

Local, International Artists Explore a 'Flatland' at the Guadalupe - The Rivard Report

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MELANIE ROBINSON on 12 July, 2014 at 02:27



Jason Villegas' "Black Boars Head" at the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center's exhibit, "Flatland." July 11, 2014. Photo by Melanie Robinson.

Historically, the sharing of processes and styles has been inherent to the evolution of art. The fluidity and inevitability of influence thus creates a context in which creation is more accurately described as collaboration and less as appropriation.

“We are always being effected by what is around us,” explains Patty Ortiz, executive director and curator of Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center. “The viewer observes, processes and reacts. It isn’t necessarily good or bad, it just is.”

“Flatland,” an exhibition presented by the [Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center](#), focuses on artist reactions to a world with increased ease of migration through technology. The gallery opened Friday night at the center’s Museo Guadalupe and will be on display until Oct. 11.

The collection of local and international artists’ work furthers the notion of “flatness” by referencing popular imagery from the artists’ own and other cultures.

The idea of influence spans all artistic genres and can be viewed in every artist’s work including Kurt Schwitters, Jackson Pollock, and Pablo Picasso, who openly used forms and markings of traditional tribal masks. Pop Art and its subsequent permutations, including music genres like hip-hop and rap, have mastered the practice of “sampling” in which a portion of a sound is taken and reused as an instrument or sound.

The exponential growth of digital communication has equated to cultures colliding at an even more rapid rate. The universal presence of the actual flat screen monitor has brought about a two-dimensional mentality. Artists are increasingly being asked to juggle their ethnicity, cultural experience and global views to create works that are multilayered and distinct. The presenting artists of “Flatland” are at the intersection of cultural form, process and meaning in this emerging, “flat” world.

Featured local artists include Mark Hogensen, Leigh Anne Lester, Rigoberto Luna, Ann-Michele Morales and Ansen Seale, Xochi Solis (Austin) and Jason Villegas (Houston).

Internationally, Carlos Aires of Spain, Francisco Merel of Panama City and Ricardo Rendón of Mexico also have works on display.

A few opening-night favorites included Cisco Merel's interactive piece titled "Self-Portrait," which uses an infrared camera and special software to record viewers as they enter his vibrant and colorful digital world. Using an animated version of his paintings as a backdrop, the images are only created with the participation of the viewer. A kind of selfie of epic proportions, the piece is reflective of how television and the digital field drive the viewer to forget one's existence in the physical world for a digital one.



Brothers manipulate their virtual portraits in Cisco Merel's interactive piece titled "Self-Portrait" at the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center's exhibit, "Flatland." July 11, 2014. Photo by Melanie Robinson.

Carlos Aires' laser-cut vinyl record silhouettes attracted large crowds as well. "Love is in the Air (Fly edition)" results in a juxtaposition of romantic album titles against dark images of pornography and tragedy to illustrate the fine balance of the human condition. **Jerry Vale's vinyl "Born Free,"** for example, is cut from a prisoner's body with his chained hands held in the air. In contrast, love song albums have cupid cut-outs. Female bodies in provocative poses illustrate more suggestive albums.

Ortiz holds each artist in high regard, but comments on her

particular admiration of Solis. “She makes me feel small. It’s similar to what oceans do. Her work is simple but incredibly powerful.”

When asked of heritage and respect, Ortiz explained the outcome of the task at hand is hybrid, not homogenous. “It is the center’s responsibility to preserve tradition but to also support the next conversation.”

A panel discussion will be held at a later date to be announced, focusing on the topic of whether or not the world is “flat.” During the discussion, a group of nationally and internationally renowned curators, collectors and museum directors consider the new, flat playing field of the art world and the globalization of culture.

On Sept. 20 from 6 p.m. to 7:20 p.m., the center will host “Around the world in 80 minutes,” a community potluck to celebrate the varied cultural tastes of San Antonio cultures. Guests are invited to bring a dish to share that has a special cultural memory or simply join to eat and hear all the stories of our community from around the world.