



Pulga Table with Stuff Half Off

SURFACE TREATMENT

barrioPOP

Where: Beyond Arts Gallery, 114 North A Street, Harlingen
When: Through January 5, 2018
Hours: 1-5pm Wed-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat
Contact: (956) 230-2859

POP Scapes, etc.

Aguillar conveys the feeling of a Border neighborhood through a series of mixed media works

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

Cande Aguillar's new exhibit, "barrioPOP", now on display at Beyond Arts Gallery, is really a gallery-wide installation distilling a complex concept. Aguillar says of his work, "barrioPOP is an amalgamation sprung by characters, colors and street phenomena that is my life immersed in popular border town culture, expressed through multimedia such as painting, image transfer, collage, photography, assemblage, digital collage, video & music." The Brownsville artist wraps all this together in his barrioPOP style and viewers land in the midst of the whole dynamic.

Entering the gallery space, a mural of authentic, laminated, hand-made grocery store ads sets the mood for the show; we are walking into a barrioPOP-flavored space. There are three wall-sized mixed media paintings that depict indoor and outdoor scenes; two of these large paintings are mounted on simulated walls to mimic a domestic setting, the third one, the street. What do local people put on their walls? "Sometimes people tend to mix and match things," explained Aguillar. "That was the idea behind the installation section "barrioPOP Pedaso de Ayer". The painting hangs against the vivid aqua-hued wall along with four other art pieces, including one of Aguillar's first paintings. The

trademark features of Aguillar's style - cartoon figures sharing space with abstract brush strokes, photo transfers, and linear graffiti marks - are here. Across the gallery, "barrioPOP Side Walk Blues", is the third large painting and accentuates the idea of graffiti. A simulated brick wall supports the painting that encroaches upon actual graffiti painted on the "brick." This is a brilliant play of graffiti-inspired work placed against actual graffiti, which is, in turn, graffiti-inspired. The wall graffiti and the shapes and colors in the painting resonate against each other in an act of aesthetic solidarity.

Two highlights of the exhibition are "Pulga Table with half-off stuff" and "Encapsulated Backyard Birthday party piñata under Plexiglas cube on St. Augustine grass", excellent works in terms of concept, execution, and wit. It's rare that we get to see that combination of components. Aguillar admitted, "My favorite piece in the show - and I hope it brings laughter to people - is the "Pulga Table". You go to the flea market and you want half-price off everything; you want a deal. So here, things are literally cut in half." "Pulga Table" is a great piece; the water-jet precision cutting gets a double take from the viewer - everything looks perfect. It takes a moment to realize that things are not as they should be. The "Encapsulated Backyard Birthday party piñata" enclosed in an acrylic structure is also an unexpected image. We never think of piñatas being repurposed. After the initial delighted response, the piñata, mashed into its acrylic casing, has the uneasy feeling of the fate of a food animal.

Four extremely large paintings, described as waterPOP, fill another wall and don't visually relate to the other works. These large minimalistic works seem almost barren by comparison to the information-packed barrioPOP images, and are meant to suggest a backyard or empty lot view. The work at one end of the grouping communicates the feeling of a sunny day, as colorful wet confetti bleeds down the canvas; at the other end is the glitter-filled starry night.

barrioPOP has the feel of a random, yet intimate, stroll through a border neighborhood. Make plans to visit.

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