS ANGELES  
6150 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles CA 90048  
+1 323 509 0895  
losangeles@praz-delavallade.com

PRAZ-DELAVALLE PARIS  
5 rue des Haudriettes, F-75003 Paris  
+33 (0)1 45 86 20 00  
info@praz-delavallade.com

[www.praz-delavallade.com](http://www.praz-delavallade.com)

Julia Cistiakova  
Curator, art critic