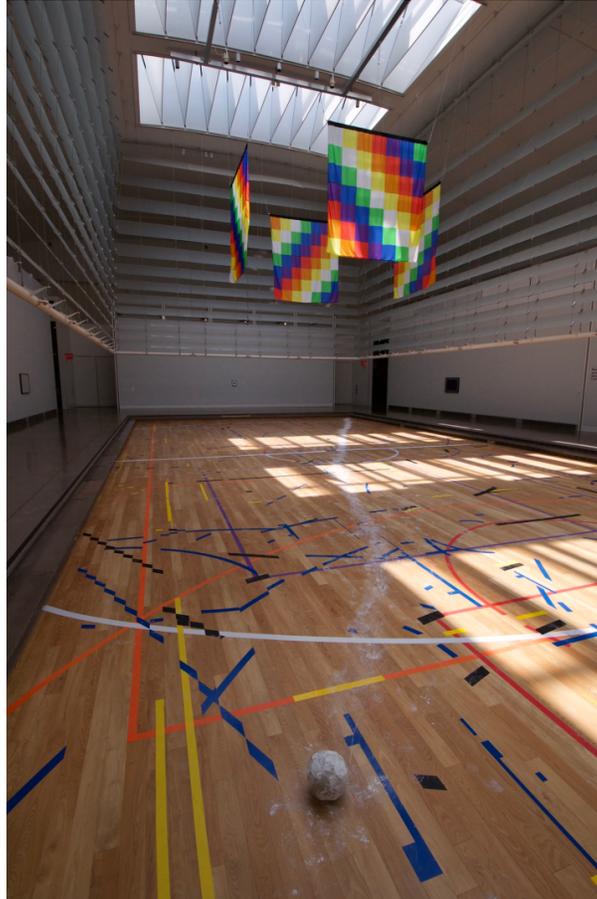


## A Vision of US Immigration Beyond the Melting Pot

At the Queens Museum, Ronny Quevedo uses the rules of sports as metaphors for the boundaries drawn in public space.

by Seph Rodney August 7, 2017



Installation view of *no hay medio tiempo / there is no halftime* at the Queens Museum (photo by Hrag Vartanian)

**Ronny Quevedo's *no hay medio tiempo / there is no halftime*** exhibition at the **Queens Museum** revolves around a polychromatic line drawing, rendered in vinyl tape, on the polished wood floor of the museum's atrium. Many smaller works, including digital prints, embossed paper pieces, and custom-printed nylon works, hang on the periphery and deserve their own discussion, but I want to focus on the floor drawing. It depicts the markings one would typically find on a field or court, configured for playing an organized game. Quevedo references basketball, soccer, volleyball, and handball courts, but the indicia are fragmented, laid one on top of the other, which Quevedo tells me is about breaking down barriers and seeing these spaces as negotiable.



Aerial view, Ronny Quevedo, "no hay medio tiempo/there is no halftime (after Glissant and Quevedo)" (2017), custom printed vinyl, vinyl tape, concrete and chalk, dimensions variable (photo by Argenis Apolinario)

Quevedo, like me, is an immigrant. He was born in Guayaquil, Ecuador to a father who played soccer. He understands that the marks indicating the boundaries and zones of a particular game are also employed in a territorial fashion when drawn in a public space: they are about claiming that space, conveying to all that certain rules will apply to it once enough players who are ready and willing to participate are present. Once the game begins, the space is transformed into a formal one for contest, concealing all the ones that preceded it, a cycle that will continue once this game is over. The notion of the nation as a melting pot is a largely abandoned assimilationist strategy. These days it is widely recognized that immigrants don't need to dissolve their very specific and unique home-grown flavors into some general stew. Rather, we might think about the US as a salad, with key piquant ingredients that retain their character while together they constitute one (varied) dish. There's a similar idea at work here with the layering of the markings of organized games on top of each other. It's not about dominance, but coexistence; not about hierarchy but recognizing borders as mutable. It's about, as Quevedo says to me, "paying tribute to the idea of mobility." Of course, this country needs to exist without walls, because waves of immigrants and residents have always negotiated this geographic space — though too often negotiation has been construed as capitulation and weakness. Thus the poverty of our public dialogue, which has become even coarser and less empathetic under the current ethically bankrupt administration.



Ronny Quevedo, "Lyra" (2017), silver leaf on dressmaker's waxed tracing paper, 26 x 39 inches (photo by Hai Zhang)

Quevedo's *no hay medio tiempo / there is no halftime* is a vision, really a diagram of what this nation can look like if we let go of the rope just a little — if we let go of the idea that winning means dominance and the imposition of one group's means stability. This is a post-colonial vision: there is no halftime because people are always coming and we are always resetting the space to accommodate the newcomers and determining the rules under which we are able to play.

**Ronny Quevedo: no hay medio tiempo / there is no halftime continues at the Queens Museum (Flushing Meadows Corona Park, New York City Building, Corona, Queens) through August 13.**