

# What Does the U.S. Capture of Maduro Mean for Venezuelan Artists?

The prospect of an end to the Chavismo government brings new hope for change among the country's artists, alongside fear at what comes next.

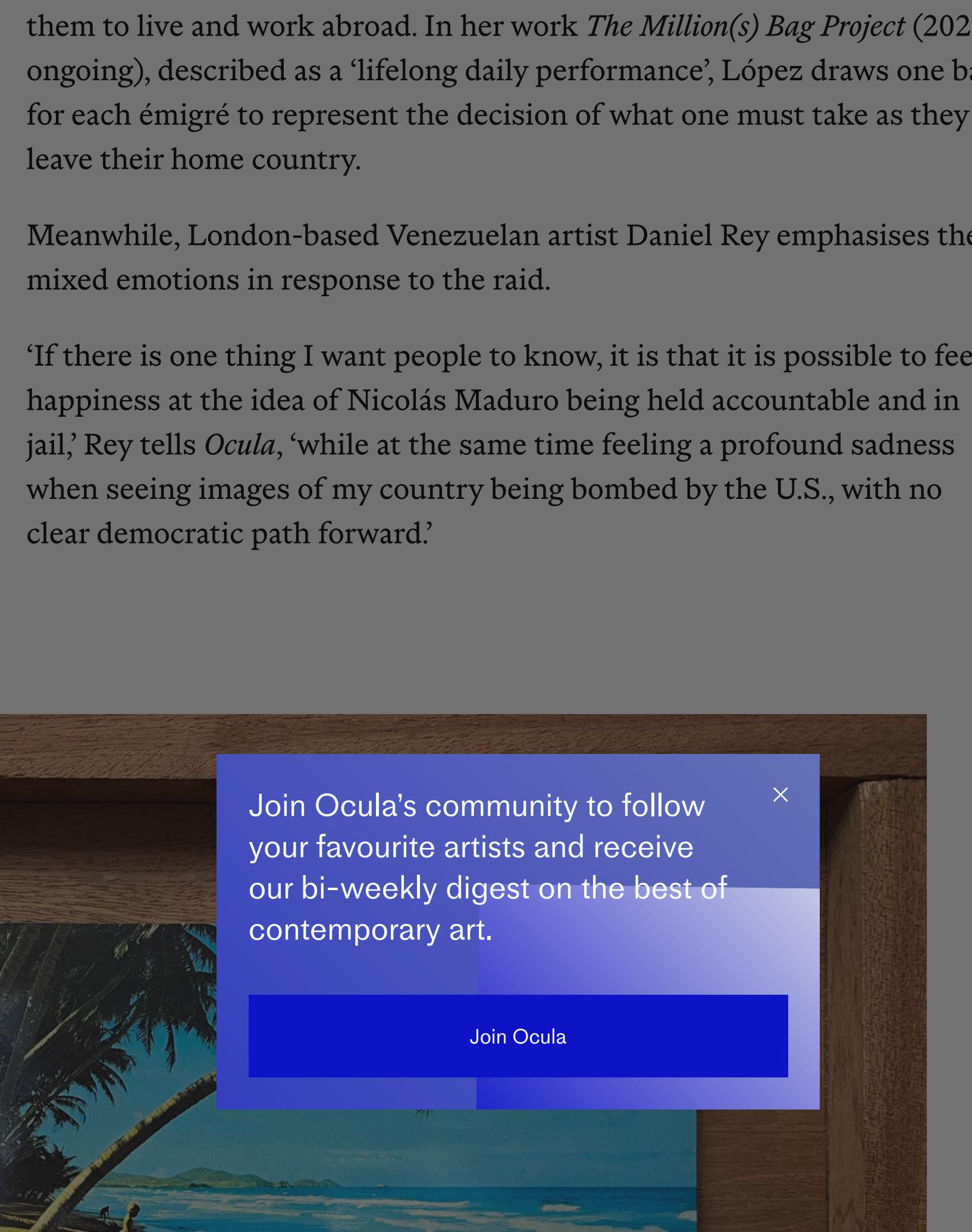
★ Save to My Ocula

omforting to grow up feeling you have a country of , one you can proudly stake a claim to.

By Rachel Kubrick – 7 January 2026, London

'I woke up on Saturday at 2:00 am because I felt my door shaking and planes flying,' artist Francisca Sosa López tells *Ocula*. 'I thought I had some kind of hearing issue because I was incredulous to think that we were being bombed. The first text I got about a bomb going off, I realised I was not dreaming.'

López was one of millions in Venezuela's capital city Caracas when it was bombed by the United States Armed Forces on Saturday, as they forcibly removed longtime leader Nicolás Maduro from power, along with his wife Cilia Flores.



Francisca Sosa López, *The Million(s) Bag Project* (2020-ongoing). Courtesy the artist.

