

RUIZ-HEALY ART

Latinx, Latin America, & Texas Contemporary Art



César A. Martínez, *Bato Con Sunglasses*, 2021, Acrylic on Muslin, 28 x 22 in, 71.1 x 55.9 cm

César A. Martínez: Mi Gente

November 4, 2021 to January 21, 2022

74 East 79th Street, 2D, New York, NY 10075

Tuesday-Friday 11 AM - 5 PM and by appointment

Ruiz-Healy Art is pleased to announce *César A. Martínez: Mi Gente* an exhibition of paintings and drawings of Martínez's iconic cast of Batos, Pachucos, and Rucas. This is the artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery. *César A. Martínez: Mi Gente* opens on Thursday, November 4th from 6 to 8 pm. Please contact the gallery at info@ruizhealyart.com or 646-833-7709 for details regarding our opening night reception.

A major figure in the Chicano Art Movement of the late 1970s and 1980s, Martínez's portraits are icons of Mexican American art history. Martínez was a teenager during the early 1960s in his hometown, Laredo, Texas where Pachucos (zoot suiters), Batos (dudes), and Rucas (girls) were part of his everyday life.

Martínez is drawn to the way in which Mexican American family photographs served as intimate, personal portraits, during a time when only white individuals or groups were being iconized in paintings. Martínez offsets his melancholic subjects against a vibrant palette of clothes in tension against abstract backgrounds. The individuals in Martínez's works are merely hybrids derived and elaborated from many different photographs found in high school yearbooks, obituaries, newspapers, and other public sources.

Martínez explains "I've never really done art that I would say is political. But I think the kind of art that becomes politicized, as in my case and in many of my contemporaries, is simply because it had a Chicano perspective or Chicano imagery. The Chicano Movement was a renaissance in thinking about us and in creating those institutions and images and writings that reflected who we are. They were non-existent at that time, we had nothing to relate to, so we had to make it up as we went along. And that was the road to a deeper understanding of who we are."

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Complementing his iconic cast of Batos, Pachucos, and Rucas paintings, *César A. Martínez: Mi Gente* also features a suite of his *Serape* paintings from 1980 and portrait drawings that have served as a source of inspiration and invention for Martínez's most recent paintings. Martínez states, "The new paintings reflect the spirit of the drawings more and more and I couldn't be happier because evolution is a good thing, and that has been happening in different ways. The characters in the Bato/Pachuco series have, over the years, acquired more and more particularity, and much more so now with the new drawings." The *Serape* paintings started, in the late 1960s, as an ode to the Color Field movement and as a reaction to contemporary art from a cultural standpoint. Martínez comments that upon seeing the work of Gene Davis he reacted: "These are like *serapes!*" The series was an epiphany of sorts though he did not realize it at the time and inspired the artist to create his own *Serape Series*.

About the Artist

César A. Martínez (b. 1944, Laredo, TX) is a contemporary artist who lives and works in San Antonio Texas. His artwork allows him to explore his multicultural identity and provide familiarity to those often not represented in the arts. Martínez's work has been included in landmark exhibits like *Hispanic Art in the United States: Thirty Contemporary Painters & Sculptors*; *La Frontera/The Border: Art About the Mexican/U.S. Border Experience*; and *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation 1965-1985*. He was honored with a solo exhibition, and accompanying book, at the McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, Texas in 2009. His work has been exhibited and is part of the permanent collection of institutions like the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC.; Brooklyn Art Museum, Brooklyn, NY; Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City; LACMA, Los Angeles, CA; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, Chicago, IL. among others.

About Ruiz-Healy Art

Established in 2006, Ruiz-Healy Art specializes in contemporary works of art with an emphasis on Latinx and Latin American artists, as well as working with prominent Texas-based artists. With galleries in San Antonio, Texas, and New York City, Ruiz-Healy Art's continuous investments in these underrepresented areas have remained a longstanding signature of the gallery program.

Please contact the gallery at info@ruizhealyart.com or 646-833-7709 for details regarding our opening night reception and COVID-19 protocols as well as to request high-resolution images and more information about the exhibition