

# Glasstire

## The Serious Business of Being Funny in “A Post modernist Says ¿Qué?” at Centro de Artes, San Antonio

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*An installation view of “A Postmodernist Says ¿Qué?” at Centro de Artes. Image courtesy of Andrew Lopez for the City of San Antonio*

“A dummy says what?”

This is the timeless, witty joke that inspired Vikky Jones as the conceptual elements of *A Postmodernist Says ¿Qué?* came to mind. Jones, who received her MFA from the University of Texas at San Antonio in 2012, curated the exhibition on display at Centro de Artes, in San Antonio’s Historic Market Square. The show is expansive, featuring 34 artists whose works fill the walls and podiums across both floors of this massive gallery. Throughout, viewers encounter the humor of the Latino experience through a wide range of media, with photography, collage, ceramics, videos, installations, and assemblages showcasing the many ways artists employ humor.

Before diving into the artwork on view in the show, some context on Postmodernism is useful. Emerging in the mid- to late 20th century, Postmodernism challenged rigid definitions of art and encouraged artists to experiment across media, styles, and cultural references. Rosalind Krauss, Professor of Art History & Archaeology at Columbia University, writes in her essay, *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*, that Postmodernist art “provides both for an expanded but finite set of related positions for a given artist to occupy and explore, and for an organization of work that is not dictated by the conditions of a particular medium.” In other words, artists were no longer confined to traditional categories of painting, sculpture, or photography, but could freely combine materials and approaches.

Arturo Lindsay, Professor Emeritus at Spelman College, applies ideas from Krauss to Latino art in his essay, *Mestizaje and the Postmodern Latino Aesthetic*. He writes that Latino artists “blend the aesthetics of their mestizo cultures with postmodern artistic practices” to create works rich in iconography and meaning. In *A Postmodernist Says Qué?*, these ideas emerge through a variety of lived and abstract experiences acting in conversation with one another throughout the gallery. Artworks convey domestic life, a charged political climate, cuisines, a negotiation of mental health, luchador culture, historical references, nature, medicine, religion, and a strong Texan sensibility, overwhelmingly tied together by humor.



María J. Brown, “What Fruit Bowl,” 2023, oil on canvas. Image courtesy of the City of San Antonio

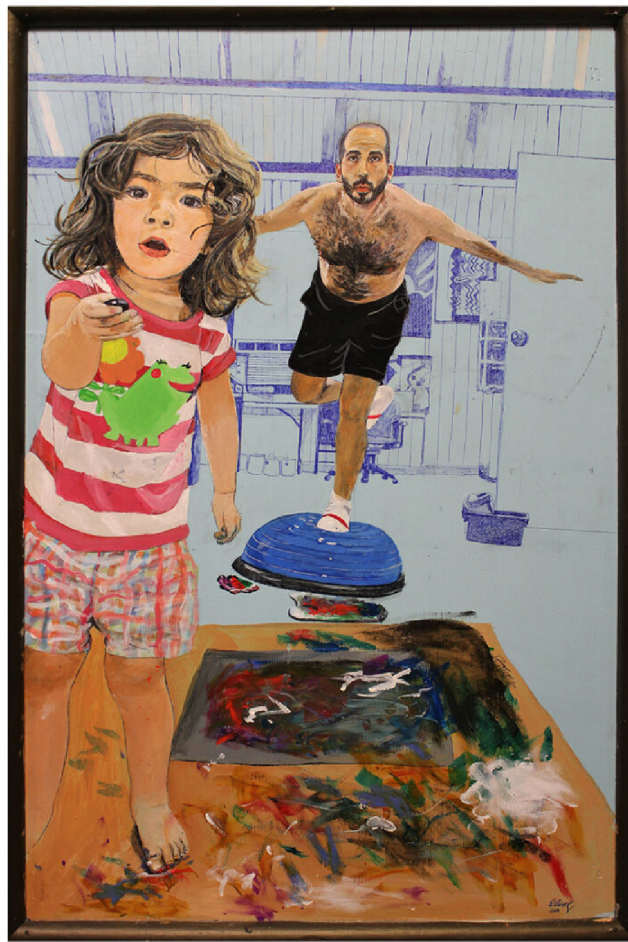
María J. Brown’s *What Fruit Bowl* showcases a standing pickle and peaches inside of a bowl. In South Texas, we know that pickles are a great snack that can be purchased at numerous venues, including snack bars at schools, movie theaters, sports games, and small markets. Dill pickles are often paired with chamoy, Tajín, Flamin’ Hot Cheetos, and/or Takis, to create a variety of savory snacks. If accompanied by a Coca-Cola, Big Red, or Gatorade, the combination produces a uniquely refreshing blend of salty, sour, spicy, and sweet flavors. Adding to the work’s humor is the pickle’s phallic

arrangement among the two peaches in the bowl. While many people think of pickles as vegetables, they originate from cucumbers, which are botanically fruits. Brown playfully exploits this ambiguity, presenting a fruit bowl that is technically accurate while celebrating a snack that many Texans know and love.



Adrian de la Cruz, "Heal All, Save All," 2026, acrylic on panel. Image courtesy of the City of San Antonio

Adrian de la Cruz highlights a prominent healing tool in *Heal All, Save All*. The artist immortalizes Vicks VapoRub ointment, painting the medication on a panel that recalls stained glass in Catholic churches. The medicine jar sits amid a verdant garden, and brilliant, warm rays of light radiate from it. Above the jar, the ointment's vapors form a metaphorical crown. Two white doves flank the crown, bridging the warm sky below them with the night sky above. The phrase "Heal All, Save All," written at the base of the jar, playfully elevates Vicks VapoRub from a household remedy to a sacred symbol. For many viewers, the work's humor stems from the familiar cultural belief that Vicks VapoRub can cure nearly every illness that comes your way.



