

LUBOV

TZVETNIK

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**'Meant to Be' by Manuela Soto at Lubov,
New York**



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Manuela Soto's work is both viral and permanent, a contradiction fit for an age where female empowerment and self expression is wrapped up in enduring trends and cyclical battles for Instagram-oriented liberation. From flip phones and fishnets to knuckles that read «B-A-B-Y», the signifiers found within Soto's anime-inspired tattoos mimic the online trends adopted by their wearers. Sensual postures, bare breasts and scowling grins imply agency, transforming manga-like figures into modern symbols of sexual dominance and self-empowerment.

Soto's drawings and stencils could be seen as ephemera on the road to permanence, but they mark a collaborative effort – a marriage of the virtual and the real. Like the online communities they mirror, Soto's illustrations find inspiration across a multitude of cultures and forms, locating their power within the trend-conscious bodies they emulate. From hard-edge latina gangsters to innocent-looking, tear-strewn girls, Soto's drawings echo both caricatures and tribal forms. If the skin is merely a shell of the soul, etching into it is just like trying on the latest trend – your options might be limited, but that's what makes you part of the gang.

Like barbie, each form is similar in structure and appearance, carrying an air of self-confidence that is amplified by her unique aesthetic. Do you identify with the crybaby in a Louis Vuitton bikini? Or the bad bitch with an AK? Either way it doesn't matter. Like with all simulated identities, it's not who you are on the inside that counts. It's who you want to be.

– Taylore Scarabelli

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http://tzvetnik.online/portfolio_page/manuela-soto-at-lubov/

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