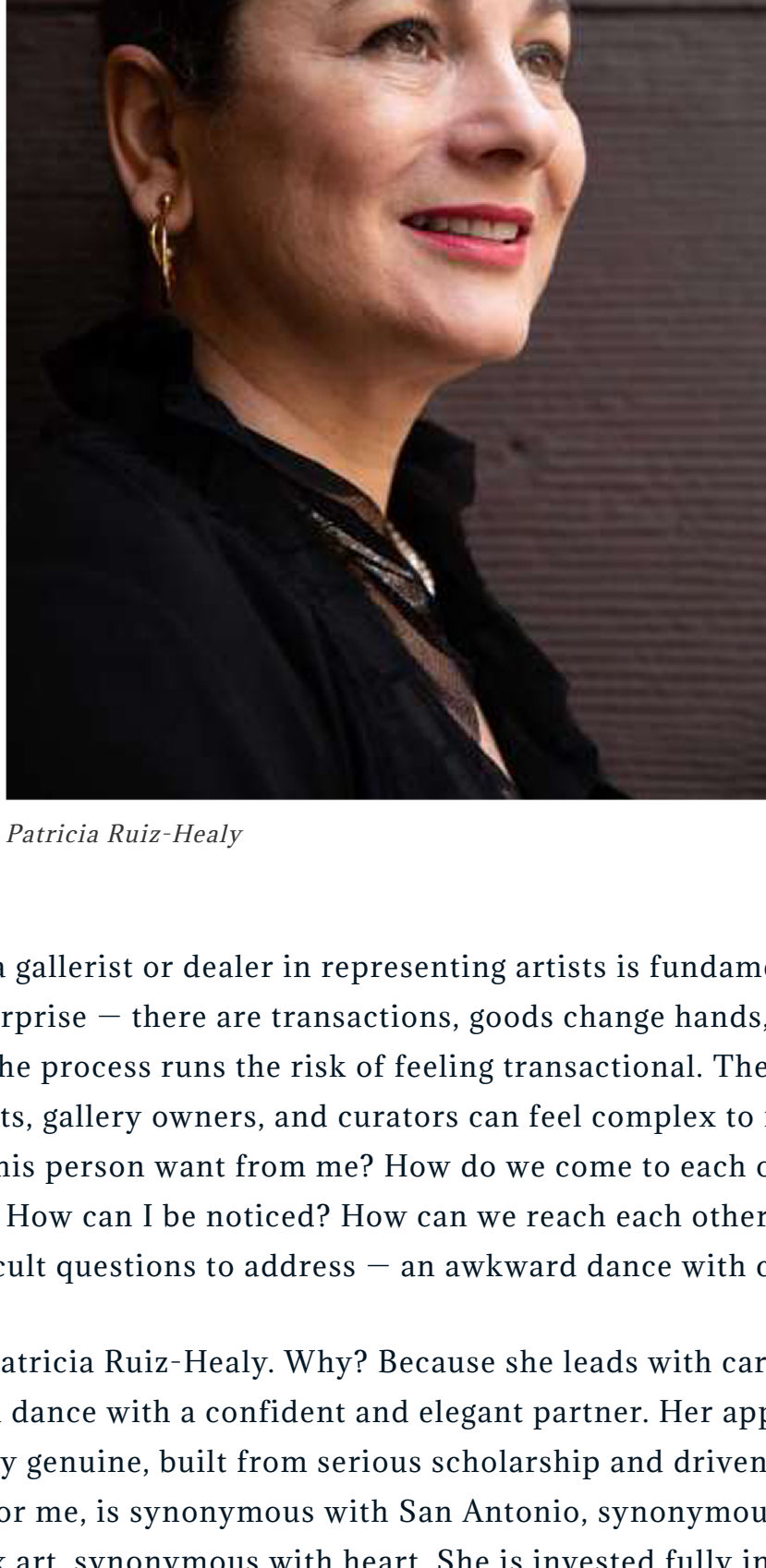


When the Business of Art Comes from the Heart: Patricia Ruiz-Healy

MAGGIE ADLER | SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

*This article is part of a series of pieces celebrating Glasstire's 25th anniversary. To see other stories from this series, go [here](#). To see pieces from the month of September, around the theme *Stewards of the Scene: Texas Galleries & Collectors*, go [here](#).*



Patricia Ruiz-Healy

The work of a gallerist or dealer in representing artists is fundamentally a business enterprise — there are transactions, goods change hands, objects are exchanged. The process runs the risk of feeling transactional. The relationship between artists, gallery owners, and curators can feel complex to negotiate. “What does this person want from me? How do we come to each other with authenticity? How can I be noticed? How can we reach each other?” These can feel like difficult questions to address — an awkward dance with clumsy steps.

