



Vase and Mexican Rebozo II

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: “Retrospective” Irma Garza García
Where: Kika de la Garza Fine Arts Center, 921 E 12th Street, Mission
When: May 11-June 1, 2019

A Culmination of Learning

The artist shares her experiences in working with contemporary and forgotten oil mediums.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

Not only does Irma Garza Garcia favor traditional themes in her art, but she also favors some almost forgotten painting mediums and techniques. Originally from Nuevo Leon, Garza Garcia lives in McAllen, and has developed her artistic skills via workshops in the United States and Mexico, and also with local artist Diana Montemayor who has been a strong stylistic influence. “Retrospective” represents the development and honing of her realistic technique; it is the culmination of her artistic journey. Learned over the past few years, she uses paint mediums that may actually predate her traditional subject matter, which includes elegant still life paintings, landscapes, portraits, abstract works, and combinations of the aforementioned. All are there to contemplate at UVAL’s Kika de la Garza Fine Art Center.

The more striking works in Garza Garcia’s exhibition are the still life paintings. Her subjects, often vases supporting additional objects, command the center of the canvas and evoke a sense of controlled drama that draws us to them. Some hint at a narrative while others are enigmatic, perhaps the result of human folly. “Vase and Mexican Rebozo II” suggests the former, showing a vibrantly hued Mexican rebozo placed atop an empty metallic vase not currently functioning in its intended capacity. The vase

seems to have been hurriedly assigned this unexpected role in the rush of daily activities; its owner did not have time to properly put it away. Garza Garcia identified this painting as one in which she had used the ancient technique of adding pigments to an egg-oil emulsion. "Right now, I'm very interested in conserving old techniques," she professed. "I want to focus on rescuing old techniques that are not in use today as much as they were several decades ago," Indeed, egg mixed with oil and pigment was called "tempera grassa" during the Renaissance, but by the 16th century, it was obsolete until an American revival in the 1930s. Then it faded away once more. A whimsical arrangement exists in "Vase and Mexican Rebozo III", where the painting of the same metallic vase is stunning. But although undeniably beautiful, it appears to be there for its own sake, with no conversation beyond its perfection of skill. The egg-oil technique allows for the gorgeously and smoothly blended metallic tones, encouraging the illusion of extreme 3-dimensional reality. The artist's hyper-realistic control of shading and light as it describes an object, particularly the vases, demonstrates the emulsion's advantages with jet-black backgrounds serving as exclamation points.

With the painting, "Quiet Nook" she has applied the medium in multiple thin layers to create the illusion of depth and distance. Layering of emulsion and pigment can also produce richer colorations within a single hue. Unfortunately, her color choices interfere with the potential effect of the medium, and she finds more success with limited picture spaces, such as in "Still Life II", a playful expression with a teapot and fruits.

Garza García's paintings reveal a strong connection to her Mexican origins and reflect her experiences and artistic growth. "I like to express in my paintings feelings and memorable experiences," she professed, "I feel a certain liberty and sense of adventure when I raise a paintbrush." Her paintings are meant to project a level of vitality to which she hopes people can relate.

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