



*Nopalitos*

## SURFACE TREATMENT

What: *My Very Own Room: Carmen Lomas Garza & Women of the Collection*  
Where: STC Library Art Gallery, Bldg. F, 3201 W. Pecan Blvd.  
When: Through April 19, 2016, Mon-Thurs: 9am-10pm  
Info: 956-872-3488 or <http://lag.southtexascollege.edu>

### **Cultural Contrasts**

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

By NANCY MOYER

An artist records her cultural history through her prints

*My Very Own Room: Carmen Lomas Garza & Women of the Collection*, offers an interesting contrast of feminine cultural identities. This dual exhibit at the STC Library Art Gallery shows the work of women artists from STC's permanent collection on the the lower floor, along with the the *Carmen Lomas Garza* exhibit upstairs. *Women of the Collection* includes selections of art works that we've seen in previous exhibits, and so the important focus here is *Carmen Lomas Garza*.

*The Lomas Garza* exhibit is on loan from local art collectors, George and Virginia Gause. "Most of the prints were purchased from Xochil Art and Culture Center," said George Gause. "From 1978-83, I would go over and meet with Xavier Gorena, executive director of Xochil, buy a Carmen Lomas Garza print for \$70 or so, get it framed, and Virginia would feed me for the rest of the month." This collection represents earlier lithographs and etchings from the artist's lifelong project of creating a chronicle of Mexican-American familial, communal, and cultural practices in South Texas through her own recollections.

Growing up in South Texas, Lomas Garza felt marginalized by the non-Hispanic community, who, she believed, did not understand her culture. She set about correcting that communication gap through art. She has stated, "I saw the need to create images that would elicit recognition and appreciation among Mexican Americans, both adults and children, while at the same time serve as a source of education for others not familiar with our culture. It has been my objective since 1969 to make artwork that instills pride in our history and culture in American society."

She effectively communicates her vision by employing exacting printmaking techniques while rejecting the academic art styles based on European guidelines; her stylization offers a sharp contrast to the mainstream influences seen in the *Women of the Collection* display. Chicano art typically embraces an inherently derived art style to distance itself from the European aesthetic that has been prevalent in United States art schools, and is at odds with the both the Mexican and the Mexican American cultural experience. The simpler style was believed to more effectively engage the people it represented. "Cumpleaños de Lala y Tudi" illustrates a birthday party for two children whose birthdays were on the same day; here the artist has depicted family and relatives who share in the day's festivities. "La Curandera II" depicts local health care. This bedroom scene records religious objects, a photograph of a loved one, a statuette honoring a renowned curandero, and a sewing machine. Other scenes of daily life chronicle harvesting nopalitas, a visit to grandmother's house documenting the custom of chaperones for young ladies, and a summer evening on the front porch enjoying watermelon.

While we have seen the work of several Chicana artists who focus on their ancient Mexican heritage, Lomas Garza stays close to home. Her work is an historical record of the Mexican-American culture of South Texas in our time, and she wants society to understand and appreciate those values. Originally from Kingsville, she now lives in San Francisco. Lomas Garza is an author, illustrator, and artist who feels committed to remember her culture on behalf of her community - a project that is ongoing.

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