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**Título:** Trabajo duro

**Title:** Work Harder [Trabaje Duro]

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**Resumen:** *Trabaje Duro* es el título de la exhibición de Quintín Rivera Toro abierta en el Antiguo Arsenal de la Marina del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña. Casi veinte años de producción artística componen su discurso visual, en el que el esfuerzo tiñe de sarcasmo esta arenga de tinte político. Publicado originalmente en español en noviembre de 2016. Traducido a inglés por Joan Pabón y Brandice Walker, Traslacion, y editado por David Auerbach, UPRRP.

**Abstract:** *Trabaje Duro (Work Harder)* is the title of the exhibition by Quintín Rivera Toro, that is open at the Antiguo Arsenal de la Marina of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture. Almost twenty years of art work make up his visual discourse, in which effort tinges with sarcasm this political raving. Originally published in Spanish in November 2016. Translated by Joan Pabón and Brandice Walker, Traslacion, and edited by David Auerbach, UPRRP.

**Palabras clave:** Instalación, Fotografía, Quintín Rivera Toro, Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, Emilia Quiñones, Otal

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## *Work Harder*

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Quintín Rivera Toro, *Work Harder*, 2016.

The title of Quintín Rivera Toro's exhibition, *Work Harder*, sets the tone for this collection of works, which opened to the public on October 20, 2016. In Puerto Rico, a colonized country now mired in a financial crisis from which the imperialistic banking sector has greatly benefited, the expression "work harder" may be understood in a number of ways. The phrase lends itself to further degrade the subjected by reminding them they are at fault for this crisis and even for their own poverty—that if they could only "knuckle down" they would surely get ahead. All while they slave seventy hours a week for wages that would barely compensate for twenty hours of work. At the same time, the statement may be a proposal to explore the work that goes into a piece or the effort of conceiving an idea that will later become a work of art. "Work harder" is often what our inner voice tells us when we are in need of motivation.

*Work Harder* (2012) is also the title of one of the works exhibited. The piece was part of a performance that took place on the day of the opening, where a group of artists took turns sanding the metal letters that make up the set of words. The phrase remained incomplete while all of the letters were lowered to the floor. The artist who was polishing had to completely kneel on the floor to do the job, an effort that could be considered useless, since the piece was not improved even though the letter was sanded.

The general themes displayed were made palpable in the performance that opened the exhibition at the Arsenal de la Marina (the former Spanish Navy Arsenal at La Puntilla, in Old San Juan). Quintín Rivera Toro transported us to a liberated Puerto Rico that needed to attack the United States, so that the U.S. could in some way get a taste of its own medicine. Through a speech recited by a character named José Rivera Rodríguez González, the artist denounced the years of imperialism imposed on Puerto Rico by the U.S. and its other interventions against countless nations across the globe, while at the same time rallying a call for self-defense. Somehow, we can link this presentation to the piece *Work Harder*: we must work harder to get rid of the colonial violence inflicted upon our country.



Quintín Rivera Toro, *Work Harder*, 2016.

The show is not intended as a retrospective, yet a simple glimpse around the exhibition space gives viewers the feeling that they are looking at Rivera Toro's entire career. The works displayed date from 1998 to 2016. The exhibition also offers a peek into the artist's intimate personal life. Along the way, we can see the artist's years spent outside and in Puerto Rico, his home life—performing daily chores, his worries and concerns, his family—and the sense of

coldness that often pervades all of it. Coldness is present in some of his works as a metaphor for exteriority—what exists outside of Puerto Rico, and the tropics, and is part of the reality of migration. It is also a metaphor for a fast-approaching period of fiscal austerity. As noted in the statement at the exhibition entrance, written by curator Abdiel D. Segarra Ríos, Quintín Rivera’s works “attempt to turn their messages into open invitations to conversations that are waiting to happen.” It is definitely a politically charged exhibition, one that speaks to the current situation on the island. *Work Harder* demonstrates how Quintín Rivera Toro has mastered a range of visual media to give his take on his status as a Puerto Rican, a migrant, a father, and an artist.



Quintín Rivera Toro, *Work Harder*, 2016.

**Quintín Rivera Toro’s *Work Harder* is on display in the *Sala Este del Antiguo Arsenal de la Marina Española* [East Room of the Former Arsenal of the Spanish Navy], in Old San Juan until February 17, 2017. For more information, please call 787-724-5932, or send an email to: [aplasticas@icp.pr.gov](mailto:aplasticas@icp.pr.gov)**

**Translated by Joan Pabón and Brandice Walker**