



*Longhorn Sunset* by Harutyun Grigoryan

#### SURFACE TREATMENT

What: "Nature in the Valley; a Fine Art and Poetry Exhibition"  
Where: Dorothy and Charles Clark Art Gallery, Edinburg Liberal Arts Building South, UTRGV campus, Edinburg  
When: February 8 - March 15, 2019  
Hours: call ahead  
Contact: (956) 665-3480

#### **Natural Resources**

This exhibition reflects interest in documenting our natural resources.

BY NANCY MOYER

#### SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

UTRGV's new exhibition, "Nature in the Valley", is sponsored by the School of Art in collaboration with the South Texas Border Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist program. This juried show features the work of twenty artists and fifteen poets who work in varied styles and media to focus on awareness of the natural resources of the RGV. Photographs were not eligible. Maria Elena Macias, Exhibition Coordinator, is a member of the Texas Master Naturalist program and was instrumental in the show's creation. "We wanted nature-based art with a feel for the environment, wildlife, landscape, but not necessarily the specific place," she said. "Artists gave us the visual symbols of our surroundings and poets wrote about their perception of the environment." Dana Younger, Exhibition Manager for Texas Parks and Wildlife served as art juror. "The Rio Grande Valley is a treasure chest of Texas resources," he stated. "Each piece in this show is a jewel from that chest." Poet Laureates of McAllen, Edward Vidaurre (2018-2019), and Rodney Gomez (2020-2021), served as poetry jurors. Appreciating the efforts of all the artists and poets, six awards and six honorable mentions were awarded, while all others received Certificates of Participation.

The following works earned awards. Fine Art category: 1st Place, "Curved Bill Thrasher" by Jessica Monroe; 2nd Place, "Longhorn Sunset" by Harutyun Grigoryan; 3rd Place, "Caracara" by Virginia Garza Shuey. Honorable mentions went to "Dead Dove" by Berry Fritz, "Pink Blossoms" by Patricia Ballinger, and "Tillandsia Bailey" by Sue Sill. In the Poetry category, 1st Place was awarded to "Lake Song" by Ben Salinas; 2nd Place, "Ode to the Beach Morning Glory" by Katherine Hoerth; and 3rd Place, "Disturbances" by Anita Westervelt. Honorable Mentions for poetry went to "Egrets in Traffic" by Ben Salinas, "Mockingbird Solo on a Rainy Day" by Jan Seale, and "La Orquesta" by Tania Torres

"Nature in the Valley" offers a pleasant viewing experience, reflecting the increasing interest in the changes now occurring in the natural world. Because plants and wildlife play a central role in maintaining our ecosystems, a sense of urgency has developed in recording today's potentially shifting habitats for future generations.

The conservationist/conservative mindset of nature artists is the predominate direction here, focusing more on direct depictions of their subjects than broader ideas. Sill's classic botanical study with hummingbird reflects the standard of this tradition. Surprisingly, there is an uneven quality to this show; the few art works that excel both technically and artistically stand apart from what appear to be student or amateur endeavors. Wall pieces comprise the show with only one small sculpture and a recycled-media creation. Many works here seem to lack the quality that usually accompanies successful naturalism - a depth of feeling for their subjects. Paintings by Monroe, Grigoryan, and Stephen Hawks were the thankful exceptions; all were able to infuse their paintings with an exhilaration of life and environment. Grigoryan's "Island Delight", is a Pop stylization contrasting in style with his descriptive "South Padre Spoonbills". Monroe's "Curved Bill Thrasher" gives us heartfelt information about the bird and its way of life, and Hawks' "Crane" lets us feel the South Texas air. While nature studies rarely have meaning beyond themselves, ironically or maybe even sarcastically, Berry Fritz' still life, "Dead Dove", does suggest meaning outside of itself. It is truly *la naturleza muerta*. The poetry selections are adhered to the glass walls of the gallery.

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