



Yoshua Okón was born in Mexico City in 1970 where he currently lives. His work has been described as “a series of near-sociological experiments executed for the camera, blends staged situations, documentation and improvisation and questions habitual perceptions of reality and truth, selfhood and morality.”

Okón challenges the assumptions we make as so many of us live our lives oblivious of the reality beyond the bubble. He pops the bubble of everydayness. We are forced to confront, and hopefully question, our lives.

For *Freedom Fries* Okón convinced a **McDonald's** manager to grant him access for an overnight shoot at a location in Mexico City. Next, he convinced a customer to participate as a model:

<https://vimeo.com/87796357>

What follows is a surreal experience – both for the viewer of the video and surely for the McDonald's customer. The customer is trapped, turned into an obese human animal in a fast food zoo. The employee, mindlessly polishing the glass, is reduced to the role of a zombie – a dehumanized worker. Okón highlights the perils of consumerism – an insidious system that takes over our lives and destroys us while we remain, for the most part, unaware. Our “freedom” is anything but free.

In his own words, Okón tells us that “*Freedom Fries* documents the consequences of an economic and political system that has eroded our agency so deeply that we have lost not only the connection with other species and other human beings, but we have also become alienated from our own corporality.”

Boom.

What troubles Okón is the apparent ignorance of the citizenry. How can we vote if we don't know what is going on?

What can the artist do to awaken us from our despair?

In *Oracle*, Okón asks us to consider our stance on immigration. Here's the story:

In 2014, Oracle, Arizona, was the arena for the largest-yet protest against the entrance of unaccompanied children from Central America into the U.S. During Okón's first trip to Oracle he spoke to the leaders who orchestrated the protest. They agreed to gather those that participated in the protest, in order for Okón to create a live reenactment based on what happened from their ideological perspective as well as to create extra scenes.

Oracle also includes a video of a chorus where 9 of the immigrant children sing a modified version of the US Marine's Hymn. The original hymn glorifies US invasions around the world. For the new version, the children narrate the US invasion to Guatemala placing special emphasis in the complicity of the government with transnational corporations.

The title also refers to **Oracle Corporation**, a company known to have deep ties to the CIA and a perfect example of the current geopolitical paradigm in which the lines between public and private are being increasingly blurred and state structures are at the service of private interests. *Oracle* questions the adequacy and the relevance of nationalism in this transnational age.

<https://vimeo.com/134428088>

What have we become? Is this the best we can do?

Why does it take an artist to challenge our assumptions – to point out society's total and utter ignorance of historical perspective?

Art makes us uncomfortable. And that is *why it is ART*, and not fashion or design. Okón is a prophet – awakening our sleeping conscience, shaking us up, asking us to reconsider the road we have chosen.



*This article is part of a series based on **Corpocracy**, a group show now at the [Station Museum](#), Houston, Texas.*

**PUBLISHED BY
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