



Protests-Black Bird by Deborah Roberts

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: *Intersections of Perception and Self: A Study in Images*
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>

Self as Subject

Women's History Month opened at the South Texas College Library Galleries with a special two-woman show. The exhibit, *Intersections of Perception and Self: A Study in Images*, features the work of Deborah Roberts and Coco Rico. Focused on *Self*, these two artists are sweepingly different in their approaches to what constitutes self. Rico's works are displayed on the first floor gallery area, while Roberts' works command the upstairs gallery.

How do we grow into our self? How is it formed? Both artists give us something to think about regarding that development. Rico's self-development and identity was formed through a close relationship with her family who had moved from Mexico into California in the 1970s. Subsequently, close relationships with those around her continued to form who she is. By contrast, Roberts' early concept of self was hijacked by the fashion magazines and European Renaissance artists who dictated a narrow image of feminine beauty of which she was not a part. As a woman of color, she has formed a concept of self and identity by challenging existing social norms.

Rico's small intimate prints are imbued with a feminine delicacy. But as their small scale lures us closer, we are denied total access of information. The title of each piece is hurriedly written beneath each image, but there are no title cards to inform us of the medium or technique. The works are gentle and speak of Rico's interrelationship with the natural world; the faces of her self-portraits are replaced with leafy plants and

images of tropical birds. "Objects in my work signify a person, place, a time, or a situation that I personally have gone through," she explained. "I have hidden in my prints stories deeply personal to me that shaped me into the person I am today." Some of her prints have stories written into the imagery in very small unreadable text that at first appears to be a ragged thread, suggesting a protective reluctance on the part of the artist to completely share herself.

Roberts communicates a sense of otherness and is not so inwardly contained. Reconciling her racial reality with the stereotypical ideals that have been unfavorable to women of color, Roberts has used her art to challenge this narrow notion and make room for women who are not included in those icons of ideal beauty. Her work exists in layers and double meanings, sometimes not readily clear to everyone. She experiments with media and familiar characteristics such as nappy hair, big red lips, and large hoop earrings as visual celebrations. Some mixed media images are deconstructed and layered as if to demonstrate the complexity of the path to discovering and acknowledging self. The collage, "There's No Sweeter Innocence," combines an African-American face over a child's blue crayon drawing. Closer inspection shows an imagined blond bouffant hairstyle.

Roberts' works are confrontational. Their content reaches out and grabs you. Rico's works are coy; they quietly invite you over for a pleasant visit.

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