

Toria Maldonado Artist Statement

Toria Maldonado is a multidisciplinary visual artist from and currently based in Long Beach, California. Primarily working in figurative painting and digital illustration, their work is largely informed by social issues and art activism. Collectively, all of their work centers their identity as a queer non-binary Trans person and how that relates to their Mexican-Japanese American culture.

Their current body of work, "Self Love is..." is an on-going series of illustrative self-portraits that embody their personal journey with self love. Each portrait explores different approaches to defining and practicing this concept, driven by issues such as gender identity, mental health, and vulnerability. Because the series expands throughout 2020, the context of the work also acknowledges the underlying impacts of COVID-19.

One of the portraits in this series, "Making Space To Be Vulnerable" depicts the personal struggle with finding and making space for emotional release — allowing myself permission to cry. Because our society conditions people to believe crying is synonymous with weakness and an act that should be repressed, this self-portrait describes one's conflicting experience of being visibly vulnerable, and instead using privacy as an opportunity to exercise this often condemned, but necessary release.