Not so with Patricia Ruiz-Healy. Why? Because she leads with care. With Patricia, it’s a dance with a confident and elegant partner. Her approach is fundamentally genuine, built from serious scholarship and driven by passion. Ruiz-Healy, for me, is synonymous with San Antonio, synonymous with the best of Latinx art, synonymous with heart. She is invested fully in the people who surround her and are fortunate to learn from her.

My first trip to San Antonio was one in which I was hosting an out-of-town artist to meet everyone who was part of that scene. The artist stayed at Casa Chuck, the home of luminary photographer [Chuck Ramirez](#). As we got to know Ramirez’ story — as a prodigious talent who died too young and as a convener and instigator and inspiration to so many other artists — we heard tale of Patricia and her unflagging dedication to supporting everything needed to make his art possible. Artist after artist, venue after venue: “Oh. You need to meet Patricia. You cannot know San Antonio and art without knowing her.”

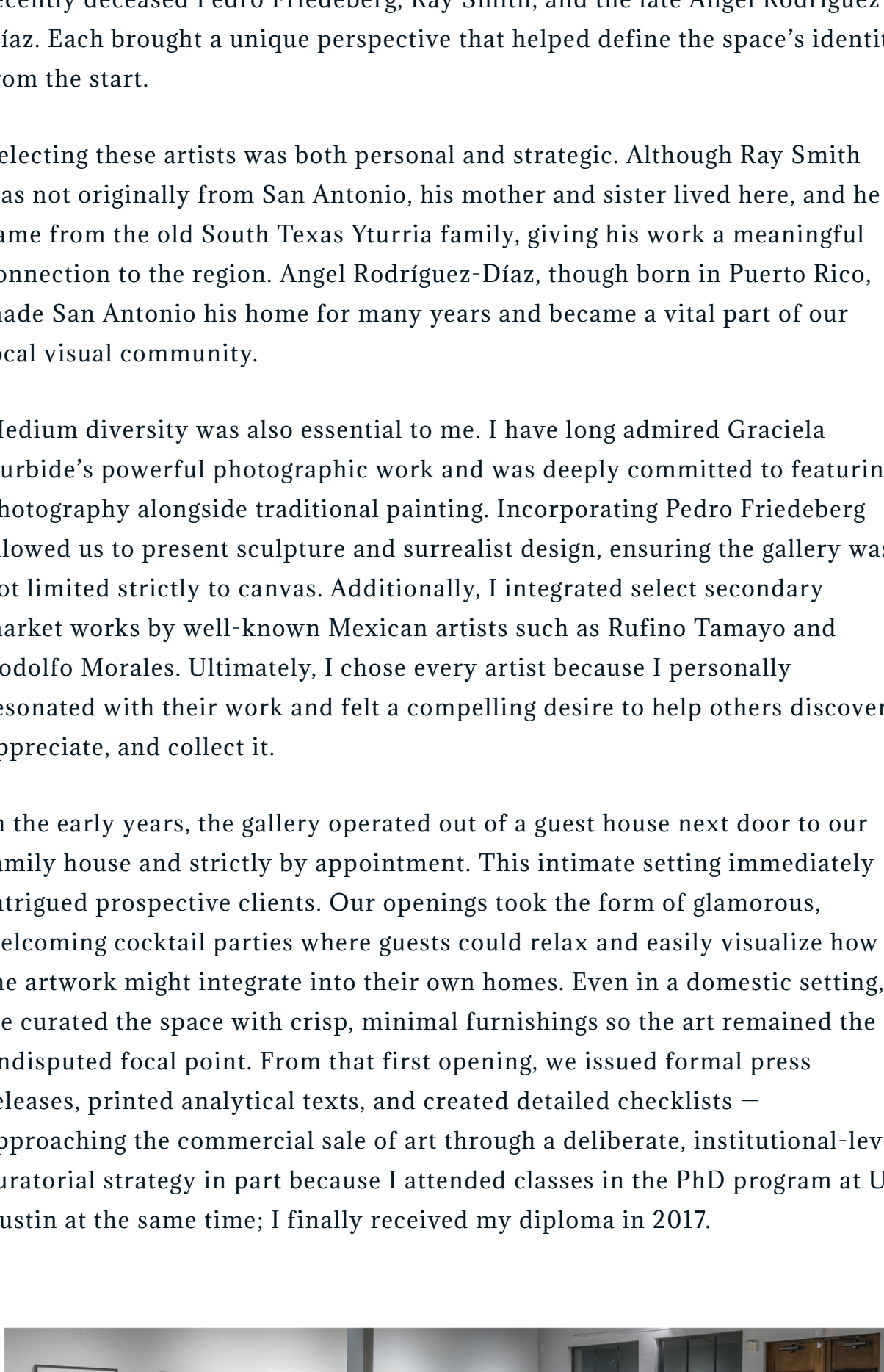
It took a while for us to connect, even though I would visit her gallery when she was not there and marvel at the introduction to works and artists new to me. Often those artists were historical Latinx legends who were overdue for more broad recognition. Just as often, Patricia would have lifted the work of some young artist trying to gain a foothold. I marveled at the variety of her eye — no two shows resembled each other — in a world in which gallery programs often feel homogenous.

