



Alejandro Garza-Glass Wing Butterfly

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: "Characters & Creatures"
Where: STC VAM Art Gallery, Bldg. B-103, Pecan Street campus
When: Nov. 5–29, 2016
Hours: 8am-3pm Tues., Wed., Thurs.
Contact: artgallery@southtexascolleg.edu
Free to the public

People Plus

STC invites viewers to this friendly artistic gathering of artist Eduardo E Aguilar's family, friends, and colleagues

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

Eduardo E. Aguilar, Sr. can certainly capture a likeness. "Characters & Creatures", currently on display at the VAM Gallery at STC, demonstrates his longtime artistic passion - portraiture. There are twenty-three graphite and Prismacolor drawings in this show with all but two concerning the entire torso of the subject. A native Texan, Aguilar has been doing portraits of family and friends since elementary school.

The work in this exhibition is a revised theme first explored during the artist's graduate MFA show at UNT. For "Characters & Creatures", the single portraits of family, friends, and colleagues are juxtaposed with small life-size creatures such as insects and birds. While the portraits are achromatically graphite, Prismacolor was used to emphasize the small creatures.

Aguilar jump-started this project by asking his family, friends, and colleagues if they would volunteer to pose for a portrait and choose a small creature that would be juxtaposed with their image. The original thought included life-sized characters and creatures, and because each portrait would be limited to a 30" x 40" space, the life-sized creature needed to be one small enough not to crowd the composition of the figure. It was felt that small colorful creatures would work best and could balance the larger graphite image. Aguilar's subjects are presented objectively and although there are clues to personal interests in some of the pictures, they are not readily deciphered. For instance, printmaker Lenard Brown is shown perusing a book. Overall, Aguilar's drawings represent a content society; these are basically happy people. And while we aren't told how each creature relates to its character, a few were explained to me. A portrait of his aunt shares space with a long-legged spider. She said that she was very tall in school and that the other kids called her Daddy Long-Legs. Lenard Brown identified with a Scorpion, his astrological sign, and cat lover Richard Smith, STC instructor, is shown with one of his cats. Only the cat's photographed face is shown because the size of the entire animal would have disturbed the composition plan. Like Smith's cat, there is one other creature that appears as a photograph rather than a Prismacolor drawing, "Alejandro Garza/Glass Wing Butterfly". When Garza was in a forest in Argentina the butterfly landed on his hand and he photographed it. Possibly a little homage to the photograph.

Graphite has been a long-time medium of choice for Aguilar. His technique is traditional, but there is a subtle, unique styling in his treatment of shading. Flat areas of softened tone exist adjacent and sometimes under the linear strokes. Occasional erasure marks produce light lines over tonal surfaces producing a richer effect, and often dramatic highlights. These effects are notable in the portrait, "Eddie Sandoval/Horned Toad". Here, white strands were created in his hair and his face shows a subtractive modeling technique. As Professor and Chair for Tarrant County College's Visual Arts Department until 2013, Aguilar still sees himself first and foremost as an educator. "As an educator," he exclaimed, "I am interested in sharing the knowledge that I have accumulated in the forty-five years of teaching professionally in all levels of public schools and higher education. As an artist, I am interested in sharing my seventy plus years' experience of creativity in visual arts."

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