

LACMA UN FRAMED

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Vincent Valdez, *Excerpts for John #6*, 2012, courtesy of the artist and David Shelton Gallery, © Vincent Valdez, photo courtesy of David Shelton Gallery

# Vincent Valdez on “Excerpts for John” in Home—So Different, So Appealing

MAY 29, 2017

Vincent Valdez

*Contemporary art*

In honor of Memorial Day, we invited Vincent Valdez to write about his powerful series, *Excerpts for John*, soon to be on view in LACMA's Home—So Different, So Appealing.



Vincent Valdez, *Excerpts for John #3*, 2012, courtesy of the artist and David Shelton Gallery, © Vincent Valdez, photo courtesy David Shelton Gallery

The series *Excerpts For John* (2012) presents an unfolding sequence of a military funeral procession. The point of view is fixed on the flag-draped coffin. Uniformed pallbearers carry the casket out of the military cemetery and silently march their way through city streets and into an American barrio. The procession carries on until it reaches its final resting place: home.

This suite of paintings pays homage to my lifelong friend, 2nd Lt. John R. Holt Jr., (1978–2009) who survived a tour of duty in Iraq as a combat medic, but lost a battle with post-traumatic stress disorder in 2009. The varied backgrounds remain anonymous to the viewer, but depict the neighborhood that John and I grew up in.

The muted, dissolving, hallucinatory effects of these paintings are my attempt to translate what I experienced on that morning of his funeral. I was numb from the freezing rain and by a feeling of emotional surrender.

This intentional display of the casket reverses its absence and censorship in the American press and in the American psyche. In February of 2009, the 18-year ban of photographing flag-draped coffins returning to the United States was overturned and, in 2013, the rate of military suicides had officially surpassed combat deaths and is now being referred to as an epidemic.

*Excerpts For John* is a eulogy for those who can't find their way home.

While creating this work in the studio, I could not help but reflect on the lyrics of Bob Dylan's "Song To Woody" (1962): "I'm out here a thousand miles from my home...I'm seeing a new world of people and things."



## Vincent Valdez: Excerpts for John

from Walley Films

11:47



Vincent Valdez: Excerpts for John from Walley Films on Vimeo.

*Vincent Valdez's Excerpt for John will be on view in Home—So Different, So Appealing: Art from the Americas since 1957, opening June 11, 2017. The exhibition is part of Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA, a far reaching and ambitious exploration of Latin America and Latino art in dialogue with Los Angeles. Member previews are June 8–10, 2017.*

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