

Artists navigate flat earth at Museo Guadalupe

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By Elda Silva Updated 12:19 pm, Friday, July 18, 2014

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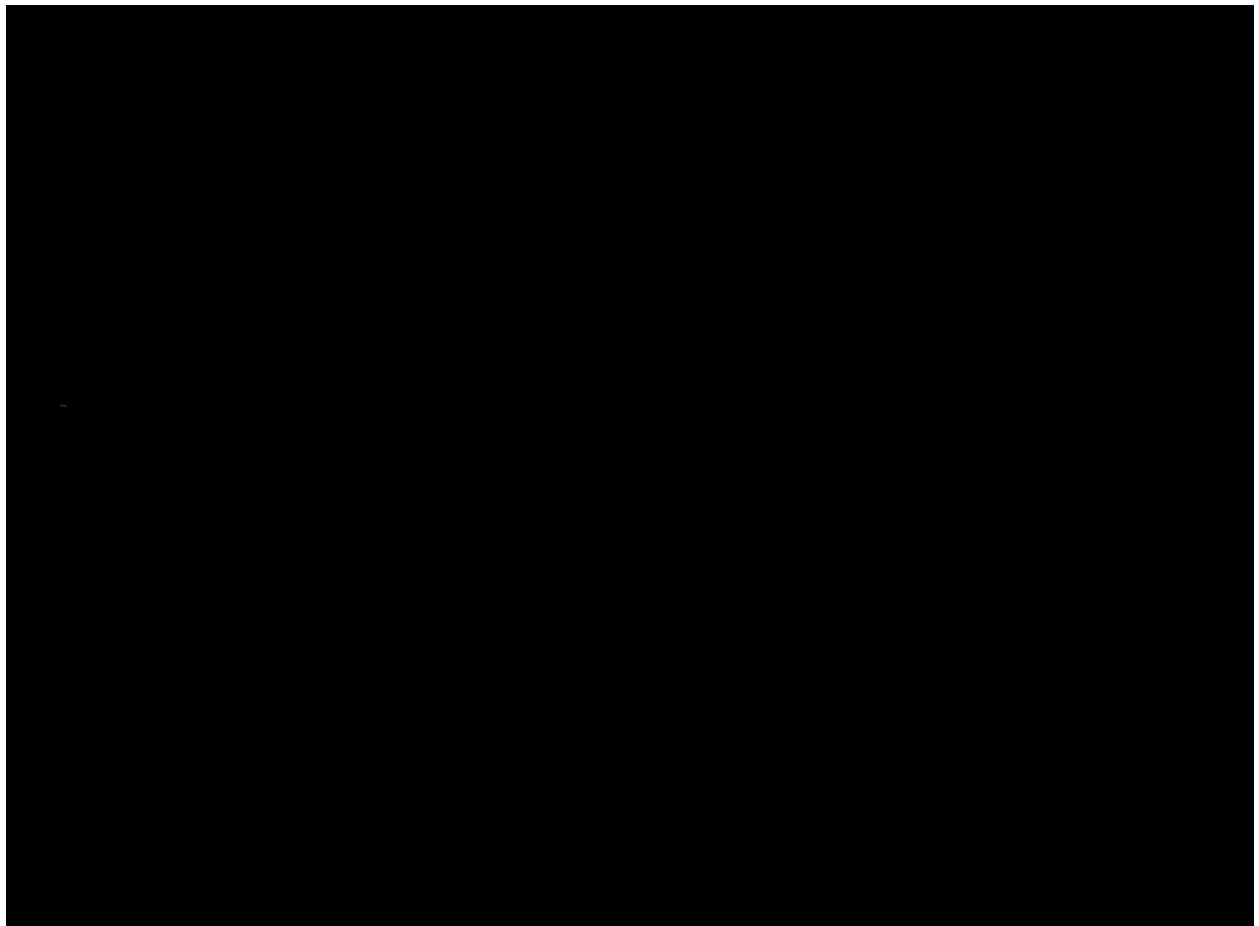


IMAGE 1 OF 12

“Material de Exhibición” by Ricardo Rendón is part of “Flatland” at Museo Guadalupe. Mark Hogensen created a smudged charcoal drawing of sailing ships directly on a museum wall for the exhibit.



ease than ever before. Many artists also have embraced the graphic, 2-D sensibility pioneered by their pop predecessors.

“Flatland,” a group exhibit at Museo Guadalupe, explores the brave new flat reality through the works of 10 artists from four countries working in a range of media and styles.