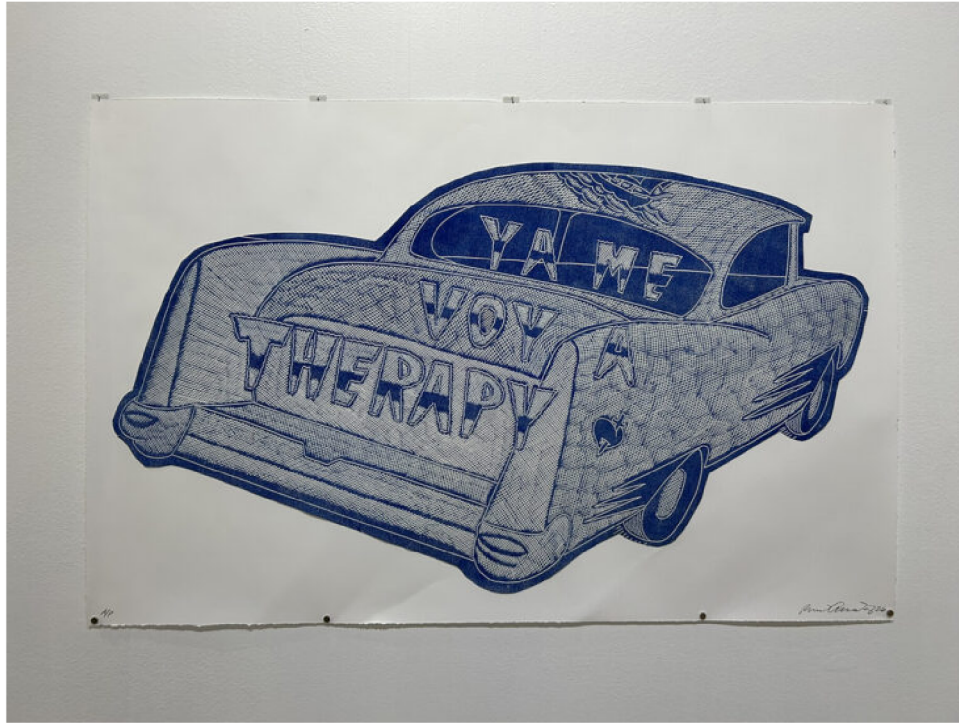
Raul Rene Gonzalez, "Photo Lessons, Balance Werk, & Feet Painting (Collab with June)," 2019, acrylic, ballpoint pen, graphite, wood panel. Image courtesy of the City of San Antonio

The exhibition's interest in lived experience extends into the realm of family through the work of Raul Rene Gonzalez. *Photo Lessons, Balance Werk, & Feet Painting (Collab with June)* stands out for its clear, unashamed representation of fatherhood. Gonzalez, a father of two daughters, Cecilia and June, shares a memory with June, who actively participates in the work through her own gestures and marks. In the composition, Gonzalez multitasks in a way that feels familiar to any parent; he balances himself on one leg on a BOSU ball behind his daughter, who toggles with a camera clicker to capture the exact photo this artwork is based on. The floor is a colorful frenzy of paint marks courtesy of June's feet painting.

The artwork's background, rendered in ballpoint pen, not only deemphasizes the background but also recalls a sense of craft that is so clearly articulated by June's floor markings. In an interview with me regarding this piece, Gonzalez states, "It's not just about capturing moments with my daughters. I got to collaborate with June at a young age and show her that she can be part of the artmaking process. I don't have to keep my artist-life and parent-life separate."

Gonzalez's work offers an image of fatherhood that lies in the routines, responsibilities, and joys of domestic life, a role more frequently associated with maternal figures in art historical and larger cultural representation. As a stay-at-home

father and an artist working through fatherhood as his subject matter, Gonzalez consolidates his multiple roles into an artwork that is relatable and exuberant.



Richard “Ricky” Armendariz, “Ya Me Voy A Therapy,” 2025, collage and woodblock print.  
Image Courtesy of the City of San Antonio

Among the artists featured in the exhibition is Richard “Ricky” Armendariz, whose work I’ve long admired for its embodiment of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands experience. *Ya Me Voy A Therapy* touches on cultural tensions surrounding masculinity in Latino communities. Broadly, lowriders are symbols of connection and cultural expression, particularly for working-class Chicanos. However, in this work, the lowrider maintains this sensibility while also acting as a visual representation of machismo. When carving the print, Armendariz made way for the phrase, *Ya Me Voy A Therapy* (Now I’m Going to Therapy), which appears on the car as if it were a custom paint job. The phrase contradicts the idea of the lowrider’s traditional macho male. It’s a humorous image that pokes at the notion that a macho man would go to therapy at all.

*A Postmodernist Says ¿Qué?* stands out from other shows is its raw capturing of Latino experiences by a variety of artists. What started off as a show about humor — meant for a single floor only — morphed into something complex, and far beyond the scope of this article alone. In an interview regarding the exhibition, curator Jones told me, “The idea of Latino humor is open. The artists have great range. I want audiences to be able to bring their range to this show. Humor allows us to get over discomfort, because we can laugh at things that we otherwise wouldn’t.”

A Postmodernist could say many things, but one thing for sure is, laughter and vulnerability are not mutually exclusive.

*A Postmodernist Says ¿Qué?* is on view through August 30, 2026, at *Centro de Artes in San Antonio*.