

## PREVIEW: *Massachusetts*

### VERONICA A. PÉREZ: UNTITLED

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Whether wound in intricate braids or pouring down in a black curtain, hair is a defining feature in Veronica Pérez's work. The sculptor uses artificial locks to create pieces she describes as weird, personal and a little bit funny. "Hair is a way to talk about identity; though all these colors and strands of hairs," she says. "[It] can allude to so many things that other materials can't." Hair growth continues after death, which gives it "an infinite quality." And yet, these dead strands also have a "sense of life...."

Pérez began incorporating hair into her work in spring 2016 after finding a stray piece of artificial hair on the floor of the Maine College of Art, where she had just completed her MFA. "At the time, I had a lot of resentment...centered around things that had been said to me," she explains. A critical comment that she believes referred to her physical appearance—inspired her to retreat to her studio. "I closed my eyes and sat there. When I opened them, I had this weird amalgamation,

and I immediately started snipping chicken wire and stapling it to the wall." She took the words of insult, wrote them down and hid them under the chicken wire, which she then covered in a twirl of blonde braids. "It was my way of saying, 'Your words don't matter.'"

*Blonde* is an otherworldly sculpture—eerie yet gracefully composed and protruding from the wall like a growth. It was the catalyst for Pérez's hair-decorated series. As she continued working with artificial hair, she began experimenting with other colors and formats of hair, resulting in *Black and Red*—featuring brown hair attached to a metal hoop and designed to resemble a mourning wreath. Although that piece is "more personal" (Pérez is brunette and the wreath also alludes to her 2015 funeral-themed work, *A wake/Awake*), she seeks to represent "all women. I want everybody to be accounted for. It's not just me with the brown hair that has felt this way, or you with the blonde hair," she said. "It's about all of us reclaiming our power."  
—Katy Kelleher



Veronica A. Pérez, *time out*, 2016, hair, bobby pins, 23 x 6 1/2 x 6 1/2".  
Courtesy of the artist.