



Silencio por Elección

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: *"#Daño Colateral"* by Manuel Antonio Lince
Where: Creative Arts Studio, Old Hidalgo County Jail House Exhibition Hall,
E Esperanza Ave, Hidalgo
When: Through Nov 9, 2017
Hours: 4-8pm, Monday -Thursday
Contact: (956) 600-9251

Psychology Visions of Fear

With paintings spanning several years, Manuel Lince tells of psychological damage inflicted through Cartel violence

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

A new art space in the Valley, Creative Arts Studio is located in the picturesque old Hidalgo County Jail House and opened with Manuel Antonio Lince's exhibition, "#Daño Colateral." This venue, freshly renovated and filled with positive expectations, contrasts with the raw emotional content of its first art exhibit - a 21st century drama with figurative paintings and drawings filling several spaces. This exhibit presents psychological destruction that has happened very close to us.

"#Daño Colateral" tells about collateral damage from the violent Cartel activities in Reynosa over the past several years. Lince, originally from Reynosa, depicts anxiety, fear, and paranoia, human reactions resulting from years of living in terror. Several paintings show partial figures, the headless victims. Most of the works communicate the terror of people not physically harmed, but emotionally damaged. A group of paintings in the upstairs gallery depicts isolated figures surrounded by conflicting patterns and marks, an environment of physical and psychic hostility. Dynamic surface textures serve as backgrounds, often moving into his figures.

Downstairs, a group of paintings expresses the phenomenon of being unable to speak out about the situation. "Silencios por Elección" shows a hand over the mouth of a young woman; environmental disturbance is embedded in her face. It is one of several paintings of women being kept from speaking. "At first, there was fear of speaking out because the narcos could find out and kill you," Lince explained about his concept. "Later we decided that we needed to say something, but at the same time, people close to us stopped us, because the government was not reacting in the way we wanted." (there was no official protection). Another painting, "No me gusta Reaccionar Así" (I do not want to react like this), recalls survival behavior. Even when the violence subsided, habits remain. "Still, when we hear something like a shot," continued Lince, "we fall down, because it's the only way you can feel secure. It's still happening in Reynosa and we don't want to live like that." In the painting, the figure looks up cautiously while large amorphous diagonal shapes press upon his body, his fears pinning him firmly to the ground.

Three different artistic styles are apparent with this exhibit. A flat contemporary style shows observable actions, but Lince's technique of combining unlikely styles for psychological expression is most relevant. Backgrounds referencing Abstract Expressionism catch the emotional disturbance of his message, while foreground figures reference Neoclassicism. The nobility of the Neoclassical figure representing people of Reynosa creates a palpable tension against the barbarism of the expressionistic markings. He succinctly expresses a reality out-of-sync. "My society is down," lamented Lince. "We are not only losing lives, we are losing mental/emotional stability. A lot of people who used to live here would still visit to buy tortillas, but now they don't want to be here. Not even to visit." The paintings' backgrounds also suggest disintegration.

The City of Hidalgo refinished the old county jail, originally built in 1890, to be used as an art, theater, and dance school for the community. "The purpose is to bring the community back to the historic city of Hidalgo," said Augustino Contreras, Executive Director of the Creative Arts Studio. "We teach children and young adults fine art, but we also have a room for artists' exhibitions." Within view of the river, this surviving historical structure offers a peaceful space for artistic inspiration and thought.

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