

The Pit

Pepe Mar: Doppelganger
June 28 - August 9, 2025

Doppelganger, an exhibition of new works by Pepe Mar presented by The Pit Los Angeles, marks the return of Mar to California—the place where his artistic practice began.

After growing up in Reynosa, Mexico near the United States border and in McAllen, Texas; California was where Mar first stepped out on his own and began making art. It is where he was a student of Raymond Saunders and became familiar with artists like Bruce Conner and Larry Bell who worked with found objects and a wide array of source materials to create collages, sculptures, and assemblages. These early exposures and Mar's own passion for reclamation are the provenance for his creative process, one that involves a continuous search through thrift stores and vintage shops for items that will eventually be re-imagined and incorporated into his artworks. His earlier collages made with magazine cut-outs, posters, and printed ephemera have led to sculptures and assemblages that are at once anthropomorphic and otherworldly. Mar has reworked some of those early collages into a fabric mural against which a new assemblage piece, "Tetas," is displayed at The Pit, collapsing timelines and his life experiences into one mystical and vivid universe.

At the center of this universe is Mar's alter ego or doppelganger, Paprika. Each piece in the show is a depiction of it. Less of a sinister twin like in Fyodor Dostoevsky's "The Double" or Robert Louis Stevenson's "Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde", Paprika is Mar's spiritual double that arises directly from him and evolves fluidly alongside him. It is his hermetic medium in which he explores his current and past lives. He uses leather that he has found in thrift stores in Miami (where he has lived for the last 25 years) to create Paprika's tentacle-like extremities that give it a sense of skin and simultaneously reference the gay subcultures he excavates from. Always depicted with its eyes and mouth open, Paprika eclipses any need for self-definition and reveals to us who or what else Mar may be, who or what else he might have been.

Even Paprika has a double, as seen with the twin pieces "Ingenuity" and "Opportunity"—further expanding the possibilities of self into an infinite amount of potential mirrored selves. His experience of having grown up near the Mexico and United States border, where duality and differing cultures abide, has undoubtedly influenced his ability to work in such a liminal space of creation and self-exploration. As does his Mexican heritage, where chimera-like creatures, alebrijes, are part of the local folklore and spirits are able to roam our plane of existence during special holidays like the Day of the Dead. Each piece is a cornucopia of Mar's lived experiences; in some cases literally, like with "Alacran," where the body is composed of various wicker baskets. And in other works figuratively, like with "Afterhours," where Paprika wears a vintage Gianni Versace vest that reflects Mar's love for fashion and his fascination with the extravagant and euphoric queer culture of South Beach in the 1990s. Doppelganger is a reflection of the abundance found within Mar—and perhaps by our own process of witnessing and recognition, within us all.

The exhibition will be on view from June 28th to August 9th, 2025 at The Pit Los Angeles, and an opening reception will be held on Saturday, June 28th from 5-7pm.

-Ivana Cruz