



Ricky Armendariz “must see” exhibit for January

By **La Prensa** - January 13, 2018



By Dr. Ricardo Romo

ricardoromo358@gmail.com

Ricky Armendariz, art professor at UTSA and a recognized artist known for his exquisite art carving on wood in addition to woodblock prints, has been selected by the Tricentennial Art Project as the “must

see" exhibit for January 2018. To see it at the Ruiz-Healy Gallery, you must hurry as the exhibit closes Jan. 13.

The show can be subdivided in to four topics: pain and healing; historical themes; professional and inspiration; and animals and their primitive world. Typically, Armendariz adds phrase to his paintings that touch on subject matter.

For example , he includes the phrase "The way to my heart is a bumpy road." This phrase needs no explanation; some do. Most of his phrases come from songs he enjoys and others, he says are phrases he made up that should be in a song.

Armendariz acknowledges that some of the people he grew up with in EL Paso during the 1970's believed in the supernatural as well as in *curanderos*, or faith healers. Thus he includes a self-portrait of himself with a fiery cone connected to his ear.

Almendariz titled his show "Tell me where it hurts," however the pain is not necessarily the most dominant theme. There are multiple concepts and they are revealed in woodblock images carved on birch wood panels as well as in several oil canvases.

In his woodblock portrait of artist Luis Jiminez, for example, he allows images painted on Jiminez' face to tell of major episodes in his life. The bronco statue that accidentally fell and killed Jiminez appears on the left side. On his forehead, Jimenez painted an image of Talaca, a skeleton hand recognized as a Mexican-Indian image of death.

Jimenez drew or painted numerous images of death, mainly in the form of Talaca. On the bottom of Jimenez's face is the image of a raven, a pet bird he kept in his studio in Hondo, New Mexico. Armendariz, a friend oh Jimenez, visited the studio and met the raven, whom he described as 'quite mean.'

Armendariz included in the Ruiz-Healy show two of his own interpretations of Juan Pareja, the slave assistant to Diego Velasquez. The Spanish master, perhaps the most famous of the Spanish Baroque painters, gained an appointment in his mid-twenties as court painter to the Spanish Crown. As court painter, he was provided with a slave assistant of African-Moorish descent, Juan Pareja.

Velasquez taught Pareja many of his painting techniques and Pareja was also considered an excellent artist. When in Rome in 1650, he painted Pareja in preparation for a portrait of Pope Innocent X. While

famous for many paintings of the Royal Family, Velasquez' portrait of Pareja is one of the best and considered the first ever of an African-European person.

In Armendariz' woodblock portrait of Pareja, he pays tribute to Velasquez by including the lettering "Diego 1650" on his cheek. Both his oil portrait and woodblock retention, Almendariz has Pareja gazing directly at his viewer.

There is much to see and contemplate in this superb show. While some images may need further explanation, the imagery in itself is powerful and engaging. As a body of work, it shows superior craftsmanship and creativity. Seeing it is a wonderful way to start the new year, a year of greater appreciation of art.

The Ruiz-Healy Art Gallery is located at 201-A East Olmos Drive.

La Prensa

We are an independently-owned bilingual newspaper in San Antonio. La Prensa San Antonio covers local state and national news, insightful opinions, arts-entertainment-culture, religion, health, and more! We are your voice in two languages, serving the community through the written word. The oldest BILINGUAL newspaper in Texas is local and far-reaching!!!!