



A Better Tomorrow by Daniel Padilla

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: Padilla Gallery
Where: 1500 Pecan Blvd, McAllen
When: Ongoing
Hours: Business hours Mon-Fri; closed Sunday
Contact: (956) 278-5309 or www.padillagallery.com

New Art in Town

The business of art arrives in McAllen.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

The business of art: a new Padilla Gallery has opened its doors in McAllen. Based in Dallas, the Padilla Gallery demographic is corporate art as well as residential decor. This venue operates under the dual ownership of Daniel Padilla and Naomi Padilla, incorporating a beauty salon into the fine art ambiance. The art of the Padilla family is showcased, including Daniel, Manuel, Frances, Naomi, Raquel Padilla-Perez, and also, Darius Thompson.

The artistic styles seen in this gallery target businesses and interior designers by featuring work that may be accommodated by large or public spaces. Although the Padilla's are extremely facile with their artistic capabilities, this introductory showing emphasizes various kinds of abstractions. Daniel's paintings are large and diverse, ranging from spiritually energized mixed media that allows serendipitous paint phenomenon, through abstracted figurative compositions, to blatantly stylized fashion faces. But to be fair, those faces are highly suitable for interior fashion venues. The large works by Manuel have a controlled presence with several offering a soothing respite from the seemingly unrestrained bursts of energy from some of Daniel's. He also shows some linear figurative abstraction.

While several of Manuel's paintings evoke feelings of calm or relaxing mindscapes, his triptych, "A Moment in Time", captures a dynamic by using linear circles that overlap into a seemingly hectic dance until they connect at points in the central space. They could symbolically reference the complexity and rapid movement of traffic infrastructure in large urban areas; strong contrasting hues intensify the sense of congested but rapid movement. There is also the idea of circular time patches, periodically repeating/overlapping into the idea of commuter traffic. Daniel brings an even more, but very different, forceful dynamic into his paintings. "A Better Tomorrow" seduces through the beauty of its color palette combined with the quirky textural characteristics of the flow of the medium when poured onto a previous wet layer. Its brilliant upward luminosity of the thinning, translucent, paint layers create a euphoric experience.

Despite the emotional power of these paintings, there is an emotional distance; they are more design than art. This is particularly true of the work by Thompson. His smaller pieces are clearly decorative, and while faultlessly executed, they project a clinical ambiance of mass production. "Blue Box", mounted on a steel-like plate, is too close to ceramic tile design to be independent of decor. Relying on the same feathering technique, "Xclamation" is also tile-based, but the glitzy red chevrons against the monochromatic feathering combine to create a strong minimalist cross reminiscent of Native American weaving. This clever design concept offers infinite right-angled reconfigurations and expansions. It is a mural disguised as a decorator piece.

Naomi and Raquel show smaller, more personal pieces. Naomi's small acrylic paintings featuring crosses with extended symbolic meanings communicate on a personal level. Raquel shows jewelry; glass enamel neckpieces on copper reflect the color treatments and shapes found in Daniel's paintings.

The Padillas are originally from Santa Rosa, and the brothers, Daniel and Manuel, opened the DMA Art Group gallery in Houston after graduating with a BFA from the University of Texas-Pan American. The gallery moved to Dallas in 2008 and was renamed Padilla Gallery. This gallery is a branch of the Dallas venue; parking is in the rear of the gallery.

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