



Catholic Secrets

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: *Duality*: an art show by Manuel "Raid" Zamudio
Where: Beyond Arts Gallery, 114 North A Street, Harlingen
When: Through August 20th. Hours are Tues-Fri: 11am-7pm,
Sat: 10am -5pm
Contact: (956) 230-2859

An Unflinching Vision

McAllen artist, Manuel Zamudio, has created an extraordinary collection of paintings and drawings that unflinchingly capture our current world duality. His paintings speak of art now - contemporary spray paint on panel, hang opposite his beautifully imagined pen and ink drawings. Dualities exist not only in the artist's choice of art forms and their scale, but also in the content inherent within each form. The boldly colored paintings embrace enlightenment, although it is occurring from a place of ignorance (a netherland informed by pop culture), while the delicate achromatic ink drawings openly speak of our dystopia and combine pop culture references with traditional subjects. Spoiler alert: Visitors should not expect political correctness here.

Zamudio's small drawings support big ideas. Although the paintings serve as this exhibit's main focus, the drawings are remarkable. Pop imagery is combined with realism, and stirred with esoteric symbolism, cultural commentary, and personal philosophy. His "Catholic Secrets" depicts a dystopian image of a church on the brink of self-destruction. The Gothic-styled church grows from an anthropomorphic bloated tick; one of its arms holds the book that could save it, but its gaze happily focuses on the hand with the flaming torch that could destroy it. The drawing, "You Wore Out Your Welcome," features the Hamsa symbol cautiously peering over its small, lone, fortress. Surrounded by a denuded forest, this ancient sign of protection reminded me of the assault on our ecosystem by industrial forces.

Primarily a muralist, Zamudio's five main paintings are all titled, "33" with the addition of a series number, and are images pulled from his wall murals. "I take the centerpiece of what would be a mural, then I scale it down so it could be shown inside a gallery," he

explained about his process. "The number 33 is very important for different people, different cultures, and different times." It is connected to the promises of God, it is one of the Karmic numbers, and it is the last and most important of the esoteric Master Numbers. In the "33" paintings, large netherfaces are experiencing the moment of their enlightenment from a higher plane. "I always wanted my paintings to have an aspect of spiritual growth, spiritual enlightenment, a feeling of finding yourself, or an AHA moment," commented Zamudio. Or a moment when you transcend your thinking." And while "33 pt four" is still experiencing blocked vision, "33 pt one" is in the throes of enlightened joy. Small, but energized red eyes emerge from dark soulless sockets; the face-image itself exceeding its own confinement.

As Michael Bise recently stated in *Glasstire*, "We seem to see darkness and light in equal measure. A large part of the artist's job description is to envision utopias and dystopias, to speculate on the fate of humankind. The strength of art lies in the fact that it's speculative. To be boring is the greatest artistic sin." Zamudio is doing just that with *Duality*.

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