



Untitled by Paul Valadez

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: "School of Art Faculty Exhibition"
Where: Dorothy and Charles Clark Art Gallery, Edinburg Liberal Arts Building South.,
UTRGV campus, Edinburg
When: February 8 - March 15, 2020
Hours: 9am-5pm weekdays
Contact: 956 665-3480

Art Has a Voice

Ancient inspiration and contemporary issues flavor this year's School of Art exhibition.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

The School of Art Faculty exhibition at UTRGV has a lot to say this year. Installed in the Dorothy and Charles Clark Gallery on the main campus, faculty artists reflect different points of view, as well as presenting different opinions on priorities in this complex era. Fourteen artists from the Edinburg and Brownsville campuses are represented in this show and despite divergent foci, a harmony of aesthetics is apparent among the diverse approaches to visual communication. The work in this show is strongly expressive of each artist's current personal reality, providing visual stories and notable insights.

Not only were there categorical crossovers and unexpected materials combined within single works, concepts within these works sometimes combined to address different cultures and time frames, providing a rich aesthetic experience. Cultural crossovers are seen among some of the works; M.C. Faris pursues his Japanese, American, cultural crossover explorations with his mixed media, "Conversations in the Western Vernacular: The Impact of Confiscated Dialogue", demonstrating the perils of misunderstood language along with an occasional undertone. In "Prometo", Rigoberto A Gonzalez focused on the confiscation of fire from the gods in his silver-point drawing. In the performance piece, "Esquilita Tortilla " by Christen Sperry Garcia, an indirect commentary on genetically modified foods offers a strong protest. Garcia made fresh tortillas enhanced with vivid colorations, offering them to gallery goers as a symbol of equality and referencing issues of living in-between worlds. But "Esquilita Tortilla " is the embodiment of the GMO food producer, enhancing tortillas for visual attractiveness rather than nutrition. The tortillas evolved into an American product expressing

the problems of food modification – commercially attractive, but offering the consumer an unexpected side effect. Appropriately, left-over tortillas are displayed as small art objects, not food.

Raheleh T Filsoofi also uses food as art in her neon ceramic and spice(?) installation demonstrating a simultaneity in time; here, past traditions and the present co-exist. Paul Valadez uses past and present also, but for a very different purpose. A scathing commentary on the decline of literacy, two shelves display small sketches that appear to be immature art works propped against the wall. Closer consideration reveals that they are not age specific, but reflect an imperfect education. Descriptive words in English and Spanish, some misspelled, identify simple drawings that are seemingly off-handed scrawls on the inside of old book covers, torn from books that are no longer used for reading.

Sculpture and ceramics were strong with Julian Rodriguez and Stephen Hawks showing works demanding full walk-around observation for total informational absorption. Rodriguez' ceramic and steel sculpture speaks of tenacity of purpose with its beautiful metal insect imagined flying through a seemingly impenetrable object, denying the barred attempt at blockage. Hawk's ceramic, "The Door Hinge Spoke", used laser jet decals for his poetic text and image on this contemporary nod to ancient amphorae. Carefully imaged, this piece is both visual and literary. The severed "Sasquatch" head by Brian Dick initially seems almost warm and cuddly with its pink faux-fur head, then a fear inducing discomfort sets in with its blood-red face and dark glowing eyes. It is – or was - the brutal aggressor holding within its mouth a partially visible beaded star of undetermined final shape.

This faculty art show engages on both the visual and cognitive levels. Other artists showing included Erika M Balogh, Jared Erum, Robert Gilbert, Jerry Lyles, Elizabeth Mc Cormack-Whittemore, and Ping Xu.

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