

Triumph of Our Communities: Mexican American Artists in Arizona

May 4 - Sept. 23, 2005



Magicus, 2003, Daniel Martín Díaz, Lithograph

This exhibition was selected from the collections of the Hispanic Research Center at Arizona State University and the Glenn Green Galleries (Scottsdale and Santa Fe, N.M.).

The exhibition was part of the Arizona International Latina/o Arts Festival and within its celebration of community artists and organizations. The exhibition featured work by 14 Arizona artists, including Tempe residents Tlizza Jaurique and Marcus Zilliox. Works range from paintings and sculptures to photography and other media.



Ay Juana Cholla, 1999, Larry Yáñez, Lithograph

About the Artists

Virginia Agüero's work is as much a part of the rich tradition from which she draws her inspiration as it is an exploration of it. Her art spans a wide range of expressive forms, easily encompassing such diverse media as contemporary nichos and works on fabric. Agüero is immersed in a Chicano/a culture that is firmly rooted in Mexican tradition, and the religious iconography that often is the subject matter of her work is a natural outgrowth of her cultural roots.

Sculptor and printmaker **Manuel R. Burruel** often works on the basis of strong memories from childhood or associations with his everyday life. Deep affiliations with his culture often are apparent. Among his works are pieces that depict a tree house, the corn husks in which tamales are wrapped, his patio or a stove, a tamale mill or an old wringer laundry washer, in recognition of the deeper meaning that quotidian appliances expose for the Chicano condition.



Santa Teresita, 2001, Virginia Agüero, oil and acrylic on wood

Cristina Cárdenas's work is largely autobiographical and introspective. She combines icons and images that speak of her cultural background, nationality and gender. She asserts her status as a mestiza by acknowledging and

celebrating both her Spanish and her Indian heritage. Cárdenas gives women, who are frequently the protagonists of her work, a permanent and positive voice. They are depicted as goddesses, traitors, victims, virgins and martyrs, they serve as metaphors for strength, innocence, subjugation and courage.

Daniel Martín Díaz has a formal, yet vernacular style that embodies his definition of Chicano art, which he considers to be the expression of two cultures colliding. This apparent conflict does not result in discordance, but rather in aesthetic synchronicity and convergence. His paintings bring together a wide range of artistic genres, from the formality of Russian icon paintings, replete with Latin text, to the colloquialism that is characteristic of Mexican folk retablos. The reductive, understated palette Díaz employs, as well as his placement of figures in a state of isolation, create a sense of pathos and disconnectedness.

Xochitl Gil's art show's his concern with the defining lines of the feminine. Subjects and symbolic organs are rendered in an expressive, almost organic style. There seems to be an externalized dialogue with intimate narratives of self, a melding of the psychological and physical. Her motif of the heart blooming atop a stem seems to be the perfect representation of this exploration.



La niña de los espejos, 1997, Cristina Cárdenas, Gouache on paper

Trisza Jaurique

mixes symbols of Aztec and other ancient Mexican cultures with her own technical innovation of applying glitter to canvas. Jaurique says about her work, “Glitter conceptually reflects the viewer. The imagery is physically composed of thousands of individual pieces, but only in unity are these images formed.”



Ancestral Roots, 1996, Trisza Jaurique, Glitter on board

David Manje uses a variety of different styles with vibrant color and bold imagery. He says about his work, “I embody a sense of connection to the old world and the new world as I discovered that Colonel Juan Manje traveled and chronicled the journeys of Padre Kino. Feeling a kindred connection to this bit of history has inspired me to travel as far south as Central America in search of hints and glimmers of what it might have been like long before the introduction of the Christian idea.”

Mónica Aíssa Martínez is that rare artist who can evolve the tradition of diverse artists in a way that is fully realized and original, at times even revelatory. While Leonora Carrington immediately comes to mind when considering Martínez’s use of colors and spatial license, perhaps the most striking element of her work is its relationship to Paul Klee. At times, teasing the viewer with a liberated illustrative style, Martínez allows single strokes to fling themselves across complex compositional landscapes, as an isolated improvised note would invade a full symphony. She creates the anticipation that at any moment the surreal forms might dance off the canvas and climax in some unforeseen way.

Martín Moreno is a sculptor, muralist and oil painter who also does works on paper. Moreno has cultivated various themes of relevance to both Mexico and the Chicano community, including César Chávez and Emiliano Zapata, the mythos of Aztlán and of La Malinche, the origin of mestizaje and other themes of the Mexican or pre-Hispanic cultural and racial heritage of Chicanos.

Joe Ray says, “I do my art as a way to have dialogue and fantasies throughout my life and my interactions with others. I’ve been fortunate

enough to observe and interact with a lot of different people (real and imagined) from a lot of different backgrounds. A lot of my work is done as a series. It’s where Joe and José speak and argue with their compadres. We discuss the Cultura and we discuss the ridiculous. Then we drink together.”

Eduardo Oropeza works in a variety of media, creating a diverse language encompassing sculpture, serigraph, mosaic and photography. As a sculptor, Oropeza worked extensively in bronze, while also exploring the possibilities of less expensive cardboard constructions that often initiated larger pieces. This connection between the unassuming and refined was an important condition of the artist’s work. Oropeza, drawing inspiration from the city topography from which he was immersed, depicted subjects who are defined as much by their ordinary existence as by the moments of revelation in which the artist found them.

Larry Yáñez’s art springs from his experiences as a contemporary Mexican American living in dual, overlapping cultures. He brings together such taken-for-granted, everyday American phenomena as refrigerators, bathroom fixtures, skyscrapers and footballs; mixes in a strong measure of traditional Mexican references, such as Virgins of Guadalupe, salsa jars, red roses, cacti and Popo and Ixta calendars; and completes his recipe with a generous sprinkling of poignancy, wit and humor.

Frank Ybarra paints what he calls the “suburban ethnic” lifestyle. He draws on his experience as an illustrator and also on traditions of mainstream modern art, which he transforms and intensifies with the vibrant color scheme so beloved in his culture. His works are cartographic icons of the Southwest, indicators of place and vehicles of memory.

Marcus Zilliox presents alternative visions of meaning made of layers of complex, even contradictory systems. Though Zilliox occasionally includes recognizable imagery in his paintings and mixed media works, he constructs his description of contemporary life directly through the arrangement and manipulation of lines, textures, patterns and colors.



Ancestral Roots, 1996, Trisza Jaurique, Glitter on board