

MODERN PAINTERS

JULY/AUGUST 2012 | ARTINFO.COM

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PHILADELPHIA

Germán Gómez

Bridgette Mayer Gallery // April 4–April 28

THE MIXED-MEDIA PIECES in this exhibition span 10 years in the artist's career and show research into and deconstruction of the idea of the portrait, while continually making reference to the history of art and photography. The series "Fichado y Tatuado (Registered and Tattooed)," 2005, comprises photographs of men exposing their tattoos, presented alongside police records stating their identity, age, location, and so forth, and including mug shots, fingerprints, and close-ups of the aforementioned tattoos. The series gives the impression that the artist works in a documentary tradition, but the actual tattoos—ranging from a pair of scissors to a painting by Joan Miró—clearly reveal that the artist drew them on his photographic subjects. Which brings us to the show's title, "Diary Portraits": The men documented in these works are the artist's friends, and their images are actually an extension of Gómez himself. It's all fiction. The deceptively scientific-looking research into the tradition of portraiture is in fact what the artist calls diary portraits, a form of self-portraiture where each person photographed is in fact a representation of Gómez's emotional world.

Another series, "Condenado (The Damned)," 2008, unveils an additional aspect of the artist's interest in the history of art. While the photographs depict men in wrestling poses that echo Gómez's interest in the male body and its photographic image, they also quite strongly recall the damned in Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel.

The works are all based on photographs that Gómez reworks in a highly idiosyncratic way: He chips away at the material, cutting and tearing the photo paper only to sew it with black thread, and then fastens the paper to iron or plastic sheets, giving the final work a sculptural quality. Many artists in history have created self-portraits throughout their career. In his investigation of what these diary portraits could be, Gómez is in good company. —**Orit Gat**



Germán Gómez
Fichado y Tatuado 1042
(Registered and Tattooed 1042), 2005. C-print on paper, 39¼ x 39¼ in., and C-print on paper and ink on filing card, 19 x 14½ in.