

Daniel Torres

MEMENTO MORI

In memory of those who are no longer, the altar is constructed.
Omniscient eyes staring back from the altar allow insight into a serene world.
I saw bicycles with Harley handlebars littering the front yards of houses.
Liquor stores on every corner, house parties, and car meet-ups.
Vatos sewing their marks on any plain lifeless wall, so their barrio is known.
The burning memory of a life without the sins.
Until those street lights flicker to life.

A walk home turns into a jog,
then to a run,
then to a panicked sprint.

When the sun dies. Chaos is born.

Omniscient eyes once glancing at me, glare at me until they slammed shut, shunning me away.
I stepped out of my home and walked down the street.

After not a minute of walking, I came across another altar. It sat on the sidewalk. Concealed and sodden, broken and knocked over. Hastily arranged as a reminder with no hint of fire emanating its memory.

I saw a world that was plunged into eternal chaos. I saw names tagged onto walls; devoid or decorated, it made no difference.

Full of life and death, they were testimonies to what once was. Eyes shut forever, flowers and pictures accommodating them.

Bullet casings, yellow tape, chalk outlines. Memento mori. As I looked upon the drag races, burnouts, drive-bys, and shuffling of bodies, I shut my eyes to escape the gaze of the deceased eyes.

I returned to my world, it was neither omniscient nor chaotic. It was alive.

What the omniscient eyes allowed me to see will not be forgotten.

A reminder of the chaos of what once was, a history of life and death that dwindles.

Trampled beneath the weight of sorrow and deprivation.

A longing for the heat of the omniscient eyes of life.