

Karlo Andrei Ibarra *Brújula Ciega* (Blind Compass), 2012-2018

Karlo Andrei Ibarra is a multidisciplinary artist who works with geopolitical issues around the Caribbean and Latin America. Most of his artistic approach arises out of decolonizing practices and resistance to colonial structures, while directly commenting on the island's failed relationship with the [mainland] United States. Ibarra has been thinking about the idea of limbo as a metaphor for the sociopolitical status of Puerto Rico as an unincorporated U.S. territory, and for the imposition of political and capitalist models in the island. The word "limbo" comes from the Latin "limbus," which means "edge" or "limit"—the point at which a certain state or condition becomes uncertain.

Brújula Ciega (Blind Compass) reflects on the contradiction of a Caribbean island in the middle of the Antilles being so culturally separate from the rest of the archipelago. Puerto Rico has all the physical characteristics of a Caribbean country; at the same time, it is profoundly influenced by the United States, but it is not an American state. **It may be considered a non-place—a political experiment, a failed national project, living uncertainty in the imaginary of its inhabitants.** Ibarra's work for *Isla Imaginaria* is a two-by-two-inch compass.

The symbolic gesture of manipulating a compass—an instrument of orientation used by explorers, colonizers, and navigators to orient and guide its users by pointing north, an orientation responding to the imaginary of a certain ideological sector. The role of north in the imaginary is being questioned right now more than ever in Puerto Rico in terms of both the sociopolitical context of the United States and the American relationship with the island. Ibarra has removed the cardinal directions from his compass, only leaving the arrows suggesting a drift, that very limbo of not knowing where to go. *Brújula Ciega* (Blind Compass) also suggests that we don't control our future, that as colonized subjects we are attached to the preexisting conditions of this relationship. In *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant talks about circular nomadism and arrowlike nomadism, but the symbolism of inhibiting this non-place or imaginary place becomes stronger when the arrows of this compass do not move, as if time were suspended by its own destiny.

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