What does a haunting, large-scale image of a Whataburger cup have in common with a painstakingly rendered surrealist drawing? With a discerning eye, visitors can see the throughlines. Ruiz-Healy weaves the tales to make us look again and see anew. Rather than unnerving, the variety of her choices brings delight and surprise and comprehension that a movement, a culture, a city is anything but homogenous — the multiplicity of types of work echoes the multiplicity of who we are as creative humans.

We finally solidified our friendship, after having met briefly at the San Antonio Museum of Art for the exhibition *La Malinche*. As happens with all humans, I had been having a difficult stretch of family issues, was in a terrible mood, and I was not as approachable as I would have wanted to be. Patricia was there supporting artists and institutions and admirably representing her city. That meeting, for no good reason, did not engender a relationship. I do not think Patricia knew that I had long wanted to know her and had often been admiring her work. When a museum colleague new to Texas queried me about San Antonio and who she needed to know, I did not hesitate to send her to Patricia. Apparently, Patricia was surprised. A show and acquisitions ensued from that meeting. It took an encounter in Times Square in New York City — the debut of a major commission by artist Yvette Mayorga, for whom Patricia is also a staunch advocate — to clear the air. We both realized we badly wanted to know each other, both held each other with genuine regard, and the often distanced or transactional nature of the art world made us feel challenged in that endeavor. We had a powerful visit in her gallery space in New York, which she [opened](#) in 2019.

I am so glad for Patricia’s persistence and authenticity. What has followed is deep care and respect. I know that I can turn to her for an honest opinion, reassurance, and inspiration. This is the secret to longevity and success. In this year of Glasstire’s anniversary, in which we illuminate the movers and shakers who have long shaped Texas art, Patricia Ruiz-Healy stands as an exemplar of what it means for one person to be an institution.

I asked her some questions as research for this article, not intending to publish an interview, but, true to form, Patricia’s responses were so elegant, thoughtful, and expressive of her in a way I cannot improve upon, so, with her permission, I offer them here.



Consuelo Jimenez Underwood, “One Nation Underground,” 2022, installation view. Photo: Ansen Seale

Maggie Adler (MA:) Why did you start a gallery, and how did you make it happen? When?

Patricia Ruiz-Healy (PRH): I decided to start the gallery after recognizing a distinct need for thoughtful, dedicated gallery representation within the community. The initial spark came from personal experience: guests visiting our home consistently admired and praised our collection of contemporary paintings from Oaxaca, México. Armed with a Master’s degree in Art History and an undergraduate degree in Business, I felt I had both the creative insight and the practical foundation to take the leap. Living in London on and off between 1998 and 2002 also served as an immense source of inspiration, exposing me to dynamic gallery spaces, rigorous curatorial approaches, and a thriving international art ecosystem. Ultimately, everything developed quite organically. November 2006 marked the official beginning with my first gallery opening, and today I am proud to celebrate 20 years of building connections, supporting artists, and sharing exceptional art.

