

Felix Gonzalez-Torres: A Three-Part Exhibition

May 5, 2016 By [Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.](#)

The work of artist Felix Gonzalez-Torres, who was lost to AIDS in 1996, is being celebrated in a three-part exhibition in New York, Milan and London. The [New York exhibition](#) at the Andrea Rosen Gallery runs from now through June 18, featuring painted word portraits.

The late Cuban-born artist was one of five Cuban-born artists I highlighted in 2015 as curator of a [featured gallery](#) for Visual AIDS. As a first-generation Cuban American, I related to all of them, but perhaps to the work of Gonzalez-Torres the most.

As [his biography](#) on Visual AIDS states: Employing simple, everyday materials (stacks of paper, puzzles, candy, strings of lights, beads) and a reduced aesthetic vocabulary reminiscent of both Minimalism and Conceptual art to address themes such as love and loss, sickness and rejuvenation, gender and sexuality, González-Torres asked viewers to participate in establishing meaning in his works.

And as The Wall Street Journal [states](#): In a work such as “Untitled” (USA Today), audiences are encouraged to take candies individually wrapped in red, silver, and blue cellophane from a pile, subverting, in the process, the notion of permanence and the anticipated relationship of the viewer to a work of art. And, as such a work can never be exactly replicated, especially when compared to the relatively static nature of a painting or photograph, it forces the issue of interpretation and responsibility in recreating these works from show to show.

Click [here](#) and [here](#) to see additional examples of his work. And click [here](#) for a 2013 blog post I wrote about a billboard exhibition depicting his work.
