

Guillermo Gómez-Peña



Guillermo Gómez-Peña, courtesy of the artist.

Photo by Zen Cohen

A man sits upright at a table wearing a black hat, sunglasses, and an open black jacket with yellow shoulder pads exposing his chest with tattoos. A stack of white paper sits on the table along with a vase of flowers, an intricate ash tray with skulls, candles, and a plastic alien head labelled with the text "Alien Pops." The room is red behind the seated figure, with artworks, photographs and carved items decorating the walls. A prominent neon sign that reads "La Nostalgia BAR" sits above the seated person.

An indomitable flux permeates the pioneering work of "cyberpunk Chicano" performer Guillermo Gómez-Peña. Toggling just as easily between languages as between gender expressions, stage personas, and artistic genres, the Mexican-American artist navigates and challenges physical, political, and cultural borders. The riveting, collaborative performances he

orchestrates can take the form of anything between a Spanglish spoken-word recital and a guerrilla television act. Everything from cultural fetish items and racist memorabilia to robotic arms and a myriad of costumes are featured in Gómez-Peña's anti-colonial critique of US empire and its racial politics. Itself a combination of sci-fi aesthetics and Mexican and American popular culture, his experimental "ethno-techno art" meditates on the hybrid identities that form within and move across borderlands such as that between the US and Mexico.

Throughout a multifoliate career spent engaging in political theatre, poetic journalism, and radical pedagogy, Gómez-Peña has centered collectivity and community in his work. In 1993, the artist founded the transdisciplinary performance art troupe La Pocha Nostra with Roberto Sifuentes and Nola Mariano. With an ever-fluid cast of members hailing from different generations, ethnic backgrounds, and gender complexities, the group works across photography, video, installation, and performance to tear down the walls between the practice and theory of art, as well as between artist and spectator. The rebel artists work across national borders and identities in practice of a "radical citizen diplomacy." By breaking down gendered and raced divisions on stage, the group strives to collapse these borders in society at large.

With an increasingly blurred distinction between life and performance art, Gómez-Peña uses his body as a conduit for a cyborg consciousness that simultaneously channels ancient Mayan and Aztec civilizations while projecting tech-powered visions of a more equitable future. Fundamental to both Gómez-Peña's performance practice and *Toward Common*

Cause is a belief in the vital role art plays in society and its power to radically change it.

—Jad Dahshan

b. 1955, Mexico City, Mexico
MacArthur Fellow, 1991

I invite you dear foreigner in my performance country to dream with me and send me your own letters imagining a better art world or rather a myriad of art worlds, coexisting in synergy with nature, radical imagination, and community

Venues

[Guillermo Gómez-Peña at Jane Addams Hull-House Museum](#)
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