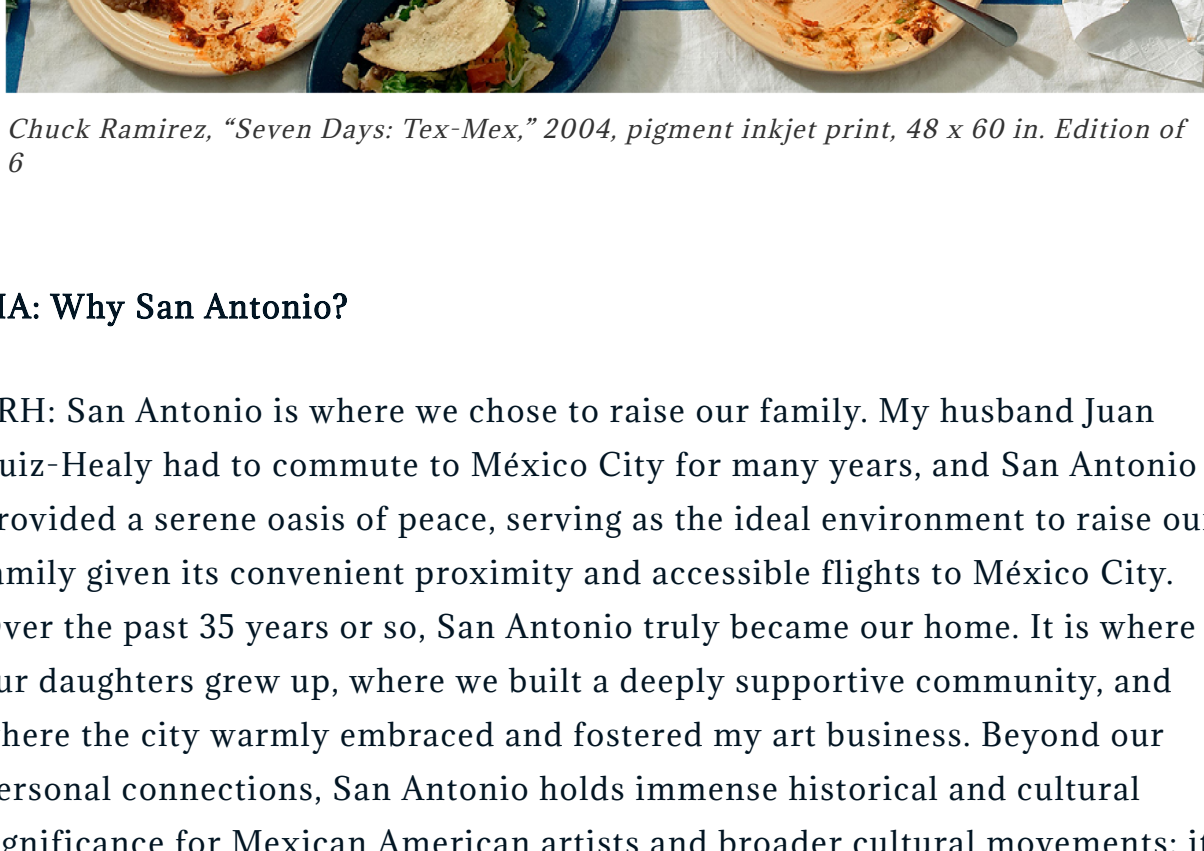
MA: Tell me a little bit about your first artists. Why did you choose them?

PRH: When I first opened the gallery, I intended to build a roster defined by artistic rigor, distinct voices, and strong regional and cultural connections. My initial group of artists included Graciela Iturbide, Pedro Diego Alvarado, the recently deceased Pedro Friedeberg, Ray Smith, and the late Angel Rodríguez-Díaz. Each brought a unique perspective that helped define the space’s identity from the start.

Selecting these artists was both personal and strategic. Although Ray Smith was not originally from San Antonio, his mother and sister lived here, and he came from the old South Texas Yturria family, giving his work a meaningful connection to the region. Angel Rodríguez-Díaz, though born in Puerto Rico, made San Antonio his home for many years and became a vital part of our local visual community.

Medium diversity was also essential to me. I have long admired Graciela Iturbide’s powerful photographic work and was deeply committed to featuring photography alongside traditional painting. Incorporating Pedro Friedeberg allowed us to present sculpture and surrealist design, ensuring the gallery was not limited strictly to canvases. Additionally, I integrated select secondary market works by well-known Mexican artists such as Rufino Tamayo and Rodolfo Morales. Ultimately, I chose every artist because I personally resonated with their work and felt a compelling desire to help others discover, appreciate, and collect it.

In the early years, the gallery operated out of a guest house next door to our family house and strictly by appointment. This intimate setting immediately intrigued prospective clients. Our openings took the form of glamorous, welcoming cocktail parties where guests could relax and easily visualize how the artwork might integrate into their own homes. Even in a domestic setting, we curated the space with crisp, minimal furnishings so the art remained the undisputed focal point. From that first opening, we issued formal press releases, printed analytical texts, and created detailed checklists — approaching the commercial sale of art through a deliberate, institutional-level curatorial strategy in part because I attended classes in the PhD program at UT Austin at the same time; I finally received my diploma in 2017.



