



*Masonic Eggs* by Manuel Zamudio

## SURFACE TREATMENT

What: **Allegories** presented by Manuel "Raid" Zamudio  
Where: Space16th, 322 S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street, McAllen  
When: Through June.  
Hours: Call for hours.  
Contact: (956) 330-8582

## The Future

Colorful paintings and monochromatic drawings search for enlightenment

Walk into Manuel Zamudio's world. Currently on display at Space16th, oil paintings reflect the boldly chromatic Pop style that we associate with his work, and the unerring illusionistic technique thoughtfully describes his imaginative imagery. For me, the small and remarkable drawings are the best part of the show. Zamudio's beautiful, but ambiguous, ink technique conveys the soft tones of graphite in his depictions of an imaginary future society. Twenty-nine works take viewers on allegorical adventure into the future.

Allegories is a metaphorical adventure about human enlightenment. Across his picture planes, giant beings of the future earth, filled with a fresh curiosity of life, are on a constant search to figure out what it all means. "I feel that my work is a reflection of the human situation," explained Zamudio, "in a fun, different, colorful way. I want it to have its own creativity and mystery that we all on earth share; it's the same mystery that we have of our own creation and being." His giant beings have mysteriously appeared on earth, possessing a Christlike innocence with no recollection of their origin, much like we were as children. This innocence is subconsciously

conveyed through the basic configuration of children's preschematic and schematic drawing stages, albeit much more complex. Children at this age are searching for meaning, as are the giant beings who search through relics of bygone humanity. Books, houses, the natural world – what are these things? Zamudio wants to convey a sense of mystery. What do his images mean? His characters are like anthropologists searching for storylines. The artist's future vision shows who we already are, although in his scenario, humanity was wiped out through climate change. The art works are storylines for his allegories.

The paintings and drawings need to be read by the viewer, but sometimes this is no simple task. They are filled with cultural references and symbolism, and understanding symbols always relies on a certain level of common knowledge. In the dominant painting, "Allegories," we catch a giant being having an "Aha" moment. His upper portion contains a third eye, but above that is another eye opening in what appears to be an egg – the birth of an idea? He tosses a book which appears to be about history. Eggs as containers of ideas/information/more also appear elsewhere in the exhibit. The blending of imaginative ideas with his assured technique allow undistracted attention to the visual information. "The Book of Breakfast" is hilarious.

Superb drawing has been used alone as a communicator to explain cultural or world existence through narrative graphic expression. Greek pottery and Mayan vases come to mind; a few graphic narratives are there, but their reliance on text turns them into illustrations. Unlike most artists, who turn to past art for content or stylistic inspiration, Zamudio uses the past more for aside references than for core solutions. Wyeth and Ensor would probably both be amused. With Allegories, rather than seeing the past translated into the present, we see our present pushed into the future.

"What I'm trying to do here in the Valley as an artist," exclaimed Zamudio, "I'm trying to bring what's going on everywhere else. There's low brow, graffiti, urban, Pop art everywhere, but there's not a lot of that here." Well, there's Zamudio.

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