

Memories are Made Tangible in “Heirloom” at Ruiz-Healy Art, San Antonio

by [Christopher Karr](#) | August 2, 2025



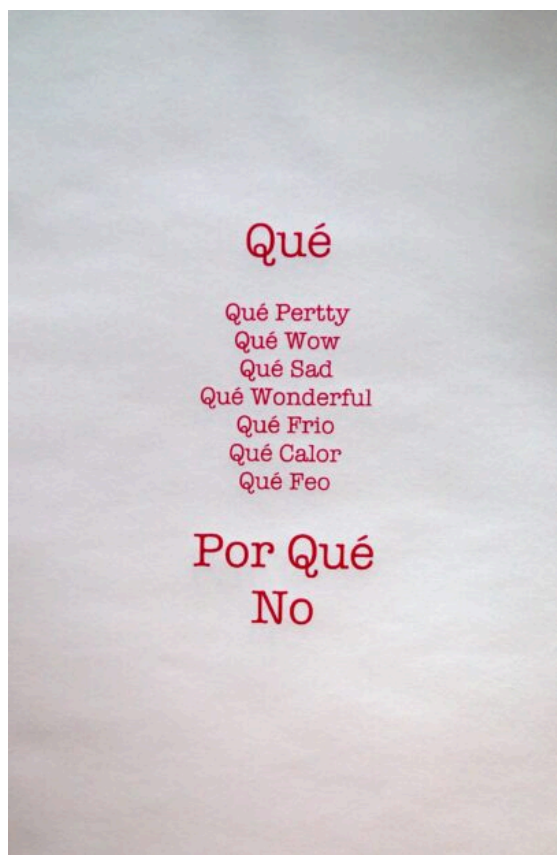
An heirloom is more than an object; it’s a story passed from one generation to the next. At Ruiz-Healy Art, the exhibition, *Heirloom*, delves into the quiet power of everyday things to carry, reconstruct, and honor memory. The featured artists draw from personal archives that often point to both intimate family histories and broader cultural environments. Curators Sarah Beauchamp and Yadira Silva selected works from the gallery’s extensive collection that explore how cultural artifacts, gestures, and moments become embedded in visual language.



Richard ‘Ricky’ Armendariz, “Your Wild Garden is Where I Choose to Live,” 2020, oil on carved birch panel, 48 x 48 inches. Courtesy of Ruiz-Healy Art, San Antonio | New York City

Richard ‘Ricky’ Armendariz references several cultures in *Your Wild Garden is Where I Choose to Live*. The artist carves a rich composition of philodendrons and lilies rising from a vase with trout handles. Reference to the **Moche** of Peru is made through the decision to incorporate animals on the vase. The quote etched into the vessel reads, “your wild garden is where i live mas y mas y mas.” Armendariz pulls this quote from his lived experience, as he was raised in a bilingual household in El Paso. The slang-like phrase, with little regard to conventional grammatical norms, references the idea of moving back and forth from English to Spanish as one speaks or thinks, which is a common occurrence in communities along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Black witch moths are native to Texas, and Armendariz scatters them throughout the artwork. Regarding the use of animals in his work, Armendariz explains that the inspiration comes from various historical European empires. **Armendariz** notes that animals have “been used in Classic, Romantic, Grecian, and Roman art.” He adds, “I’m attracted to this idea that the deities, the gods, were constantly turning themselves into animals to connect with human beings.” The juxtaposition between the moths and trout reveals how Armendariz puts his spin on Greco-Roman gods, merging those cultural ideals with animals that thrive at the borderlands. This painting pulls from multiple cultures, including Armendariz’s cultural heritage.



Ethel Shipton, “Qué,” 2014, edition 5 / 10, screenprint on Canson Classic Cream 90lb paper, 18 x 12 inches. Courtesy of Ruiz-Healy Art, San Antonio | New York City

Like Armendariz, Ethel Shipton also merges English and Spanish phrases to the region, and could resonate more broadly to bilingual individuals of any culture.

Originally from Laredo, Shipton's American and border identities deeply impact her work. She **proclaims that** "being in that in-between space allows you to move with some fluidity between two cultures, two languages, [and] two worlds." *Qué* conveys common vernacular expressions, such as "Qué Wow" and "Qué Wonderful," that are humorous in nature. This is the type of vocabulary that comes about among conversations with family and friends.



Jennifer Ling Datchuk, "LUCKY," 2021, porcelain and gilded silver on wooden table with mirrored plexiglass, 1.5 x 22 x 4 inches (sculpture), 24 x 50.5 x 13.5 inches (table). Courtesy of Ruiz-Healy Art, San Antonio | New York City

Jennifer Ling Datchuk's *LUCKY* sculpture also references aspects of her upbringing. Datchuk magnifies the size of a bold, gilded silver bracelet with hearts on each side of the word "LUCKY." The bracelet sits stretched out on a table that is also gilded silver. In Chinese culture, it is custom for elders to give gold jewelry to women, especially on monumental days, such as the Lunar New Year or weddings. When Datchuk was a teenager, her grandmother gifted her a LUCKY bracelet. This sculpture not only centers that moment of giving, but also memorializes Datchuk's grandmother.

In a one-on-one discussion with the artist, she explained that "adornment is a choice and can empower and comfort a wearer... By rendering this bracelet on a larger scale, I convey the weight of traditional cultural symbols and how it can provide hope during uncertain times." Bracelets tend to be small, but an heirloom like this, especially when given by a loved one, has a meaning that transcends its size.



Chuck Ramirez, "Abuela's Kitchen," 1996, digital prints, edition of 6 plus 2 artist's proofs (#2/6), 8 x 10 inches (each print) . Courtesy of Ruiz-Healy Art, San Antonio | New York City

Chuck Ramirez also reminds viewers of the power of a caring grandmother through *Abuela's Kitchen*. On the opening night of the exhibition, gallery director Patricia Ruiz-Healy shared with me that this artwork has sat in the gallery's archive for numerous years. She credited the curators for taking the time to revisit works in storage, carefully considering how each one might resonate within the larger narrative of the show. In this case, displaying *Abuela's Kitchen* not only aligned with the exhibition's theme, but also honored Ramirez himself, who **died** in 2010.

Ramirez captured these photographs from the center of his grandmother's kitchen. He framed and displayed the series in sequential order on painted shelves. The candid images showcase everyday scenes in Ramirez's grandmother's home, which may be familiar to other Mexican American families. A representation of Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* hangs on the kitchen wall, as if to protect the family while they eat. Pans rest on the oven, while Ramirez's grandmother stars in several of the photos, tending to other facets of the kitchen.

The stories experienced and represented by the artists are simultaneously local and international. The works on view make one consider heirlooms in their own lives, whether they are inherited by family, or moments from youth that stay in our hearts to remember the people that we love the most.

Heirloom is on view at Ruiz-Healy Art in San Antonio through August 9, 2025.
