

Latina Artist Eva Marengo Sanchez's Solo Exhibit Highlights Family Traditions and Cultural Memories



RICARDO ROMO, PH.D

JUN 02, 2026

Eva Marengo Sanchez's solo show, *Any Given Monday*, at the Ruiz Healy Art Gallery San Antonio, features the San Antonio-based artist's new paintings. Her recent artwork combines natural floral beauty with the daily activities of food preparation presented in both purposeful and playful ways. In these creations, Marengo Sanchez combines traditional oil painting techniques with themes of familiarity and heritage embedded in daily life.



Eva Marengo Sanchez, "Mom and Dad's House." Courtesy of Ruiz-Healy Art Gallery. Photo by Ricardo Romo.

Marengo Sanchez was part of a Borderland show that Harriett and I saw last year at the Ruiz-Healy Art Gallery in New York City. In her new solo show, Marengo

Sanchez's art focuses on South Texas flora as well as Mexican American culture and family activities. In her painting "Mom and Dad's House," the familial is revealed in a table prepared for a quiet, intimate morning gathering in her family home. Although no people are present, the table arrangement implies a multigenerational family coming together. Colorful Mexican plates are adorned with a variety of traditional Mexican breakfast staples, including *pan dulce*, freshly cut fruit, and toast, and are accompanied by mugs that reveal the definitive character traits of someone who prefers coffee with cream. These depictions are both observations and romantic interpretations of contemporary South Texas society. By combining various shades of coffee with these morning delicacies, Sanchez creates an evocative image of a family's early-morning rituals.

The painting titled "Mom's Beans" resonated with me and proved Marengo Sanchez's concept that "food holds the power to reconnect us with our memories and shift our emotions in the present." My mother, Alicia Saenz Romo, cooked great pinto beans for both her family and her customers in her South San Antonio restaurant. We were lucky because she opened her Mexican restaurant only on the weekends, and on those days, we always had her delicious, freshly cooked *frijoles*.



Eva Marengo Sanchez, “Mom’s Beans.” Courtesy of Ruiz-Healy Art Gallery. Photo by Ricard Romo.

Marengo Sanchez recalled that “a bowl of my mom’s soupy pinto beans, cooked slow and served in a white bowl with cilantro, onion, *jalapeño*, and *cotija* cheese (which may be from La Michoacana), is sort of a symbol for one of the reasons that our house has that magic.” She explained: “Each of my paintings represents moments and recurring themes in my life that tell a larger story about geography and culture.”

Reflecting on the profound bond between sustenance and identity, Eva Marengo Sanchez remarked in a *Texas Standard* interview, “I think there’s just this incredibly close connection between what we eat and who we are.” Her new painting, “Best Case Scenario,” brings this philosophy to life by capturing a quintessential San Antonio morning—the quiet, communal ritual of coffee and breakfast tacos shared among family members. “Best Case Scenario” depicts tacos wrapped in aluminum foil across a vibrant *mantel* (oilcloth tablecloth), “an ubiquitous emblem of Mexican American households, serving both utilitarian and aesthetic purposes,” noted Marengo Sanchez.



Eva Marengo Sanchez, “Best Case Scenario.” Courtesy of Ruiz-Healy Art Gallery. Photo by Ricardo Romo.

Corn tortillas have been a staple of Mexican and Borderland food for thousands of years. All agree that corn tortillas are also a major staple of Mexican American families. Marengo Sanchez offers a glimpse in her painting into the process of making your own tortillas, with a bag of *Maseca* (corn flour) standing by. Making your own tortillas takes time and patience, and most South Texas residents buy them already made. The HEB store that I frequent in San Antonio makes its own tortillas and is often sold out, especially over the weekends. In Marengo Sanchez's painting, "Gluten free is healthier, right?" the tortilla roller is set aside, and a tortilla, lying on the floor tablecloth, is rolled out but its edges are not perfectly round.



Eva Marengo Sanchez, "Gluten Free is Healthier, Right? ." Courtesy of Ruiz-Healy Art Gallery Photo by Ricardo Romo.

Marengo Sanchez's narrative scenes emphasize how friends and family groups gather around food, how identities are formed, and how the objects we collect help us understand ourselves. She commented that by elevating these everyday scenes, she "find beauty in the ordinary, serving as a poignant reminder that the mundane moments of our lives are truly worthy of celebration."

