



*Untitled (buste d'un Indien du Mexique)*

printed 2012,

**Ken Gonzales-Day**

lightjet-alu

18" x 24"

Photo: courtesy Luis De Jesus Los Angeles

Ken Gonzales-Day's photographic works are political and poignant. They investigate the absent other. His series have consistently explored those who have disappeared, are left out, or are hidden because of their race. Acutely perceptive, Gonzales-Day has mined archives as well as museum collections documenting the image of Latinos and other people of color. The work is neither didactic nor prescriptive. Its formal elegance and grace enhances the content and charged subject matter. While many of the works in the exhibition entitled "Profiled | Hang Trees | Portraits" have been presented elsewhere, juxtaposed anew, the depth and criticality of Gonzales-Day's vision is articulated.

While researching the photographic history of Latinos in California, Gonzales-Day became aware of their absence. Upon discovering that many had been lynched, he created a photographic project that called attention to this fact while simultaneously reclaiming their presence. In *Hang Trees*, he photographed the sites of these lynchings as they appear today, presenting images of trees in the natural landscape. Without the knowledge that these were sites of murders, they are evocative images of majestic trees. With this knowledge, Gonzales-Day turns their beauty into something haunting. Facing the trees across the room, the *Portraits* depict Latino males. Some are shirtless, others tattooed. In these images Gonzales-Day empowers the male body while authoritatively asserting a Latino presence.

Moving from images of people and places to museums, Gonzales-Day's latest works are photographs of statues and busts mostly devoid of backgrounds that describe the ways race has been depicted through art history. He

photographed on site in encyclopedic institutions including The J. Paul Getty Museum, The Field Museum in Chicago, and the National Museum of Natural History in Paris. Sifting through storage areas as well as documenting what was on display, Gonzales-Day assembled his own archive of statues. Removing the contextual data and surrounding the images in black, he creates new relationships by compositing statues from different eras and placing them into single images. Titled *Profiled*, this series of work describes the way people of color have been depicted but, more importantly, allows for a dialogue between subjects that would never be seen together. *Untitled (Reflecting Pool, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, Malibu, CA)*, (2009-2012) is emblematic of Gonzales-Day's project. It features a disembodied black leg. The leg rests gracefully on a rock hovering above twinkling water. The body of the statue has been cropped out of the frame preventing a full view. Gonzales-Day calls attention to the historical presence of racial stereotyping, asking viewers to see these statues in a new light. He questions racial boundaries and reclaims dignity through the representation of people of color who have been wrongly profiled and erased.