

José Villalobos

I Saw The Sign

Raised in a conservative-evangelical household on the US/Mexico border in El Paso, TX, Villalobos is intimately aware of how religious and political threats can impact one's behavior and identity. His work reconciles the conflicting identity challenges in his life, caught in between traditional Mexican customs and American morals, as well as growing up with religious ideals that conflict with the artist being gay.

The new works presented in *I Saw The Sign* marks a shift in focus for Villalobos, an artist primarily known for his dialogue with Latinx/Norteño culture and toxic masculinity. The pivot is one towards religion, extremism, and wider attacks on the LGBTQIA+ community by an increasingly extreme and fragmented network of hate groups and individuals. Enter the Westboro Baptist Church: a small, loud, and mostly extended-family run organization that has been well known for decades for its attacks on Jewish and Muslim people, gay and transgender people, various Christian denominations, among others. Westboro's tactics, such as protesting the funerals of those that died during the HIV/AIDS crisis, have garnered much attention in the American media landscape. In *I Saw The Sign*, the Westboro Baptist Church can be seen as a muse for Villalobos, a launching-off point that lets him explore a subject matter that is still inherently linked to his prior bodies of work.

The root of Villalobos' work lies in the performativity of his identity. The performativity in *I Saw The Sign* can be found in the artist's manipulation and dialogue with images, text, and physical materials. Words are twisted, translated, and re-drafted. Images turn, loop, and are put in new contexts. Materials are juxtaposed, elevated or brought down. This exhibition marks a new and experimental curve for Villalobos - one that is less cowboy and more altar boy.

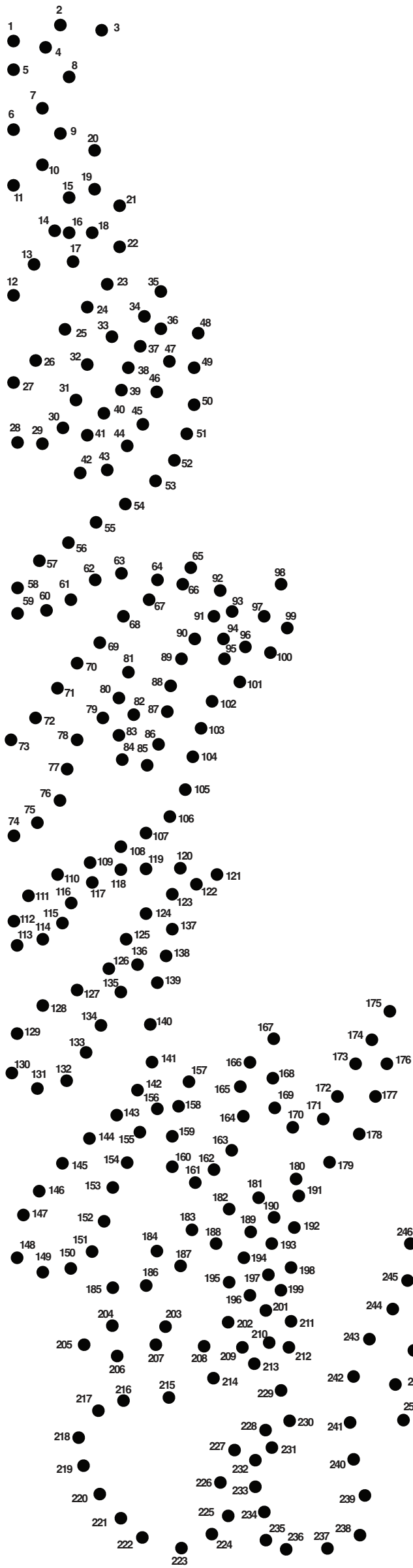
José Villalobos grew up on the US/Mexico border in El Paso, TX. He received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Texas at San Antonio. Villalobos is a recipient of the Joan Mitchell Painters & Sculptors Grant Award and Residency and is also a recipient of the Tanne Foundation Award.

His work has been nationally and internationally recognized, including the McNay Art Museum in San Antonio, TX; San Antonio Museum of Art, San Antonio, TX; NARS Foundation, New York, NY; Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, TX; Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, AZ; El Museo de Arte de Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, and upcoming at the Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO and Casa de Cultura Zacatecas, Zacatecas, Mexico.

José Villalobos' work is included in the collection of Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX, Mexic-arte Museum, Austin, TX, the City of San Antonio Public Collection, TX, Albright College, Reading, PA, and Soho House International in Austin, TX.



Everybody is a gallery in Tucson, AZ that primarily works with emerging and perpetually-emerging artists. Its beginnings in Tucson started as a warehouse project space from 2016-2018, followed by an iteration in Chicago, IL from 2019-2020. Its activity has been featured by Newcity Art, Vulture, Contemporary Art Daily, ART news, Art Viewer, Autre Magazine, Tzvetnik, Arizona Public Media, SFAQ, among others. Everybody is a member of the New Art Dealers Alliance.



GAY

OKAY

