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SURFACE TREATMENT

What: "New Horizons" Exhibition
Where: Harlingen Arts & Heritage Museum, 2425 Boxwood Street, Harlingen
When: June 5 - August 31, 2020
Hours: 10am-4pm Tues-Sat, 1-4pm Sun. Closed major holidays.
Contact: (956) 216-4901
Free Admission. Donations welcome.

"New Horizons" brings together 25 South Texas artists
BY NANCY MOYER
SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

Bursting out from the sheltered spring, twenty-five artists from across South Texas have come together for the "New Horizons" exhibition at the Harlingen Arts & Heritage Museum. This impressive number includes artists from Laredo, San Antonio, Kingsville, Corpus Christi, and the Rio Grande Valley, and reflects regional concerns. Most of the artworks are wall pieces, but a few sculptural and jewelry works add dimension to the show. The title, "New Horizons", appears to be more about the welcome return to life and a positive view for the future after the spring closures. The majority of most of the artworks lean toward a traditional and skill-based aesthetic, holding firm to representational imagery. This exhibition reflects artistic comfort zones that reflect the personal lives of their makers. With a few exceptions, these works speak about things that bring happiness and meaning into those lives.

Anna Marie Sanchez Varela's paintings follow this direction as she sees daily life with scenes and characters from the Mexican American community. The large work, "At the Pond" offers an unexpected perception to bird migration and possibly a new horizon for the artist. Against the flat acrylic landscape, fantastical birds shaped from scraps of wood with plumage of imaginative patterns gather at a pond. It captures the amazed feeling we get when watching wildlife.

Fany Mares focuses on the domestic animal kingdom with her portraits of a dog, a cat, and a swan, comfortably suited to her aggressive brushstrokes. The image of "Shaggy", a miniature schnauzer, fits well into Mares' style, with not only his hair texture magnificently defining him, but the background's strokes flow energy indicating that this dog has something serious on his mind.

Sculptures dedicated to the symbolism of emotion, mind, and spirit by Jessica Salazar McBride speak of the healing arts. Her polychrome sculpture, "Healing Herbs", shows small, colorful, images of plant forms painted against the shape of a mystical hand. On the palm side, a red oval form appears to pulsate with life against the full blue hue.

An exception to the more traditional points of view are the paintings of Laredo artist, Eva Soliz. Soliz' paintings speak of control. In the painting, "Hermanitas", chess pieces have morphed into human figures. She stated, "The figures portrayed in my current work are often an amalgamation of people, game piece/toy, and hardware elements." She looks at our most human qualities, vulnerabilities, and strengths through these unlikely combinations. The sisters are separated by a long undulating wall that may be real, social, or psychological; the oldest is separated from the other two, and her attachment to a hook and chain, suggests external control. Hardware attachments on these figures indicate a current or potential restriction of freedom.

A special treat is available for those who want to enhance their visual experience with an analog 3-D effect - looking at the paintings with a type of 3-D glasses. This was pure fun. Under this perceptual influence, red colors become exaggeratedly stereoscopic and move out in front of their picture planes due to the optical property of the eye and the wavelengths of the colors. This was particularly effective with Daniel Padilla's painting of Frida Kahlo. Her severed heart popped out toward us. The birds in Sanchez Varela's painting also moved out from their static environment, seeming to take flight.

The Harlingen Arts & Heritage Museum is a good destination point for getting back into the art scene, and "New Horizons" exhibition offers a pleasant viewing experience.

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