



## EVERYDAY ART: THE SAN ANTONIO MUSEUM OF ART SPOTLIGHTS A REMIX OF READYMADE ART

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**F**rom intricate sculptures carved from granite to precise brushstrokes on a canvas, art takes many forms. It could be drawings, pottery, jewelry or woodworkings. It could come from the mind of one of the Old Masters or your own child. A urinal can even become art.

If that last part gives you pause, you're not alone. Back in 1917, The Society of Independent Artists in New York infamously rejected Marcel Duchamp's piece, *Fountain*. The piece, an everyday urinal, was submitted as a sculpture under the pseudonym R. Mutt.

*Fountain* would become one of Duchamp's hallmark readymades, a term he created to describe the presentation of mass-produced everyday objects as art. Since Duchamp's first readymades in the 1910s, his concept has endured within the art world. That includes the San Antonio Museum of Art's (SAMA) exhibition *Readymade Remix: New Approaches to Familiar Objects*, running through April 12, 2026, where modern artists continue to innovate and create new readymade works.

"The exhibition starts with this idea of these mass-produced, readymade objects and materials that artists are drawn to, but looking at contemporary artists who are really kind of pushing those boundaries and really expanding upon that concept that Duchamp began over 100 years ago," Lana Meador, SAMA's Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, says. She adds that artists in this exhibit are "revealing other things about readymade that maybe Duchamp was ignoring," such as the hidden labor that went into the pieces.



Chuck Ramirez, American, 1962–2010, *Gregory (Piñata Series)*, 2003, Ink jet print (aluminum backing), height: 60 in. (152.4 cm); width: 48 in. (121.9 cm); depth: 1 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (3.4 cm), San Antonio Museum of Art, gift of Michael D. Maloney with conservation assistance from Patricia Ruiz-Healy, 2010.28.14 © Estate of Chuck Ramirez

A trio of the museum's recent acquisitions, on display for the first time, embody this mindset and help serve as inspiration for the exhibition. "They're very materially rich," Meador says of the new additions. She explains that, unlike Duchamp's original readymades, many of the pieces featured in the exhibition extend beyond a traditional presentation of commercially available or found objects.

The new acquisitions include E.V. Day's piece, *Winged Victory*, from her captivating *Exploding Couture Series*. The work takes inspiration from the Greek Goddess of Victory, Nike, and features shreds of a red sequined dress suspended in the air. "It's incredibly impressive. It's a real feat of engineering," Meador says, noting it was an "all hands on deck" installation with the piece utilizing 180 eye hooks and 237 monofilament strands.

Another new addition is Jaguar Guardian by Patrick Martinez. “It appears like it’s the facade of a local storefront that’s been taken off the streets of an LA neighborhood and placed right into the gallery,” Meador says, adding that the exterior even includes neon lights. “He has painstakingly created that surface, layer upon layer of stucco...power washing it to really mimic the way that these surfaces are weathered and treated, and the histories that they have when they are in an urban landscape.”

Rounding out the trio of newly acquired works is Matthew Angelo Harrison’s Beloved Worker, an Exxon employee hard hat encapsulated in the resin form of a face mask from the Dan people of Côte d’Ivoire and Liberia. It’s thought the masks have spiritual power, tying together the protective forms of the mask and hard hat. Meador sees Beloved Worker as speaking to the labor involved in readymades as well as creating a dialogue between the digital and the analog in its creation. Additional works in the exhibition include pieces from San Antonio artists Joe Harjo and Chuck Ramirez. Harjo’s The Only Certain Way: Faith features a giant cross constructed out of memorial flag cases containing folded, mass-produced beach towels adorned with Native American designs. “It’s really impactful,” Meador says.

The museum includes the late Ramirez twice in the exhibitions serving rotating selections that will change out during its run. The first is his *Santos* series of photographs, a longtime part of the museum’s collection Meador is excited to feature.

“He’s taken these Santos figurines from a botanica, and instead of photographing them as you would to see the whole figurine, he’s turned them upside down, and he’s photographing the undersides so they become these really interesting abstractions,” Meador explains, comparing them as akin to archeological objects and describing how the artist named and ordered the photos based on the nine-part grid of *The Brady Bunch* intro. The *Santos* series will then rotate with Ramirez’s *Gregory* depicting a pummeled Hello Kitty piñata against a bare white background in the context of a glossy advertising print.

Meador sees the various unique pieces and reframings of the readymade concept in this new exhibition as an opportunity to “stop and reconsider the legacy of Duchamp and how maybe these artists are pushing that forward in a different way.” Likewise, she sees Readymade Remix as a chance for younger audiences and artistic newcomers to see the multi-layered meanings embedded within readymade works such as these.

“I hope people are inspired by the multitude of ways that different materials can be transformed, and perhaps that they can do that themselves in some way,” Meador says. She hopes it “makes them think a little bit more about the objects that they see on a daily basis” and how those materials are “important and meaningful.”

—BRETT GREGA