



#4 Red

SURFACE TREATMENT

Motions of Emotions: Paintings by Pablo Peña

Where: The Weslaco Museum of Local History and Cultural Art,
500 S. Texas Boulevard, Weslaco

When: Through April

Hours: 10am-4pm Tues-Sat

Contact: (956) 968-9142

Regular admission applies.

A First Series

This painter offers two distinct styles for viewing experiences

In Pablo Peña's two-part exhibit of acrylic paintings, *Motions of Emotions*, this Weslaco painter takes us from his exuberant painterly expressions of wondrous skies and projections of outer space into his inner world of tightly controlled twists and turns. Now on display at The Weslaco Museum of Local History and Cultural Art, the exhibit is divided into two sections; the first part features the artists recent series of abstract swirling shapes, while further back in the gallery, earlier paintings depict surrealist imagery, other worldly skies, and painterly explorations.

The main focus of *Motions of Emotions* is his series of swirling shapes. "Being self-taught, I try to learn as many different techniques and styles as I can," explained Peña about his overall variety of subject and technique. "This is the first time I've said, ok, it's a series. I just let myself go with my colors - starting off with my primaries, doing my

monochromatics, and just trying to learn and do that series, while at the same time maintain my other pieces that I'm always working on. I really don't want to get locked into one style." Those other works demonstrate his mastery of capturing the elation of pure color, and it's easy to see his shift to addressing colors individually. However, the paintings in that other group are uneven and suffer from noticeable learning curves. A more successful one, "Dust in the Wind," does succeed in taking the viewer to an exhilarating visual experience. The paintings in the series depart from the rich brushstrokes of Peña's other works; instead they are sensual abstractions based on a linear organization that twists, turns, and frequently convolutes in upon itself. As is often the case with abstract works, subjective meanings are irresistible. In "#4 RED", layers of red shapes, sharply defined with white and black, bring to mind the design of ribbon candies, but suddenly their edges become tubular illusions that refuse to accept the ribbon-format. Peña is intellectually concerned with color, but how he uses it speaks of anxiety and inner turmoil. "#1" begins with a ribbon pattern whose very being is compressed within the four sides of the canvas. "#2 Blue" becomes menacing with darker shadows and increased diagonals. By the time we get to "#8 Red, Blue, Purple", a space filled with aggression and conflict erupts as red and blue fight it out for visual and spatial dominance; purple is already subdued. "I want the painting to absorb the viewer as much as possible," the artist confessed. "Just suck them into the piece."

Peña says that this series has allowed him to open up more while he paints, and to concentrate on the whole canvas rather than working in sections. "It's a little more flowing," he said about his artistic approach to this series. "My energy - I feel it a little bit more. There's a strong control compared to the other ones where I work in zones and sections. With these, I address the whole painting, which is nice. I feel freer. I can keep painting, constantly carving with light and shadows." For the foreseeable future, Peña plans to develop this abstract series. "Those are fun paintings," he concluded. "But they're all fun. I wouldn't paint them if they weren't."

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