



Drawing 4

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: "Luis Corpus: Hydrogen, Oxygen, Carbon"
Where: STC Mid-Valley Campus Library Art Gallery, 400 N. Border Ave, Weslaco
When: Oct. 8-Dec.1, 2018
Hours: 7am-9:30pm Mon-Thurs, 8am-7pm Friday
Info: Gina Otvos at 956) 872-3488 or gotvos@southtexascollege.edu
Free and open to the public

DACA and the Rio Grande

Bold drawings give faces to DACA in this unique exhibition.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

Delving deeply into his own core, Luis Corpus, STC Art instructor, engages us with his exhibition, "Hydrogen, Oxygen, Carbon". His charcoal portraits form a mini-community in the newly renovated gallery space at STC's Mid-Valley Library, but these are not just portraits; Corpus has a lot going on here. The physical aspects of these works are instantly engaging with hyperrealism combined with more expressive charcoal effects for a heavy dose of aesthetic tension. He is a master of charcoal portraiture, and delights in coordinating appearance, technique, and meaning.

His hyperrealism and charcoal formalism combination are far from accidental. The people Corpus draws are tightly wound for positive forward motion, bursting with their own

determination. Many of his subjects entered the United States illegally and are DACA recipients (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals). By paying a bi-annual fee of \$495 that allows them to work here legally, Corpus sees them embodying the idea of deserving individuals. Powerful in their beauty, the drawings persuade us to step a little closer. Corpus owns the unmistakable beauty of his drawing technique, seeing it as evoking a pleasurable emotional response. When seen and felt, beauty is a way to capture the viewer's interest, which then can give way to more important ideas. The faces look directly at us with a determined will to succeed. The absence of names or titles accentuates the anonymity of the subjects to our larger society. Random flecks of charcoal on the faces, and looser, tangled markings along the necks and into the long hair in drawings like "Drawing 4", suggest a metaphorical emergence from the Rio Grande and the thick brush along its banks. We are shown every crease, shadow, and flash of sunlight that falls upon these faces.

Born in this country shortly after his parents crossed the Rio Grande, Corpus also feels the dual nature experienced by many people in this part of the country. The majority of people living along the Rio Grande are descendants of Mexico, but not Mexican, and Corpus sees them in his works as people in between - people of the river. In addressing this physical and psychological river presence, he slides into scientific considerations; instead of typically using an image of the Rio Grande, his unique approach uses the actual place. Corpus collected branches from the river bank, charring them until they became sticks of charcoal. "Charcoal is one of the oldest materials," he commented. "30,000 years ago, charcoal was being used to create images, and here I am 30,000 years later, still using this material, creating from the human core – who I am." His drawings are finished when he drenches them with water also collected from the Rio. The completed drawings are literally hydrogen, oxygen, and carbon – the same elements that comprise 90% of the human body. "This completes the elemental basis of man, water giving life to the inanimate," continued Corpus. "The process seemed to me ritualistic, spiritual, as if the drawings are being baptized. If the composition of this saturated mass is strikingly similar to my person at a molecular level, perhaps this drawing is within my same sphere from the perspective of the universe." At that point he has manifested a heritage of the Rio Grande, and It's a personal journey for the artist as well. "Using materials from the river helps me define who I am," he concluded.

See more at www.luiscorpus.com

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