

Ferrandis' collages a hybrid of forms, materials and impulses

By Steve Bennett | March 14, 2014



IMAGE 1 OF 3

"Orenda #3" is a digital print in the "Numinous" exhibit by Andrés Ferrandis at Ruiz-Healy Art.

SAN ANTONIO — In a crisp Spanish accent, Andrés Ferrandis talks animatedly about hybrids, and it is the Valencia-born artist's crossbreeding of photography and painting, handmade and digitally generated, representational and abstract images, organic and geometric shapes, that transforms his collages into a form of visual jazz.

There is music in new works such as "Transparente" and "Agua Rara," with their warm natural tones overlaid with slashing circles of bright color grommeted onto the layered surface, more muted

cutout shapes resembling jigsaw puzzle pieces underneath, along with text, mainly from newspaper clippings.

It's a relevant comparison because Ferrandis — who has the sculpted good looks of the actor Armand Assante — is also a musician, a bass player who has evolved into more of a percussionist. Music — jazz, soul, classical, film soundtracks — is always playing while he works. Recently, he picked up the didgeridoo, the Australian wind instrument that produces such otherworldly tones and timbres.

“The room gets intoxicated with the sound,” said Ferrandis.

The same could be said of “Numinous,” the artist's exhibition of collages and larger, related digital prints on view at Ruiz-Healy Art through Saturday, celebrating Contemporary Art Month.

Ferrandis also speaks a lot about awareness, and how it can “open pathways that lead to the interpretation of moments, memory and essence.”

“My intention,” he said, “is to create a language that allows me to work, not from an experience or particular subject itself, but with the emotions that those diverse subjects provoke.”

The roots of collage can be traced back to the invention of paper in China, around 200 B.C., but it was Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso who made it a legitimate art form and coined the term in the early 20th century, from the French verb *coller* — to stick, glue or paste up. What continues to make collage so irresistible to artists such as Ferrandis, who is a photographer and painter, is that it reflects the world around us in a very immediate way.

“Collage,” he said, “is a very contemporary way of expression. Collage can get you to the point where you are really constructive. It becomes not just a collage, but a composition.”

Ferrandis, a graduate of the demanding, prestigious art program of the University of Seville, begins with a black-and-white photo as the background for his collages, which are mostly square, 18 inches by 18 inches. He uses his own images — a distorted view of lights in bare tree branches — or appropriates images from a large computer archive that he maintains — a horse's head that becomes an abstraction, cascading leaves, a woman's stockinged foot, a Vespa motor scooter.

One of the larger “Ofrenda” prints —*ofrenda*, Ferrandis said, is “a mystical force present in all people that empowers them to effect change in their lives” — shows a close-up of a woman with her head thrown back, most of her face cropped out, colorful circles placed at strategic points.

“That's Natalie Portman's neck,” said Ferrandis, who has lived in Miami since 2002.

To this sturdy foundation Ferrandis adds organically formed cutouts in felt, paper, foil, Mylar, newsprint, colored paper and cardboard, sometimes hand-painted, sometime left as is. Orbiting throughout this layered space are circles, lots of circles, in vivid blues, reds, greens and yellows, along with the negative white space of circular cutouts.

There is a certain European elegance, a glossy chicness to the work in “Numinous,” and yet there is a underlying feeling of reverence — for nature, technology, art itself. The term, from the Latin word *numen* for “divine will,” can refer to being filled with a sense of the presence of holiness, but also can mean to appeal to the higher emotions or the aesthetic sense. Both impulses are present in Ferrandis' work, constituting yet another hybrid.

“Seeing the pieces in person, one is reminded of another era,” gallery owner Patricia Ruiz-Healy said via email. “Ferrandis' collages are true descendants of the pioneering works by (German artist) Kurt Schwitters a century ago. This is not just image-play within the picture plane. A tumultuous array of paper lifts above the embracing background in rich bas-relief. One is overwhelmed by the sculptural materiality of the works.”

sbennett@express-news.net



Steve Bennett

Book editor/Arts and
architecture writer | San
Antonio Express-News