

NINO MIER
GALLERY

CONRAD RUÍZ

Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken

August 7 - September 11, 2021

NINO MIER GALLERY
GALLERY 4
1107 GREENACRE AVE
LOS ANGELES, CA

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Wild hearts can't be broken

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Nino Mier Gallery is pleased to present *Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken*, a solo show of seven recent watercolor paintings by Los Angeles-based artist Conrad Ruíz. The exhibition places icons of the contemporary American imaginary—a Target dog, a monster truck, a skateboarder, a Rolls Royce—within a theater of fire and smoke. But such dramatics do not just serve an apocalyptic cult of destruction and decadent decline. Rather, Ruíz's works celebrate the generative potential that burning might bring, whether it be for thrill-seeking fun, rebirth, or rebellion.

Ruíz's process begins as an archival project. He saves photographs from various sources - the news, the web, the street - that are particularly rich in both content and composition. He then paints these images, sometimes with slight modifications to better integrate them into his visual world. *Bye Bye Bullseye* (2021), for instance, is based on a photo taken in Oakland during the 2020 protests against police brutality. The painting centers a young Black woman standing before a blazing dumpster with her right fist in the air, a gesture which was popularized during the labor movements of the early 20th century, and which symbolizes Black Power today. In the left edge of the frame, a small plastic dog - Target's corporate mascot - lies fallen on its side, immobilized, staring blankly at the woman's fist in the scarlet-colored sky. Ruíz's process of culling together and painting powerful images wrested from the content glut gives such moments a permanence that our ever-refreshing feeds do not.

Ruíz has long worked in a figurative mode reminiscent of Malcolm Morley's photorealist work and Tim Gardner's explorations of middle-class American masculinity. For this exhibition, Ruíz opted for watercolor as opposed to oil or acrylic paints. Water might extinguish fire, but when mixed with pigment, it also creates it: the sense of flux and flow that such diluted paint imparts on paper gives his field of flames a sense of immediacy. His chosen medium also complicates his interest in boyish violence. Big wheels, jumps, crashes, booms: these are cornerstones of play for the average young American male. From four-wheelers to Marvel movies (it is no coincidence that *Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken*, 2021 features a monster truck named "AVENGER"), the media diet fed to boys tends towards the drama and pageantry of destruction. Ruíz's watercolors infuse a sense of vulnerability and delicacy—qualities that are fundamental to any eruptive, daring act but that often go unexplored—to what he likes to call his "boy zone" scenes.

Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken is titled after a 1991 live-action film about a young, early 20th century American woman who rides diving horses. The movie is based on Sonora Webster Carver's 1961 memoir *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, a heartfelt story about the protagonist's love for performing daring feats in a Wild West show at Atlantic City's Steel Pier. Though Sonora Webster Carver was blinded by an injury incurred while diving, she continued to perform as a horse diver for another eleven years. The film highlights the clarifying, vivifying effect that leaping on a horse mid-air had on her. Ruíz understands Sonora's will to "get back on the horse" as a structuring force in American social and political life, besieged by a continuous stream of crisis, but guided by a (sometimes blind) will to persevere.

But Ruíz's works share more in tone with David Lynch's *Wild At Heart* (1990) than with *Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken*, as Ruíz's sentimentalism exists alongside his irony, his humanism alongside his anarchic mischievousness. His painting *Spirit of Ecstasy* is titled after the winged angel that stands atop the Rolls Royce bumper, but his painting shows the car on fire with a plume of black smoke billowing ominously at the top of the composition. As with Lynch, Ruíz's ecstasy is not uncomplicated delight, but rather is prophetic and trance-like, guided by forces beyond individual control.

