



Tarahumara

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: "Walk into My Roots" by Monica Ramirez
Where: Artist's Gallery, The Weslaco Museum of Local History and Cultural Art,
500 Texas Boulevard, Weslaco
When: June 5 – 30, 2020
Hours: 10am-4pm Tues-Sat
Contact: (956) 968-9142
Regular admission applies.

Walk into My Roots

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

BY NANCY MOYER

The Valley art scene is coming to life again with the new exhibition "Walk into My Roots" by Monica Ramirez. The exhibition, currently on display at The Weslaco Museum of Local History and Cultural Art, speaks of life's impressions and is alive with figurative and representational paintings. The exploration of techniques and processes is important to Ramirez, with personal experiences blending with her artistic evolution in a flow of varied media learned over the years. This collection reflects the processes of the 500 paintings that the artist has produced during the past 36 years. As a self-taught artist she wanted to share her artistic evolution; earlier paintings hanging next to recent ones can sometimes be disconcerting, but allow an interesting commentary into the artist's progress and background.

Ramirez' ideas rise up from within her being. Sometimes they are emotionally recalled memories from the past, or they could be an impression that stayed in her mind until it demanded to manifest itself onto her canvas. Her subjects don't necessarily have to do with a photo or a scene that she saw, sometimes they are more internal - more what she thinks. Her painting, "The Red Passion", depicting a sophisticated young woman in alluring attire, exemplifies this mental process. "I went to Vegas," she said, recalling the origin of this painting. "I was seeing this lady and I couldn't get her out of my head." A strong work, the painting is a recent one done with egg tempera and oil. The figure resolutely faces us, her blue skin

projecting a cold interior. Her long scarlet gloves, pink hair, and a face featuring partially closed eyes and only a glimpse of small white teeth, seem to warn us about this woman.

There are some still life paintings, nature paintings, and other figurative works, but a recurring theme is feminine strength. Several paintings portray women whose positive actions underline this characteristic, be it dancing, daydreaming, or perpetuating humanity as in the meso American goddess triptych, "Three Aspects of Itzel". Here, Ramirez interprets the three ages of women embodied by the deity of midwifery as a young woman, middle aged woman, and as an old woman. "Mujeres de Ayer, hoy y siempre" shows women as Mexican revolutionaries, fighting for rights and justice. "The Red Passion" expresses feminine strength as just out there.

The artist grew up in Mexico around archeological sites, and she admits to an early interest in archeology. "I believe if I would not be an artist, I would be an archeologist," she confessed. The "Three Aspects of Itzel" triptych, was inspired from a pre-Hispanic codex and exemplifies her interest in ancient Mexico. For a more recent subject, about two years ago, she visited a Tarahumara mountain village in Chihuahua. Her internal experience informed the egg tempera and oil painting, "Tarahumara", in which an indigenous woman sits against a stone wall with her wares; it is Ramirez' most recent work in the show. Although the woman's skirt contains warm colors and lively patterns, a darkness overtakes her upper torso and face; she is living a hard life, barely prevailing. The stones are in harmony with the woman, bracing her both in actuality and visually, adding strength to the enduring figure.

Commenting on the different subjects and techniques in the show, Ramirez concluded, "The techniques change because I believe the day that we stop learning, we stop growing, and for me, it's always a learning process - for the rest of my life."

Nancy Moyer, Professor Emerita of Art, is an art critic for The Monitor. She may be reached at nmoyer@rgv.rr.com