SAN ANTONIO — Never mind Columbus and the Niña, the Pinta and the Santa María.

It's a flat world to foreign affairs experts such as Thomas L. Friedman, who argue that globalization has smoothed out the peaks and valleys, creating a level playing field.

Curator Patty Ortiz sees plenty of evidence to support extending the metaphor to the art world, where technology has blurred borders, allowing artists to mix and match ideas and imagery with greater

definitely part of our graphic design as well as our aesthetics,” Ortiz said. “I started comparing it to Friedman's notion in the book he wrote a few years ago. You can compare that to the cultural world very much, so that's what I wanted to bring forward: looking at these two concepts of the formal, just visual way we're turning

“I've always been very much interested in the notion of the formal element of flatness, and I've been noticing it's been perpetuating itself into our visual vocabulary more and more. The obvious one is the flat-screen TV and the computer as a generator of imagery, and flat colors are

very flat versus the global way we're turning flat.”

It was San Antonio-based artist Mark Hogensen's smudged charcoal drawings that sparked the idea for show.

“I went to his studio actually about two years ago and saw his smudge drawings of barbecue pits and different things,” Ortiz said. “He's obviously gone on and he's doing so many other things, but I told him I wanted to go back to the smudge drawings for a second, because what for me was very integral about that was the flatness of those smudge drawings against the memory of what those objects meant.”

For the exhibition, Hogensen created a large smudged charcoal drawing of sailing ships — Hello, Columbus — directly on a gallery wall. Also by Hogensen, a trio of elegant pen-and-ink drawings of gridded planes appear to hover like minimalist magic carpets against a white background.

“They could be considered three dimensional, but again, the beauty of drawing is you do get very much the surface of the drawing, so you feel the ballpoint pen being very flat against these three-dimensional planes,” Ortiz said.

Like Hogensen, Xochi Solis, an artist who lives and works in Austin, created site-specific work for the show — two large-scale mixed-media paintings created directly on the wall.

The artist makes what she describes as “smooshed sandwiches of color and form” by layering paint in sweet pastels and other candy colors, hand-dyed paper, found images and other materials.

“My work is literally kind of these flattened layers,” said Solis, director of public programming at the Visual Arts Center at the University of Texas at Austin. “But I can relate to the curator's statement in thinking that through globalization there is a lot of flattening — quote, unquote — of information. When you're thinking about visual artists in general, our job is kind of synthesizing a lot of information into these visual works that we create. The process of artists synthesizing information that we receive in a way is its own flattening.”

One of the works by artist Ansen Seale is a visual representation of compressed information. For “Tao Code,” Seale, who lives in San Antonio, fed the 81 chapters

of the “Tao Te Ching” into a computer program that translates the information into a bar code. He then put the resulting images into a grid.

“If you had the right kind of software on your smartphone, you could walk up to it and actually read a chapter of the 'Tao Te Ching' right off the image,” Seale said.

The other works by Seale in the exhibition are an image of a mandala composed of what looks like intricately woven tree branches and “Interference Pattern,” a flat, panoramic image of the beach in Port Aransas made with a digital slit-scan camera — a camera invented by the artist that captures a vertical slit of a scene repeatedly in rapid succession. In the photograph, moving elements are clear, while stationary elements are blurred.

Rigoberto Luna also uses photographic imagery in his work. Part of an ongoing series titled “Objects of Our Affection,” his “object portraits” are composed of vinyl graphic likenesses of his subjects on glass placed over photographs of their most treasured belongings. For the exhibit, he also created a large shadowbox filled with duplicates of his mother's beloved possessions. Luna spent months combing through thrift stores and searching online for items including the Mexican cookbook she learned some of her favorite recipes from and a nativity scene figure of the infant Jesus she received as a gift from her mother.

“I know my mom really well — we're really close — but doing a project like this, I've learned so much about her,” Luna said.

Eventually, he would like to expand the project to include portraits of people he doesn't know “and go through their things and hear their stories and find out who they are through these objects,” Luna said.

As a graphic designer, the majority of work Luna does is 2-D.

“Whether it's the flat screen that I'm always working on or the prints that I'm producing or the application of graphics to glass,” he said. “I just think in general my trade and then the kind of work that I like to do is sort of flat.”

“Flatland” also includes work by Carlos Aires; Leigh Anne Lester; Cisco Merel; Ann-Michele Morales; Ricardo Rendón; and Jason Villegas.

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“Flatland” continues through October 11 at Museo Guadalupe, 723 S. Brazos St.,
210-271-3151, www.guadalupeculturalarts.org.