In food preparation, Marengo Sanchez takes the task of grocery shopping to new artistic levels. The painting "Special Occasion" captures the aftermath of a grocery run, featuring bags from HEB, Central Market, and *La Michoacana* stores in San Antonio. Marengo Sanchez's work shows an intense interest in a specific type of Mexican food. She, however, adds a mystery to the shopping experience. She chose to place her shopping bags on the counter or kitchen table unopened.



Eva Marengo Sanchez, "Special Occasion." Courtesy of Ruiz-Healy Art Gallery. Photo by Ricardo Romo.

While some of the foods are partially visible, we are left wondering what else might be in the bags. We can only guess at her meat and vegetable preferences. Does she prefer chicken, fish, or pork over beef? Perhaps a plastic bag from *La Michocana*, a favorite market among Latinos, hints at a meat purchase. What are her favorite vegetables? Bell peppers, avocados, *chili serranos*, and onions are surely in the package.

Marengo Sanchez also paints beautiful South Texas flowers in plain settings. In one painting titled “Knorr,” she placed flowers in a discarded Knorr glass jar, a container representing a favorite seasoning for chicken broth used in many savory Mexican American dishes. She writes that a “salvaged tomato bouillon container is utilized as a vase for flowers typical of South Texas.”



Eva Marengo Sanchez. Querétaro, México. Photo by Ricardo Romo.

Marengo Sanchez shows exceptional skills in her paintings of flowers and the ordinary things that are a part of our daily life. In her work, she explains that she elevates the “commonplace, creating snapshots of her bicultural and Tex-Mex experience.” She noted that her purpose in painting is a simple exercise of “noticing and appreciating the simple, small, unremarkable, mundane parts of our lives, saying this is special and romantic and dramatic and beautiful.”



Eva Marengo Sanchez, “Knorr.” Courtesy of Ruiz-Healy Art Gallery. Photo by Ricardo

Romo

In another painting, Marengo Sanchez's beautiful floral arrangement is placed in a repurposed pickle jar. This choice, she noted, honors the resourcefulness of everyday life, "highlighting the importance of finding and romanticizing beauty in all aspect life, no matter how mundane or unassuming." This practice reflects the artist's personal commitment to sustainability, as she incorporates eco-friendly habits into her paintings by repurposing everyday objects, such as this makeshift pickle jar flow container, into functional pieces.



Eva Marengo Sanchez, "High Frequency Items." Courtesy of Ruiz-Healy Art Gallery. Photo Ricardo Romo.

Marengo Sanchez is a visual storyteller. In the “Coin Jar” painting, she focuses on a single woman’s dresser, littered with items that reflect a self-fashioned sense of self. She uses a painting of a jar filled with 100 Mexican peso banknotes, “Coin Jar,” to emphasize the passage of time through details such as old and new in a jar, a candle with ash-covered glass from reuse, and an overgrown plant gently caressing a watch at the center of the composition. Drawing on the traditions of still life painting, Marengo Sanchez explains that her new work “captures the gradual process of coming into one’s own identity, such as collecting coins or growing plants beyond one’s favorite pot.”

Disrupting traditional expectations of still life compositions, Marengo Sanchez blends technical skill with a humble sensibility. In her painting, “In Here for Two Seconds,” the artist honors the beauty of Texas native flowers, an appreciation inspired by the artist’s parents’ love of nature, at the same time recognizing their practical practice by placing the flower arrangement in a repurposed container, such as a pickle jar.



Eva Marengo Sanchez, “Here for Two Seconds.” Courtesy of Ruiz-Healy Art Gallery. Photo Ricardo Romo.

Eva Marengo elevates the commonplace, creating new iconic symbols of her bicultural and Tex-Mex experience. “Each of my paintings,” she writes, “represents snapshots into moments and recurring themes in my life that tell a larger story about geography and culture.” Her new show, “Any Given Monday,” explores the convergence of private and public through still life portraits of everyday subjects that hold strong associations in the artist’s personal narrative while also speaking to collective memories. The exhibition will be on view at our San Antonio gallery from May 20 to August 22, 2021.



Eva Marengo Sanchez, "Mom and Dad's House." Courtesy of Ruiz-Healy Art Gallery. Phot Ricardo Romo.