

# Craft Contemporary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Luis Flores: *Because of You, In Spite of You*

October 2, 2022 – January 8, 2023



**Left:** Luis Flores, *Untitled (We Go Hard)*, 2022. Yarn, bronze, AAA t-shirt, Levi's jeans, Vans shoes, socks. © Luis Flores 2022. Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Brown. Photo: Ed Mumford.

**Right:** Luis Flores, *Monster Truck*, 2022. Yarn, bronze, ABS, EPS. © Luis Flores 2022. Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Brown. Photo: Ed Mumford.

**Los Angeles - Luis Flores: *Because of You, In Spite of You***, the artist's first solo museum exhibition, continues his soulful analysis of his complex relationship with outdated concepts of masculinity. A transitional work merging older concepts and new visions, the installation probes the meaning of manhood through personal transformation brought forth by familial love. Taking the architecture and the spatial quirks that the museum's second-floor gallery offers, Flores's installation resembles a monster truck rally -- a symbolic place blending past traumatic experiences and a renewed optimism that propel the artist toward creating a better life for him and his family.

Reflecting on personal experiences, Flores confesses that while attending CalArts, he began to think of masculinity as a 'bad word,' a notion that pained him deeply as he considers himself masculine, partaking in activities typically categorized as masculine. The experience sharpened his interest in investigating topics men avoid discussing for fear of emasculation, vulnerability, or being labeled homophobic. The hyper-awareness developed during this time has led Flores to explore these issues widely through objects and hand-crocheted, life-size self-portraits to counter what he perceives as detrimental feminine and masculine constructs. Fatherhood has been a powerful motivating force to change his interactions with other men and women, unlearning behavioral models learned in childhood.

*Because of You, In Spite of You*, complete with monster trucks, ramps, barriers, stadium lights, a fan section, and life-size sculptures resembling him and his wife, takes visitors through the ups and downs of parental life. The male and female figures hold steady the ramp the monster truck must navigate while a second monster truck triumphantly breaks down barriers standing in its way. A drunken man leaning against the wall and bronzed beer packs refer to toxic masculine conduct, and the monster claws that emerge through holes in the beer packs personify their nightmares and interior demons. Using crochet to cover some of the objects entirely and for the skin and hair of the human figures, Flores infuses humor to lessen the intense dark undertones the work may evoke. In the repetitive nature of crochet, he finds space for introspection and inspiration. The objects' hard surfaces are disguised under the colorful thread, and the figures' skin and hair are malleable and squashy, like plush toys. A simple crotchet stitch the artist learned and skillfully adapted has become a recognizable element of his work.

Deeply personal, *Because of You, In Spite of You*, is a meditation on the artist's acceptance of his troubled relationship with men, such as his father, and his struggle to jettison gender stereotypes. Recognizing his own vulnerability, Flores is keen to alter unhealthy masculine behavior for the benefit of his children. He acknowledges that he is treading new territory and that, as a young father, he is searching for a fresh approach, using art to adapt to this new reality.

#### **ABOUT THE ARTIST:**

Luis Flores (b. 1985, West Covina, CA) lives and works in Los Angeles. He received his MFA from the California Institute of the Arts in 2014, and his BFA from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 2009. His work has been shown in solo exhibitions, including at Matthew Brown, Los Angeles (2019); Salon 94, New York (2019); Galerie Hussenot, Paris (2018); Grice Bench, Los Angeles (2015); and Traction Arts, Los Angeles 2013). He has been included in recent group exhibitions at Matthew Brown, Los Angeles (2022); El Museo del Barrio, New York, (2021); Taubman Museum of Art, Roanoke, VA (2020); Blum & Poe, Los Angeles (2020); Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, California (2019); University of Hartford, Connecticut (2019); Art+Practice, Los Angeles (2019); Jeffrey Deitch, Los Angeles (2019); Macarone, Salon 94, Salon 94 Design, New York (2017); and Grice Bench, Los Angeles (2016). The artist is represented by Matthew Brown, Los Angeles.

## RELATED PROGRAMS:

For a full list of exhibition programs, visit <https://www.craftcontemporary.org/programs/>

### Opening Reception

**Saturday, October 1 | 6:00 – 9:00 pm | in-person, courtyard, and galleries**

**\$12 general admission | free for members**

Join us as we celebrate the opening of our new exhibitions *Lezley Saar: Diorama Drama*; *Luis Flores: Because of You, In Spite of You*; and *Tactics of Erasure and Rewriting Histories*. Guests enjoy first access to the galleries, complimentary beverages, and live DJ music.

### Craft Lab Family Workshop:

**Monster Truck Madness with Billy Kheel**

**Sunday, November 13 | 1:30 – 3:30 pm | in-person, outdoors**

**\$10 adults | \$7 children | free for members**

Join artist Billy Kheel to create a custom felt monster truck! Starting with a pre-cut base, participants will use simple hand stitching, gluing, stuffing, and appliqué techniques to bring personality to their trucks.

### In Conversation: Luis Flores & Alma Ruiz

**Saturday, December 10 | 12:00 pm | in-person, indoors | free**

Join us for a special gallery conversation with independent curator Alma Ruiz and exhibiting artist Luis Flores. Delve deeper into Flores's solo exhibition and creative use of materials and figurative sculptural works that explore profound biographical events and transitions.

## CREDITS:

*Luis Flores: Because of You, In Spite of You* has been organized by Craft Contemporary guest curator Alma Ruiz. This exhibition is supported in part by the Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts. Additional support provided by the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs and the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture. All works are shown courtesy of the artist and Matthew Brown, Los Angeles.

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Located on Los Angeles's historic Miracle Mile since 1965, Craft Contemporary reveals the potential of craft to educate, captivate, provoke, and empower. With a focus on contemporary art made from craft media and processes, Craft Contemporary presents dynamic exhibitions by established and emerging artists and designers who are often underrepresented in larger art institutions. Through a robust roster of regular programs and events, Craft Contemporary offers creative opportunities for the public to participate in hands-on workshops led by professional artists. Craft Contemporary cultivates an environment for people in Los Angeles to deepen their relationship to art, creativity, and one another. For more information, visit [www.craftcontemporary.org](http://www.craftcontemporary.org).

**LOCATION:** 5814 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036

**ADMISSION:** FREE every Sunday

**REGULARLY:** \$9 for adults; \$7 for students, teachers, seniors; Free for Craft Contemporary members

**HOURS:** Tuesday - Sunday, 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM (starting October 2)