A work by Ethel Shipton. Photo: Ansen-Sealy

MA: I’m interested in your current program that combines established legends and up-and-coming artists. Can you speak to that mixture and why it is part of your gallery’s identity?

PRH: My academic background in art history, coupled with dedicated studies in Mexican American history, illuminated a critical gap: Many vital American artists were largely overlooked by major museum collections. I noticed a distinct lack of commercial gallery representation for underrecognized figures such as [Cesar A. Martinez](#), Consuelo Jimenez Underwood, Mel Casas, and [Celia Álvarez Muñoz](#), among others. I often wondered why, after being featured in landmark historical survey exhibitions broadly categorized as “Hispanic Art” in the late 1970s, their careers did not experience a sustained domino effect of institutional backing and representation. I feel a strong calling to advocate for these historical legacy artists and actively work to right these institutional omissions, viewing this effort as my meaningful contribution to art history.

Alongside these trailblazers, our gallery champions artists of my own generation — such as Chuck Ramirez, Ethel Shipton, Alejandro Diaz, and Jesse Amado — who serve as foundational pillars of contemporary conceptual Latino art. Expanding this dialogue further, I am privileged to collaborate with a younger generation like Jennifer Ling Datchuk, whom we have represented since 2019, and more recently Eva Marengo Sanchez, both of whom represent the youngest generation of our program. Ultimately, I view the gallery’s roster as a dynamic gathering of generations, ideas, and creative practices. By bringing together diverse voices across different career stages, our program creates a rich intergenerational conversation designed to challenge, engage, and elevate the viewer’s experience.

MA: You are known for your passion for works on paper. Why the love of paper?

PRH: My deep appreciation for works on paper is rooted in my background in art history. Beyond a personal fondness for drawings, prints, and limited-edition works, I consider paper an ideal, accessible entry point for new collectors looking to build a meaningful collection. There is a fascinating paradox in paper: while it feels delicate, it is remarkably resilient. I have immense admiration for paper conservators, whose skill and dedication can restore, clean, and revitalize historic works that have suffered decades of neglect.

Furthermore, drawings offer an unparalleled sense of intimacy. Because the medium encourages immediacy and spontaneity, a work on paper brings you as close as possible to the artist’s direct hand, thought process, and unvarnished creative impulse.

Chuck Ramirez, “Seven Days: Tex-Mex,” 2004, pigment inkjet print, 48 x 60 in. Edition of 6

MA: Why San Antonio?

PRH: San Antonio is where we chose to raise our family. My husband Juan Ruiz-Healy had to commute to México City for many years, and San Antonio provided a serene oasis of peace, serving as the ideal environment to raise our family given its convenient proximity and accessible flights to México City. Over the past 35 years or so, San Antonio truly became our home. It is where our daughters grew up, where we built a deeply supportive community, and where the city warmly embraced and fostered my art business. Beyond our personal connections, San Antonio holds immense historical and cultural significance for Mexican American artists and broader cultural movements; its rich heritage and vibrant creative atmosphere make me feel profoundly fortunate to call this city my home.

MA: What do you think the Texas art scene does well, and what do we need to do better?

PRH: Texas does a lot of things well in the art world. A wealth of foundations, museums, and private and government entities support artists. The state boasts philanthropic support, vibrant residency programs, and world-class institutions that consistently champion creative voices. However, while funding for artist grants, exhibitions, and educational programming is relatively strong, a critical gap remains in direct purchasing support. It would be ideal to have more dedicated resources and public mandates specifically designed to acquire art, ensuring living artists are supported not just through opportunities to show their work, but through sustainable acquisition.

Public art policies play an essential role in building sustainable art ecosystems, yet percentage-for-art programs have largely lapsed or diminished across municipal frameworks. In San Antonio, as far as I know, only The University Health System still allocates 1% of new construction budgets to art acquisition. This single initiative has built an extraordinary collection while directly sustaining regional creators. Expanding similar 1% art allocation mandates across municipal, county, and state-funded capital improvement projects would create a transformative economic engine for artists and galleries, enrich public spaces, and permanently embed visual culture in Texas’s civic infrastructure. It’s a powerful way to build artists’ legacies and make the art market sustainable.