

# Paul Valadez: Selections from The Great Mexican- American Songbook

A decade ago, Texas-based artist Paul Valadez acquired a stack of vintage sheet music and decided to incorporate it into his work. Several bound volumes of songs, identified as “The Great American Songbook,” captured the artist’s attention and spurred his investigation into the genre. He learned that there is no consensus among music publishers about what exactly comprises the American Songbook and set out to re-envision the concept from a Latino perspective. Found sheet music serves as the support for his unique collaged artworks, which juxtapose nostalgic images with “Spanglish” (Spanish/English) text for an effect that is often tongue-in-cheek—with a side of spicy social critique.

Old magazines are also an important source for Valadez’s *Songbook* collages and were also ubiquitous within his bi-cultural upbringing. Spending time with both his mother’s and father’s side of the family, Valadez grew up surrounded by radio, television, and print media in both English and Spanish. Valadez’s *Songbook* works use humor to draw attention to the consumerism, racial and gender insensitivity, and nationalism embedded in early twentieth-century advertising targeted at both English- and Spanish-speaking readers, leading viewers to contemplate not only how far we have come as a society—but also how far we have yet to go.

Valadez was born in San Francisco and was raised in the Central Valley of California. He earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Interdisciplinary Art at the San Francisco Art Institute, and a Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art from the University of North Carolina. He is currently Assistant Professor in the Art Department at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, in Edinburg, Texas on the U.S./Mexico border.

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