

Artist Statement: Gonzalo Alvarez

My work for the past 2 years focuses on uncovering my Mexican roots to create culturally significant media in contemporary culture. Growing up a first generation-Mexican American led much to be desired in role models within pop culture entertainment. I find myself tired of the same white men in armor or tights and it's time to tell a different story. through my transmedia political and cultural projects, I can bring to life the worlds I experienced as a Mexican child to educate, entertain, and challenge following generations.

My work ranges from the interactive medium of video games to the power of narration through imagery and words in graphic novels. Hispanic cultures contain an invisible language through it's iconography, folktales, and customs. Through the packaging of a contemporary product the stories, whether political or cultural, within Mexican and Meso-American culture can be brought to outsiders attention.

My current project "The Legend of Polloman" is a Mexican Fantasy graphic novel series following a boy's journey to defeat Mexican folklore creatures. Growing up, El Cucuy, the mexican equivalent of the boogiemán, and other folktales were used to scare children from misbehaving. These stories were so well fabricated they continue to live through subsequent generations, yet remain outside of mainstream media. Polloman serves as a contemporary role model for young latinos and non-latinos to relate to and learn about Mexican culture.

"Borders" is a political art game created to exhibit video games as an art form and recreate my parents immigration's story for players to simulate. The game came out of a response to the recent political dialogue criminalizing immigrants without listening to their stories. Players attempt to avoid the border patrol and dehydration with every death leaving behind a permanent skeleton symbolizing those lost in the Mexican Desert. I created a video game cabinet to utilize this feature in a public setting and after international recognition, the game cabinet has since traveled around the world. There are currently over 2500 bodies from players in Beaumont, Austin, and Dallas Texas, Los Angeles California, Sheffield UK, along with other locations bringing the dialogue to an international level.

Through the powerful outreach of contemporary media, people in and outside the latino community can experience our stories, struggles, and culture. Pop culture is an avenue not only to entertain, but to reach audiences to educate on all subjects matters. Morals, culture, political, and social issues can be communicated subconsciously and influence a larger demographic versus more "sophisticated" media. It is my duty as someone who has gone through the American system without a role model to become one and document our many stories for the following generations to come. Our stories matter.