



Directive Past by Eloy Jesus Rodriguez

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: *FOUND*
Where: Beyond Arts Gallery, 114 North A Street, Harlingen
When: Through Sept 2, 2017
Hours: 1-5pm Wed-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat
Contact: (956) 230-2859

Away from the Ordinary

Artworks connect with viewers via common and sometimes unusual materials

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

On display at Beyond Arts Gallery, this exhibit is well worth a visit. *FOUND* is a fascinating group adventure away from traditional art materials and the practice of using a single medium for expression. Nineteen South Texas artists are exhibiting works that repurpose or were inspired by found objects. Beyond Arts Gallery Director, Jessica Salazar McBride, invited artists whose works would be compatible for exhibition. "I love the idea of the found object," she admitted, "giving something a new life." A unique quality of this exhibition is the frequent surprise of what "found" objects different artists have incorporated into their work. *FOUND* reflects the increasing practice among artists toward recycling and using alternative materials to give more punch to their message. Found materials instantly relate an artist's work to the world around us and sharpen meaning by providing an instant viewer connection. For instant, Aleida Garcia's "Sequential Refuse" neckpiece connects with the viewer on a much deeper level with its real gas cartridges, than had she simply imitated the cartridges.

Most of the artists in this show are familiar to gallery goers, so it is particularly interesting to see how these guidelines affected their art. Considerations range from the displaying of objects without alteration from their "found" status (elevating them into fine art by the artist's selection) to the regular use/incorporation of alternative materials in an artist's typical work. Cande Aguilar's "Confetti in a Bag" is an excellent example of bringing attention to the myriad of rich and beautiful colors found in a bag of confetti. With acute perception, he introduces viewers to a minor commodity that has aesthetic relevance. Artists Paul Valadez and Brian

Wedgworth, whose works are immediately recognizable, regularly repurpose used materials for their own art production; Valadez often assembles printed papers, and Wedgworth welds scrap steel.

Between these two extremes are those artists who have integrated found objects into their customary visual expression. Those aesthetic mergers with found objects are fascinating and fun. Fulden Sara Wissinger adds metal wing nuts and a brass drawer pull to her bell shaped, lyrically decal embellished, ceramic piece, "Cappadoccia." Veronica Jaeger's assembled wall piece, "Tree House 2," includes scraps of wood, but in a perceptual twist, her painting of a lone eye on one of the scraps appears as though it were found in one of her paintings. With "Side Effects," a jewelry artist incorporates used medical capsules that overwhelm the chest of the wearer. There are several works using erstwhile text graphics. Eloy Jesus Rodriguez' plastic wall sculptures excel in their morphing from signage to stunning artworks. And there is also a video included in this creative game; Mauricio Saenz' HD video, "Dakhla," goes beyond the common concept of the physically gathered object and brilliantly ventures into object(s) captured and projected in an artistically derived time-scape.

"Many of us, as artists, tend to pick up things and maybe hoard them," added Salazar-McBride. "I have a lot of things in my garage, but it's not hoarding if you use them; I can go into my garage and pick up something and create with it. It's a challenge to look at something without seeing what it really is, but imagining what it could be. And that's the fun and the challenge about *FOUND*."

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