



*Aéreo-Aerial*

## SURFACE TREATMENT

What: *Mauricio Sáenz: Of Islands and Unicorns*  
Where: International Museum of Art & Science, 1900 Bicentennial  
When: Through April 17. Hours: Tues&Wed, 9am-3pm; Thurs, 9am-8pm, Fri, 9am-5pm; Sat 10am-5pm; Sun, 1-5pm  
Contact: 956-682-0123 or [www.imasonline.org](http://www.imasonline.org). General admission is charged. Admission is \$1.00 from 4-8pm every Thursday.

## **Isolation**

Matamoros artist, Mauricio Sáenz, takes us into a faux-utopian world and leaves us there to figure it all out. He addresses isolation in this show at IMAS, which consists of mixed-media sculpture and a video installation. *Mauricio Sáenz: Of Islands and Unicorns* presents isolated circumstances that represent limitations to perceiving reality.

Problems and misunderstandings in the world at large, even certain mindsets within the Rio Grande Valley, reflect ideas that we believe without having the actual knowledge. We hear often from those who have never been here that the Valley is a war zone. Some of us believe that the entirety of Mexico is a lawless territory - entered at one's risk. Ideas are powerful; they form who we are.

Sáenz is concerned about how isolation, self-imposed or geographic, keeps us from knowledge outside of our own viewpoints. We may imagine what's going on, or what some place is like, but not really know. The title of the show is based on the novel, "Rayela," by Julio Cortázar, who believed that love and happiness are fleeting and unreal like the air of a unicorn or island, an endless fall into immobility. "Based on those ideas we have on isolated places, there could be stereotypes created," Saenz explained, "and the stereotypes could become myths. So I'm using the theme of the unicorn." The unicorn symbolizes an imagined, but false, reality.

This works in this show define isolation and sometimes the resulting affect it has. "Hurricane," a brilliant installation, demonstrates the shifting shape of an island. The

same island-shaped cutout, existing identically in a series of cardboard plaques, is projected onto a targeted wall, but a wind constantly shifting the cardboards guarantees that the projected shape is never the actual one. In “Drift” the perceived utopia envisioned by refugees’ encounters harsh reality. “Aerial” is a house on stilts – far from the reality on the ground; a ghostly image of a unicorn hangs nearby signifying the isolated vision of its inhabitant.

Much of the imagery in this show was inspired by the artist’s trips to Havana where he observed the sophistication of the Biennial, and then, only two hours away, the ongoing ancient life of the farmer with his hand-plow. The video, “De isles y unicornios,” emphasizes isolation and confinement, with experiences occurring in repetitive circular patterns. “Conceptual art has been around since the 1920s,” stated Sáenz, “and in some places, we’re still isolated. That’s part of the show.”

The concept of isolation from new ideas is relevant to all of us in some way or another. This show makes you work for it, so when you visit *Of Islands and Unicorns*, read the wall information located at the rear of the gallery. Bring your own experiences and interpretations into it, and for maximum appreciation, bring a friend.

*Nancy Moyer, Professor Emerita of Art, UTRGV, is an art critic for The Monitor. She may be reached at [nmoyer@rgv.rr.com](mailto:nmoyer@rgv.rr.com)*