

For immediate release

Jami Porter Lara: Terms & Conditions

August 13 – October 15, 2021

Opening Reception: Friday, August 13 from 5–7 PM

Gerald Peters Contemporary, Santa Fe

Gerald Peters Contemporary is pleased to present *Terms & Conditions*, a solo exhibition with Albuquerque-based artist Jami Porter Lara.

Porter Lara is a conceptual artist who is interested in the ways humans use ideas about what is “natural” to naturalize human political constructs. Through a broad range of formal approaches such as sculpture, print-making, and sign-making, as well as sewing and embroidery, Porter Lara explores the ways in which the fictions of identity create lived reality.

For the exhibition *Terms and Conditions*, Porter Lara examines the role of mothering and the domestic sphere in propagating the social behaviors and ideologies that comprise whiteness. Utilizing the domestic space as a vehicle for expressing both emotional and aesthetic intent, this multifaceted installation delivers a penetrating social commentary on the role of white women in the reproduction and maintenance of white dominance. While racism as a violent ideology tends to be gendered male, Porter Lara turns her attention to the work on behalf of white supremacy performed by those regarded as naturally innocent — white women and mothers — and the “benign” space of the home.

Staged as a modern household interior, the installation will present quotidian objects recast as articles of transmission of white dominance. An upholstered couch titled *tête-à-tête* will punctuate the exhibition space. Appearing at first glance to be simply a white couch, careful inspection reveals the word “only” embroidered in a floral motif on one backrest, and the word “white” embroidered on the opposite. The s-shaped couch, when viewed from above, matches the shape of the transpose proofreading mark, suggesting uncertainty whether the text should be read as “white only” or “only white”. In this way, the artist raises questions about the difference between the *de jure* segregation of Jim Crow and the *de facto* segregation of today. The white-on-white embroidered floral motif reveals itself to be made up of asterisks, footnoting white women’s labor since the middle of the last century to “couch” white supremacist politics in color-blind arguments such as parental rights and state’s rights, so that it is now possible to engage in a deliberate, political transmission of white dominance without ever speaking of race.

The installation will also include a series of lithographs, hung as if they were family photographs and framed to the standard 8 x 10 inch portrait size. In place of faces, these text portraits declare “they mean well” and “he wouldn’t hurt a fly” in reference to the ways in which white families manage not to talk about racism. Printed in white ink on white paper, they are legible only from oblique angles. Like *tête-à-tête*, these white-on-white lithographs challenge standard tropes such as white innocence that underlie white supremacy.

In *She's A Good Person*, Porter Lara redesigns a vintage flour sack label to create four dresses. The original "all-purpose white flour" label is replaced with "all-purpose white fear". Playing on the depression-era practice of repurposing feed sacks into clothing, the artist asks us to consider how acts of nurturing and caring involve the transmission of ideology, and the logo redesign invokes the history of early twentieth-century marketing for industrial foods like white flour and sugar, which deliberately capitalized on white anxieties that stereotyped immigrants as unhygienic by proclaiming that the whiteness (of these products) assured that they were "pure", "all-natural", and "superior".

Noting that whiteness as a social order is reproduced through means that many experience as unmarked and unremarkable, many of the sculptures in this exhibition feature white words on white grounds, making for texts that are difficult to notice, much less read. Against this Porter Lara juxtaposes white neon signs that illuminate subtexts of the domestic, advertising unvoiced but ever-present ideologies that pervade white living.

"I am interested in how white mothers – who are portrayed as innocent, defenseless, and incapable of violence – perform the critical foundational work of propagating racism, sexism, and homophobia through the education and policing of children...Home is where so much of the labor of maintaining social hierarchy is done. It is violence, and it is maternal love, wrapped into one."