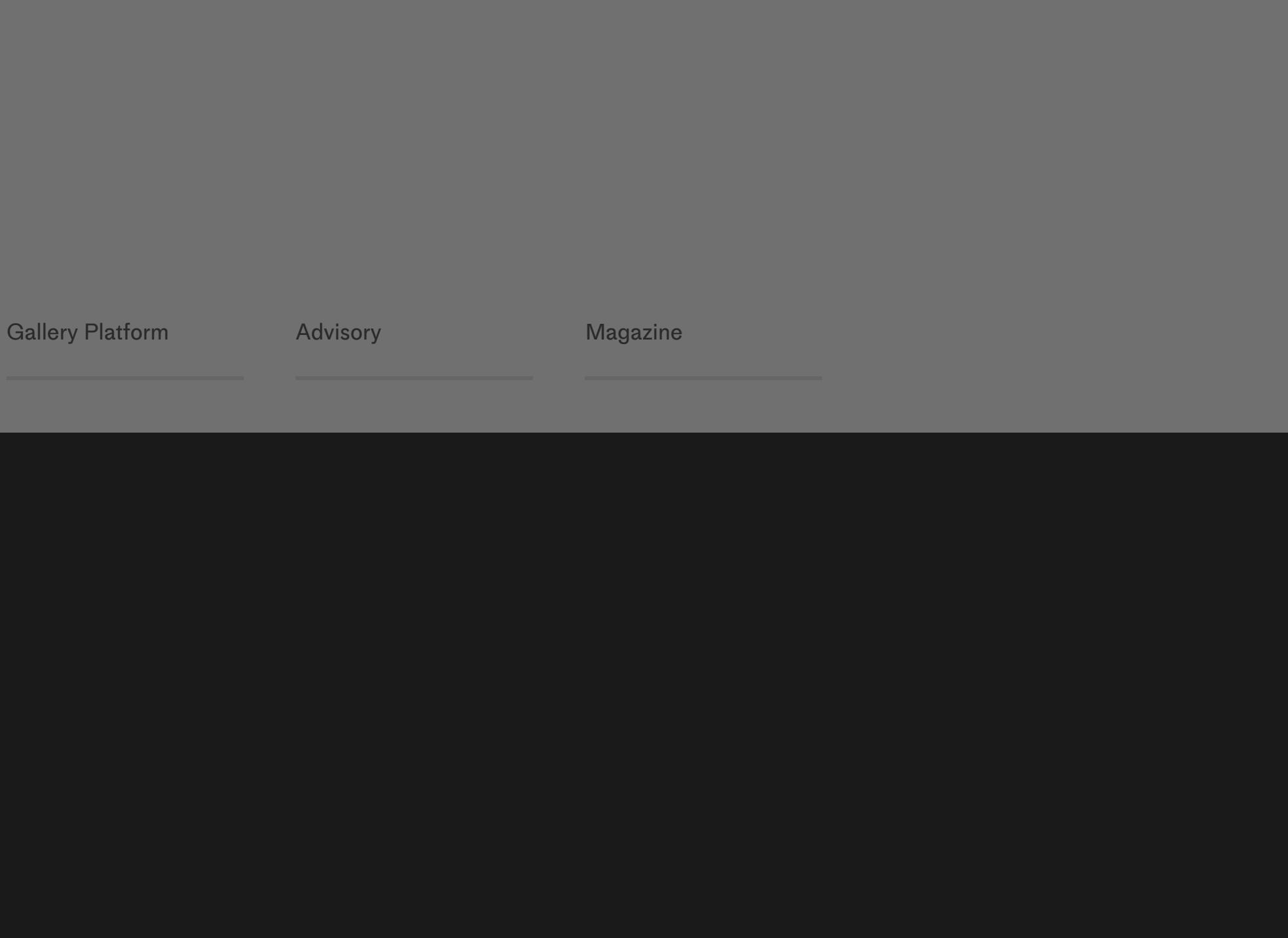
López, who is based primarily in London, is one of 8 million Venezuelan nationals who have left the country since Maduro came to power in 2013.

'I know my job is about creativity and imagination,' López says. 'But if I am honest, we've been so limited and so discouraged for so long that it is hard to imagine my country as free and what that would mean.'

She notes the enormous challenges for Venezuelan artists, with censorship, fear of retaliation, and a lack of shipping access prompting them to live and work abroad. In her work *The Million(s) Bag Project* (2020-ongoing), described as a 'lifelong daily performance', López draws one bag for each émigré to represent the decision of what one must take as they leave their home country.

Meanwhile, London-based Venezuelan artist Daniel Rey emphasises the mixed emotions in response to the raid.

'If there is one thing I want people to know, it is that it is possible to feel happiness at the idea of Nicolás Maduro being held accountable and in jail,' Rey tells *Ocula*, 'while at the same time feeling a profound sadness when seeing images of my country being bombed by the U.S., with no clear democratic path forward.'



Daniel Rey, *Irredeemably Foreign* (2025). From the series 'Irredeemably Foreign'. Used postcard, book cut-outs and translucent polypropylene in artist's frame. 17 x 23 x 4 cm. Courtesy the artist.



Daniel Rey, *Be on Your Guard* (2025). From the series 'Irredeemably Foreign'. Used postcard, book cut-outs and translucent polypropylene in artist's frame. 17 x 23 x 4 cm. Courtesy the artist.

Another prominent Venezuelan artist, who requested to stay anonymous, described a 'mix of happiness and fear' at the prospect of an end to the Chavismo government.

'After 25 years of a harsh and cruel regime, we thought we would never see that in our lifetime,' they said, describing their hope for a genuine transition, a free press, and the release of political prisoners, although the Maduro regime still remains in power under vice president Delcy Rodriguez, who is currently acting president.

The artist highlighted the strength of the creative community in Caracas – in particular artist-run spaces and galleries, which have progressed against the odds. However, they presumed that these spaces may have closed since Saturday, when only essential services such as supermarkets and pharmacies remained open.

Several galleries in Caracas did not respond to a request for comment and have not been active on social media. –[O]

Main image: Daniel Rey, *To Have A Country* (2025) (detail). From the series 'Irredeemably Foreign'. Used postcard, book cut-outs and translucent polypropylene in artist's frame. 17 x 23 x 4 cm. Courtesy the artist.

RACHEL KUBRICK

Rachel Kubrick is a London-based writer who has regularly contributed to *Ocula* since 2011.

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