



Went to Hide

## SURFACE TREATMENT

What: "Type of Abandonment"  
Where: McAllen Creative Incubator, 601 N. Main Street  
When: The month of November  
Hours: 9am-5pm, Monday through Saturday  
Contact: Laura Robles at 956-687-2787

### Lost Words

Fragments of words and phrases are repurposed against monoprints in this solo exhibition.

BY NANCY MOYER  
SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

At first, "Type of Abandonment" seems to be a carefree expression of words and shapes, but soon the awareness of an undercurrent of abstract volatility joins in. In his exhibition at the McAllen Creative Incubator Gallery, Reynaldo Santiago, Professor of Art at UTRGV, repurposes discarded wooden word fragments from a fellow artist to create a tension between tongue-in-cheek flippancy and deeper meaning. Through laser cutouts of text attached to screen-printed monotypes, several levels of content reverberate, including the ultimate abandonment of words heard and not retained, the violent force of hurricanes, and an artful conversation between colleagues whose work inspires one another.

Rescued by Santiago, the text cutouts are workshop debris left from a student's exhibition called "Her Story". The sequel/variation of taking abandoned words and phrases from an artist's previous show into another arena for new implications is intriguing. "I took whatever I saw discarded from that show and put some of the words together to make my own story," he explained, "and some of them are so mixed up they don't even make sense, yet people try to make meaning out of them." Looking for logical combinations, Santiago sometimes just arranged the abandoned shapes, but sometimes they stuck in his mind and he contrived new phrases with them. These

phrases often became titles of works, as in “Hay, I Feel Stuffed” and “Went to Hide”. New words and phrases appear from the jumble in his aesthetic configurations; some express a happy-go-lucky attitude, while others denote a more serious concern. Santiago describes some of the discarded words and shapes that he found as having meaning for him; others remain as random shapes.

Beyond the surface physicality, deeper implications emerge suggesting the phenomenon of a concept installation; the exhibition works as a single artwork. Placed repeatedly against expressionistic blue-green monotypes, the words seem to be without anchor, tossed and adrift. Santiago has used the cutout words and phrases for his own analogy. “I spend a lot of time in the water,” he said, “and when I’m out there I find a certain freedom where everything I heard during the whole week goes out - I’m discarding the words that I heard and read. We hear a lot of words every day, some of the words are retained and some are not.” The lost words are left to float away as a useless sea of words that may still return and bombard us, depending on the current. This exhibition is about those lost words.

The images recall a broader episode in Santiago’s consciousness. Having lived in Puerto Rico, he was especially sensitive to the destruction caused by Hurricane Maria, and the turbulence of a watery devastation finds its expression in the prints. Various hues, strokes, and tonal shapes of blue-green crash into each other beneath the cutout phrases; the cutouts seem further torn asunder by the prints upon which they anchor. “Went to Hide” exhibits a dynamic tension between a right-angular shape whose pointed corner appears to strike the center of the word cluster. “We Pee” is at the mercy of a storm, the cutout’s jagged edges feeling a malevolent force. In “One Must Live”, there is the implication of a predator about to clinch its pursuit of a word-group.

“Type of Abandonment” offers much for thoughtful appreciation, not the least of which is the communication between colleagues who find relevance and extended meaning in each other’s work.

*Nancy Moyer, Professor Emerita of Art, UTRGV, is an art critic for The Monitor. She may be reached at [nmoyer@rgv.rr.com](mailto:nmoyer@rgv.rr.com)*