

ACME.

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Los Angeles Times

Review: Carlee Fernandez at ACME.

March 6, 2014 | By Sharon Mizota



Taking your family as subject is nothing new, but Carlee Fernandez gives it a refreshingly surreal charge in her latest show at ACME. While in previous work she dealt with her identity as a mother, here, references to family tradition are more explicit and specific.

The most striking image depicts four pairs of bare, upended legs emerging from an outsized silver cup whose sides are engraved with a family tree. The legs belong to Fernandez, her husband and two children. The vessel (which appears as sculpture on the other side of the gallery) is a scaled-up version of a tiny christening cup handed down on her husband's side of the family. Comical and disorienting, the image evokes the intimate crush of family togetherness as the culmination of generations.

It's hard to avoid sentimentality when dealing with family matters, but Fernandez's work manages to be both tender and frank.

A larger-than-life-size photograph of herself standing next to pillows printed with nude images of her husband and children evokes comfort and familiarity, but also a creepy surrogacy in which the image of the beloved is a support but perhaps also a punching bag.

Where does the family unit end and the individual begin? Fernandez uses the bodies of her own family to explore a phenomenon experienced by many mothers: the flickering of the self in the slipstream of generations.

ACME., 6150 Wilshire Blvd., (323) 857-5942, through Mar. 15. Closed Sun. and Mon.