

DAZED

Latinx: art angels

'Bitch, you don't wait in line to start a revolution' – LA's Latinx stars on the community spirit at the core of their creativity

Photography Hart & Leshkina

Styling Alison Isbell

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MARIO AYALA

An hourglass, heavy chain and bright-red acrylic nails jostle under a lightning bolt-strewn purple-haze sky. Mario Ayala's surrealist, airbrushed paintings are not an aesthetic you would expect to find in a white-walled art gallery – and that's precisely the point. "Art should never be hierarchical," he says. "I think all forms of art hold some sort of substance." Ayala is more interested in connecting with people who might not normally set foot in a gallery. As a child, he was first exposed to art through his dad, a truck driver: "I would stay up waiting for him; he would always give me drawings he had made of dogs or trucks on the back of his workload receipts made with a ballpoint pen. Those were the first things I considered art." Last year's show *Pen Pal* explored themes of loss and heartbreak within the prison-industrial complex, complete with a letter-writing station for visitors to send letters to inmates across California. "I've always been interested in histories (that are) culturally significant for me," says Ayala. "I wanted to scratch the surface of some of these phenomena that seem as outrageously discomfiting to myself as they do to others."



Mario wears ribbed vest Calvin Klein Underwear, jeans Calvin Klein Jeans, necklace his own, vintage belt, cowboy boots stylist's own. Photography Hart & Leshkina, styling Alison Marie Isbell