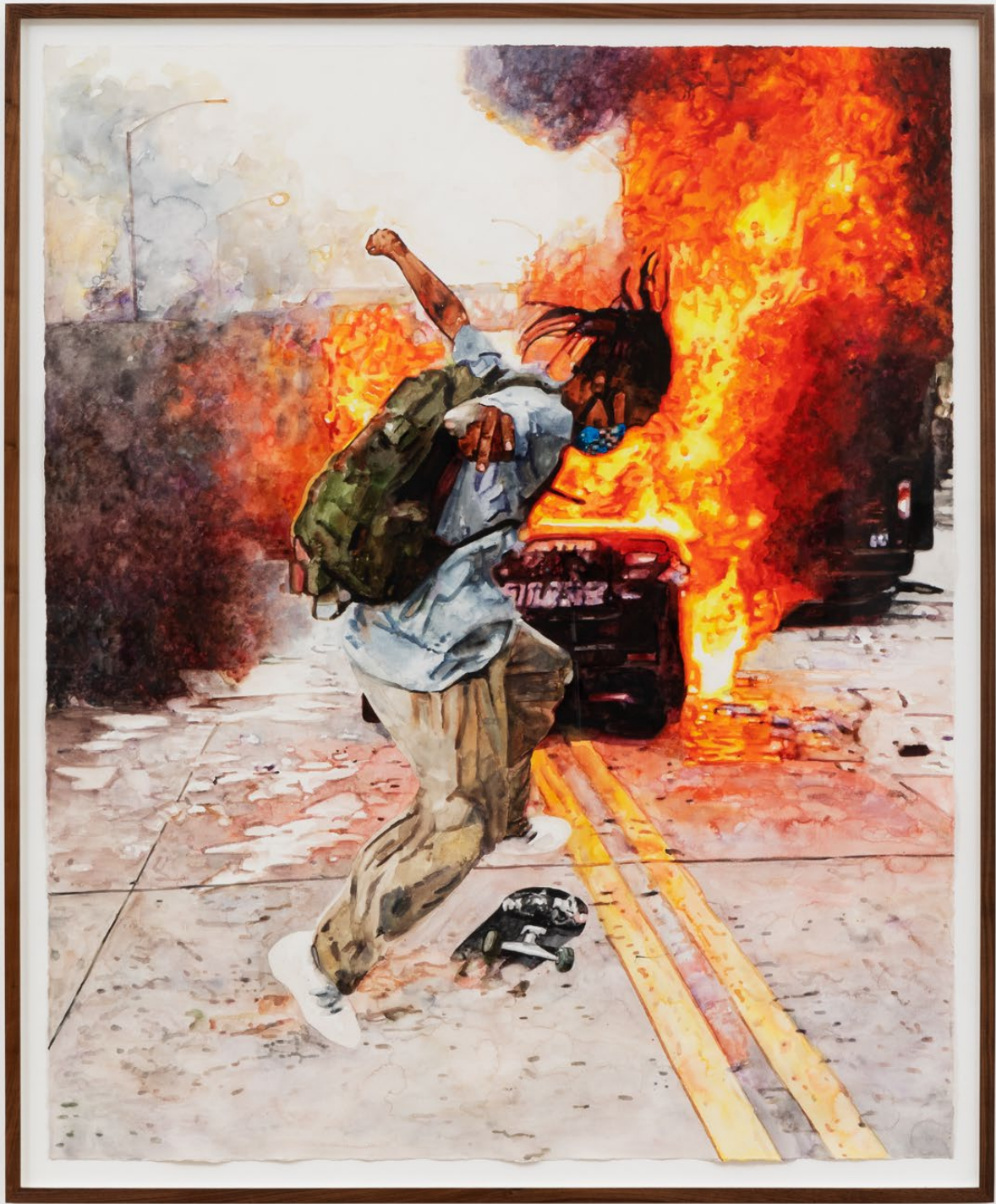
Conrad Ruíz (b.1983) has had solo exhibitions at Ochi Projects, Los Angeles (2019); the Museum of Contemporary Art in Santa Barbara (2015); Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco (2009, 2012); and Yautepec Gallery, Mexico City (2011). He has recently participated in group exhibitions at The Pit, Los Angeles (2021); No Gallery, Los Angeles (2019); Steve Turner Contemporary, Los Angeles (2018); Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (2018); and the Consulate General of Mexico, Los Angeles (2018). Ruíz received his MFA from the California College of the Arts, and lives and works in LA.



