

Glasstire

{Texas visual art}

Review: “Madre Tierra” at Ruiz Healy Art, San Antonio

by [Christopher Karr](#) | July 31, 2024



When you think of a landscape artwork, what do you see?

I picture a painting, with a large sky and small hills, like the ones that surround me in San Antonio. However, the scenes in *Madre Tierra* are no typical landscapes. Instead, the artworks invite viewers to contemplate their own rapport with nature. This group show at Ruiz-Healy Art showcases topographies by various artists whom the gallery represents and/or exhibits; [Nate Cassie](#), [Alejandro Diaz](#), [Andrés Ferrandis](#), [Consuelo Jimenez Underwood](#), [Matt Kleberg](#), [Leigh Anne Lester](#), [Constance Lowe](#), [Katie Pell](#), [Chuck Ramirez](#), [Daniel Rios Rodriguez](#), [Frank Romero](#), [Eric Santoscoy-McKillip](#), [Ethel Shipton](#), and [Einar and Jamex de la Torre](#).



Einar and Jamex de la Torre, “The Chosen Tribe – Pendejo y Cabrón,” 2010, blown glass, mixed media sculpture, 32 x 20 x 5 inches. Courtesy of Ruiz-Healy Art, San Antonio | New York City

As I walked through the exhibit, I quickly realized that these landscapes are about the self as much as they are about the environment. Einar and Jamex de

de la Torre brothers, who were born in Guadalajara, Mexico, draw inspiration from pre-Columbian cultures in their work. At the center of the two panels are Olmec colossal heads with headdresses that label the two avatars; Cabrón is on the left, while Pendejo is on the right.

Both avatars carry numerous motifs. Elements of desire and nature surround Cabrón, including models of nude women lying in erotic poses, gold chains, coconut trees, and a heart. Pendejo is also flanked by items, such as grapes, pineapples, and dice. His crown holds a token to Ganesha, an elephant-headed Hindu deity. Above and beneath Pendejo's head sit full-bodied Mesoamerican figures. The collocation of the religious figures points to a culturally syncretic composition.

After staring at these avatars for a long time, I arrive at the conclusion that they are inner landscapes; there are two brothers, and thus, two inner landscapes. My question now is, which brother is Cabrón and which is Pendejo?

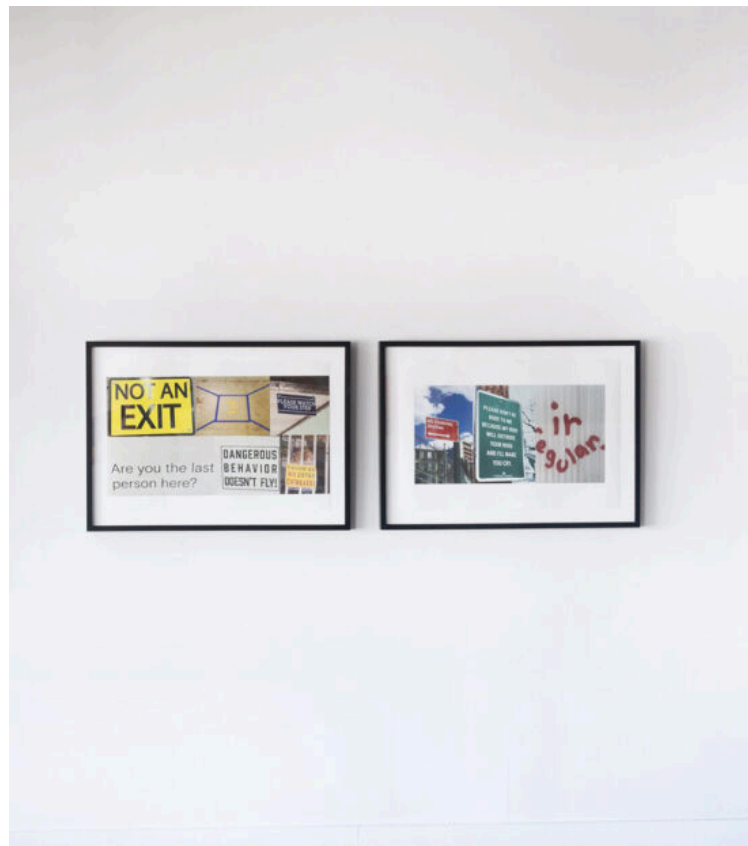
The next artwork, *Xochimilco*, also explores identity and place. *Xochimilco* is one of San Antonio-native Alejandro Diaz's object paintings. Diaz's acrylic strokes play with abstraction and reality, suggesting connections in nature through webs. He also imbues elements of the everyday through buttons that he scatters throughout the canvas.



Alejandro Diaz, "Xochimilco," 2019, acrylic, fiber paste, and various vintage clothing buttons on canvas, 28 x 22 inches. Courtesy of Ruiz-Healy Art, San Antonio | New York City

deeper connection.” I resonated with this call to action when viewing *Xochimilco*. The artwork evokes nostalgia; it takes me back to my grandmothers’ South Texas homes — inside their homes, you can find multicolored trinkets, like buttons, inside of old jewelry boxes. Both of their homes are surrounded by humid air and resilient plants that thrive in harsh Texas weather.

Ethel Shipton is originally from Laredo, Texas. Her photography garners much acclaim, and if you are a San Antonio Spurs fan, you might see her work on display at the Frost Bank Center.



Ethel Shipton, "Guidance or Warning Series 1" and "Guidance or Warning Series 2," 2024, archival print on Hahnemuhle paper, 25.25 x 35.25 inches. Courtesy of Ruiz-Healy Art, San Antonio | New York City

Shipton’s *Guidance or Warning Series 1* and *Guidance or Warning Series 2* comedically juxtapose signs that show directions to challenge our perspective of the urban landscape. Imagine walking towards a sign that says “NOT AN EXIT.” You might be slightly annoyed, yet appreciative of the notice that the path you’ve gone down does not lead to an exit. On the flip side, visualize yourself walking down a street and seeing a sign that says, “Please don’t be rude to me because my rude will outrude your rude and I’ll make you cry.” In the United States, we associate green signs with directions. The words on this green sign urge you to be kind, or face consequences! Traffic signs, like nature, don’t always adhere to human-imposed structures.

The urban landscape is ever-changing, just like an inner landscape, and the artists in Madre Tierra confront these topographies in ways that contest what we know to be true. Each artwork disputes perceptions and invites contemplation. I can promise you one thing: you have never seen landscape artworks quite like these. Connect to the places you've been by coming to Ruiz-Healy Art and experiencing these artworks for yourself.

Madre Tierra is on view at Ruiz-Healy Art in San Antonio through September 7, 2024.