

Austin

Yoshua Okón

TESTSITE

502 West 33rd Street



View of “Yoshua Okón: Miasma,” 2016.

The dark heart of “Miasma” is the ten-minute video (all works titled *Miasma* and dated 2016) Yoshua Okón developed—along with sculptures and drawings for this living-room space located in a state associated with more than its fair share of showman politicians—amid a spectacularly disheartening US presidential election. Recorded at night, the video, presented here on a flat screen above the fireplace, features Houston’s bronze statue of the former CIA director and president George H. W. Bush backlit and shot mostly from below. This gives him gravitas, yet he is shrouded in fog and paired with a sound track that includes cawing birds and creaking doors, all of which suggest filmic facade. Standing nearby is a crudely printed foam sculpture of the monument, complete with legitimating reliefs of the welcomed soldier and the benevolent leader presiding over Communism’s fall, summoning the kind of smoke screen politicians use to achieve power.

Through research with journalist Edgar Hernández, who curated the show, Okón continues his effort to lay bare the role of US policies in destabilizing Latin America and thus in causing the very flood of immigrants now decried by many on this side of the border. Two sets of drawings, hanging on either side of the video, cut to the heart of the matter with affecting subtlety. Particularly haunting is the one featuring nine variations of the cover of a book—*La CIA en Mexico*—published in 1983 by a Mexican journalist who was gunned down the following year. In each drawing, all but a fragment of the cover is masked: A red, white, and blue letter “C” is visible here, an eagle there. These mirror the situation at hand, as one vainly tries to put the pieces together and is reminded that the truth is elusive, and likely troubling.