Installation View of Conrad Ruíz, *Wild hearts can't be broken* (August 7- September 11, 2021)
Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA



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Gleaming the Cube II, 2021
Watercolor on paper
55 x 45 in
139.7 x 114.3 cm
(CRU21.001)





Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken, 2021
Watercolor on paper
24 x 18 in
61 x 45.7 cm
(CRU21.006)



AVENGER

COACH R15

السيارة





Gleaming the Cube III, 2021
Watercolor on paper
55 x 45 in
139.7 x 114.3 cm
(CRU21.002)





Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken II, 2021
Watercolor on paper
24 x 18 in
61 x 45.7 cm
(CRU21.007)





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Installation View of Conrad Ruíz, *Wild hearts can't be broken* (August 7- September 11, 2021)
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Man on Fire XV, 2021
Watercolor on paper
55 x 45 in
139.7 x 114.3 cm
(CRU21.005)

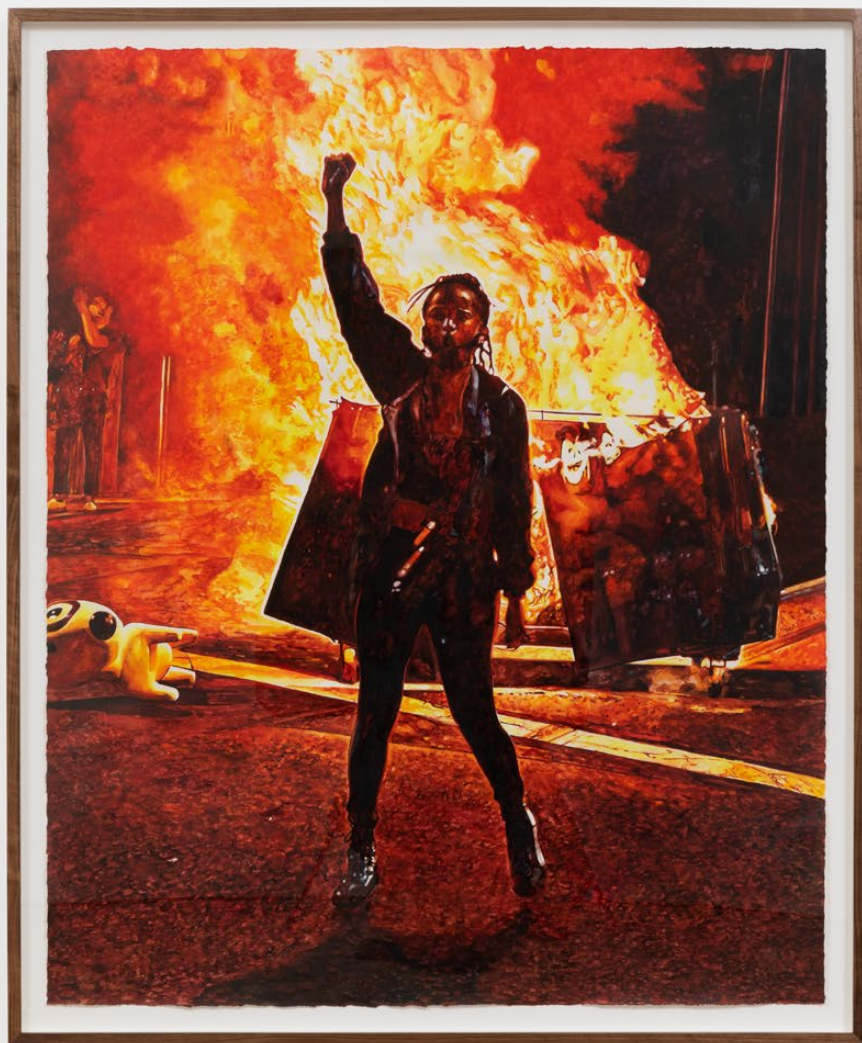




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Bye Bye Bullseye, 2021
Watercolor on paper
55 x 45 in
139.7 x 114.3 cm
(CRU21.004)





Spirit of Ecstasy, 2021
Watercolor on paper
55 x 45 in
139.7 x 114.3 cm
(CRU21.003)





Man on Fire XIV, 2021
Watercolor on paper
24 x 18 in
61 x 45.7 cm
(CRU21.007)





CONRAD RUÍZ

Born 1983, Los Angeles, CA
Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA

