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Manuela Soto: Meant to Be

June 18, 2018

There's a contradiction prevalent in the female empowerment movement— a tug of war stemming from instagram-oriented liberation that forces feminism to look a certain way, uncaring of how the individual may feel most comfortable.

Manuela Soto's work speaks to that cyclical battle for a balance between self-expression and true empowerment. From flip-phones to long acrylic nails to fishnet tights to big hooped earrings, the anime-inspired tattoos found within the Switzerland born, LA based artist's exhibit *Meant to Be* mimics the trends that saturate the social media space.

Sensual poses, bare breasts, and seductive grins that imply a level of agency transform instagram-baddie hentai into a feminist icon that represents modern symbols of sexual dominance and self-empowerment— of course fitted for 2018.

Soto's work doesn't just represent one body, like the diversity-conscious online communities they replicate, Soto's tattoo stencils find inspiration across a plethora of cultures and forms, merging into incredibly accurate look-alikes of your favorite instagram girls.

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In a world where personal identities are contrived and curated to whatever is the most marketable on social media platforms, *Meant to Be* proves that the skin is merely a shell etching into whatever the next trend is, hoping to look unique amongst a sea of “empowered” women that are all trying to prove the same thing. Each form is similar in structure, mimicking the very aesthetic that garners attention. Because, the difference between who you are and who you’re meant to be is all a matter of simulation.

There's an irony in the caricatures that challenges the viewer's idea of empowerment and question what is done for aesthetics and what is done for the self that makes *Meant to Be* worth attending, but we'd understand if you were intrigued by the hentai covered gallery walls alone.

"Meant to Be" is on display at the Lubov NYC until July 8, 2018.

Photography courtesy of [Lubov NYC](#)

<http://officemagazine.net/manuela-soto-meant-be>

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