PATRICK MARTINEZ

HAPPY BIRTHDAY MLK, IV

CATEGORIES: Sculptures, Unique Works

SPECIFICATIONS:

DESCRIPTION

Los Angeles artist Patrick Martinez highlights civil rights leaders often overlooked in history through his distinctive "cake portraits." These works, painted to resemble three-dimensional cakes, celebrate figures such as Angela Davis, James Baldwin, Malcolm X, and lesser-known freedom fighters like Larry Itliong. Martinez uses the cake—a universal symbol of celebration—to honor a diverse group of activists, contrasting it with traditional portraiture typically reserved for wealthy, white figures.

Martinez's approach to painting is influenced by Wayne Thiebaud, incorporating thick, textured "frosting" strokes and ceramic roses, elements that also appear in his landscape works. These landscapes, depicting Los Angeles, incorporate themes of memory and loss, much like street memorials, offering a nostalgic yet critical view of the city's evolving architecture.

The edition *Happy Birthday MLK* features an ink transfer from Martinez's 2023 portrait of the late civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. Each panel has a unique airbrushed background with hand-sculpted ceramic roses and decorative extruded line work made using acrylic paint. The work is mounted onto a shaped acrylic mirror and is packaged in a custom printed archival box in the style of a commercial bakery.

Martinez's cake paintings challenge traditional ideas of monuments. By portraying civil rights activists on grocery store sheet cakes, he prompts viewers to reconsider how we honor historical figures, blending the mundane with the monumental to reflect both past and present struggles for justice.