EDUCATION

2009 MFA, California College of the Arts
2005 BA, California State University, San Bernardino

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2021 *Wild hearts can't be broken*, Nino Mier, Los Angeles, CA
2019 *Black, Red, and Deadly*, Ochi Projects, Los Angeles, CA
2016 *The Space Born (with Haley Barker)*, Egyptian Art and Antiques, Beverly Hills, CA
2015 *Knuckles and Bubbles*, Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA
2013 *Two Weeks/Two Works*, Fourteen30 Contemporary, Portland, OR
2012 *Juice*, Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2011 *Pacific Theater*, Yautepec Gallery, Mexico City, MX
2009 *Cold Hard and Wet*, Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco, CA

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2021 *Wild Frontiers*, The Pit, Los Angeles, CA
LA to Milan, F2T Gallery, Milan, IT
Stockholm Sessions, Carl Kostyal Stockholm, SW
Anxiety, HVW8 Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
2020 *Gest*, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Riders of the Red Horse, The Pit, Los Angeles, CA
Fallen Monuments, Epoch Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Enough is Enough, Wonzimer, Los Angeles, CA
Ephemeral Innocence, Dozier and Hazard, Los Angeles, CA
So Far, La Loma Projects, Los Angeles, CA
2019 *LA on Fire*, Wilding Cran Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
We Go Fast, Left Field Gallery, Los Osos, CA
Roadrunner, Queens LA, Los Angeles, CA
Summer Group Show, The Pit, Los Angeles, CA
At Odds, No Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
2018 *Through -Line*, Steve Turner Contemporary, Los Angeles, CA
Group Exhibition, CACTUS, Long Beach, CA
Way Bay, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA
Goles Y Pasiones, Consulate General of Mexico, Los Angeles, CA
Boys of Summer: TLC, Mt. San Jacinto College, CA
Tiny Men on Tits, Chimento Contemporary, Los Angeles, CA



- 2017 *Fantasies and Fallacies*, Consulate General of Mexico, Los Angeles, CA
Facing, BBQLA, Los Angeles, CA
All The Small Things, Steve Turner Contemporary, Los Angeles, CA
Trust Fall, Gallery ALSO, Los Angeles, CA
Amplify Compassion ACLU Benefit, 356 S. Mission Rd, Los Angeles, CA
Boys of Summer: Love Affair, FAR Bazaar: Cerritos College, Norwalk, CA
Octollio, Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, PA
Man Up, Chaffey College, Rancho Cucamonga, CA
- 2016 *Our Masters*, Egyptian Art and Antiques, Beverly Hills, CA
How High, Left Field, San Luis Obispo, CA
Poseur, SME Gallery, School of Visual Arts UC San Diego, San Diego, CA
Disruption: Annual Spring Benefit & Auction, Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA
- 2015 *Second Wave*, Riverside Art Museum, Riverside, CA
Play: Process, Activism, Subversion, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA
An Odyssey: 10 Years at TAM, Torrance Art Museum, Torrance, CA
Jug Life, Park Life Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Poseur, Land and Sea, Oakland, CA
- 2014 *Executive Producer*, Museum of Contemporary Art Oaxaca, Oaxaca, MX
Insider Sports, Control Room, Los Angeles, CA
- 2013 *A Day Away*, curated by Kristofferson San Pablo, Slow Culture, Los Angeles, CA
Sea Stories Between the Tides, Highlight Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 2012 *We Are Here Because We Are Not All There*, Oliver Art Center, Oakland, CA
To live and Paint in LA, Torrance Art Museum, Torrance, CA
- 2011 *Boys of Summer: Slamsocks*, People's Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Boys of Summer: Centerfold, Freak City, Los Angeles, CA
The Elegance of Refusal, Gensler Space, San Francisco, CA
4th of July Show, People's Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 2010 *Group Exhibition*, Guerrero Gallery, San Francisco CA
Boys of Summer III: New Empire, Raid Projects, Los Angeles CA
- 2009 *Material Witness*, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley CA
Wet Paint: 10 Young La Painters, Steve Turner Contemporary, Los Angeles CA
Summer Exhibition, Kravets Wehby Gallery, New York, NY
CCA MFA Exhibition, San Francisco, CA
Sketchbook Show, Orange Alley Project, San Francisco, CA
22nd Annual Barclay Simpson Award Exhibition, Oliver Art Center, Oakland, CA
The Paradox of the Sets, On Six Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Illusion Helps, Orange Alley Project, San Francisco, CA
Paul McCartney's Lower Slower part 1V, Fish Space, San Francisco, CA
- 2008 *Night of 1000 Drawings*, Artists Space, New York, NY

