



El Gran Cheeto by Cande Aguilar

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: *"Ni de Aquí, Ni de Allá"*
Where: Brownsville Museum of Fine Art, 660 E Ringgold St., Brownsville
When: Closes Jan 3, 2020
Hours: 10am-4pm, Mon-Tues; 10am-8pm, Wed; 10am-4pm, Thurs-Sat.
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Layers of Cultural Duality

This exhibition takes us into the artist's consciousness where he blends bicultural observations into imaginative works.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

"Ni de Aquí, Ni de Allá (From Neither Here nor There)" is an exhibition of multimedia works by Brownsville artist, Cande Aguilar, that takes us into the artist's bicultural world. A blending of both time and border culture, the central gallery at the Brownsville Museum of Fine Art serves as an installation for the stroll through Aguilar's mind. The large multimedia work, *"Ni de Aquí, Ni de Allá"*, is an exhibition introduction piece juxtaposing neighborhood grocery signs with a light show of blinking dance floor tiles popular in Mexican Frontera night clubs. While this sets the tone for Aguilar's persona, his identity deepens with the experience of each work. The walls of the gallery mimic wall surfaces he has experienced on the border, with artworks hung on outdoor brick surfaces in need of repair, old stucco, unfinished walls, as well as vibrantly colored interior walls. Art works hung upon these walls suggest the artistic impact of these repeatedly observed structures.

"When you're born here in Brownsville, Texas, or in any border," Aguilar explained about his point of view, "you really don't feel like you're considered Mexican or you really don't feel like you're considered American. You sort of are in this kind of limbo. That's why I called the show *"Ni de Aquí Ni de Allá,"* he explained. "I am doing this immersive experience; I am trying to put

together a show that will sort of immerse the viewer in an experience.” And Aguilar does it well. His imagery bounces from culture to culture in a visual dance that declares it as a single entity that happens to contain two DNA strands. Each work is a collection of impressions and observations brought together in a unified perception.

Not only does he share the literal sort of imagery from bits of his life, but those diverse memories, reminiscences, daily facts, feelings, and observations are woven and meshed together with materials that are just as diverse. Using multimedia such as painting, collage, photography, assemblage, digital collage, and image transfer, each work becomes an overlay of visual retention often inspired by a certain situation. Linear scribbles supersede digital transfers and smash head on into painted abstractions; each impression is being documented at break-neck speed creating layers upon layers of visual information. He refers to his style as “barrioPOP”, which brings his mix of materials, styles, characters, home life and street phenomena together in a richly coherent impression. “I’m self-taught,” he said, “so I pick up on things that I feel. They compel me somehow, some way. So, I trust that, and so I go with it.”

The work, “Failure of Possession”, is particular rich in domestic impressions. Cartoon figures mix and mingle with a partially completed coloring book page, a newspaper puzzle, and parts of commercial images. The dense mélange is overlaid by a child’s crayon lines, expressionistic brush slashes, and random appearing lines. Although full of frenetic energy, there is an overall softness; it could be a day at home with the children. “Here and There” is more assertive and feels like an outdoor walk from Brownsville to Matamoros with jolts of Mexican logos appearing and disappearing over elements of bold black type. Blood red areas chillingly overlay various parts.

An exhibition of Aguilar’s barrioPOP art at New York’s 81 Leonard Street Gallery this fall was a major feat for a Valley artist. With works rich in border imagery brought into aesthetic focus through his barrioPOP style, Aguilar is an artist to watch.

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