

# La Prensa Texas

## CARLOS ROSALES-SILVA'S ABSTRACT IMAGERY CAPTURES LATINO CULTURE

Posted by Dr. Ricardo Romo | May 12, 2022 | Arts, Culture, Photos



Carlos Rosales-Silva, a resident of New York City for the past decade, relies on memory, photographs, and historical accounts of his native West Texas community to create art that represents a visual narrative of nature, people, architecture, and objects of a dynamic American borderland region. His art is bold in its color, dynamic in abstractness, and imaginative in texture.

Rosales-Silva was born in El Paso but spent his early years living in various Texas cities. He has fond recollections of his time in El Paso where he learned welding from his grandfather and furniture making from his uncle. As a teen, Rosales-Silva also took an interest in building small things of wood and metal.

Rosales-Silva's interest in art began in a high school print-making class. His love for print-making led him to the Austin Community College [ACC] where he enrolled in numerous art and photography courses and advanced classes in design and printing. When he finished his course work at ACC in 2006, he transferred to UT Austin. Rosales-Silva's artistic breakthrough came while taking art classes at the UT Austin Fine Art Department where he learned of an internship opening at the Austin Okay Mountain Art Gallery. The gallery, an art collective, was founded by nine artists who shared studios at the East Cesar Chavez Street location. Rosales-Silva assisted the art gallery collective when they hosted artist exhibitions, musical events, readings, and video shows. He found the interaction with artists stimulating, and he credits those years as part of his personal artistic development.

Rosales-Silva's years at UT Austin were filled with creative activities as well as outside work that broadened his understanding of the art world in general. Besides his internship at the Okay Mountain Gallery, he also held student jobs at the UT Briscoe History Center and discovered the adjacent library of the Benson Latin American Collection, considered the premier Latin American Collection in the world.

Rosales-Silva's creative works, principally sculptures, came to the attention of Mexic-Arte Museum curators in Austin where he exhibited in the "Young Latino Artists 13" show in 2008. Another of his early exhibitions is listed as "No National Monument," shown in 2009 at the Mass Gallery in Austin, Texas. His sculpture for the exhibit consisted of found art. In 2010, Rosales-Silva was recognized with the Austin Visual Arts "Early Career" Award.

Rosales-Silva has lived in New York City since his graduation from UT Austin in 2011. Although New York City is one of the art capitals of the world, Rosales-Silva did not move there to pursue an art career. He actually moved to New York to join his fiancé. His first jobs in New York were unrelated to art. Initially, Rosales-Silva found work as an office assistant. He looked for work near his home and studio in Manhattan to enable him to continue his artwork. The skills he learned from his family in El Paso came in handy. He took a job with a small shop that employed him as a designer and creator of wood furniture.

New York City attracts some of the best artists in the world, and many young and emerging artists select New York City to test their abilities in the highly talented creative industry. Rosales-Silva did not put himself to that test. He chose to live in New York for family reasons and his art success was only a part of the decision. While his passion for art grew stronger, making art was limited to evenings and weekends because of his day jobs. In addition, finding long-term studio space was especially challenging for emerging artists in the city. Rosales-Silva demonstrated tenacity and determination as he was forced to relocate twelve times in his first ten years in New York City. Rosales-Silva's persistence, creativity, and determination paid off as he exhibited in two shows in Brooklyn, as well as in shows in Houston and Dallas. Following two shows in Minneapolis, he won an Artist in Residence in 2017 at Pioneer Works in Brooklyn, NY. Further artistic recognition for Rosales-Silva came in 2019 when he was selected as an International Artist in Residence at Artpace in San Antonio, Texas.

In an essay on Rosales-Silva's 'Sunland Park' solo exhibition at Ruiz-Healy Art in 2021, art critic Barbara Calderon noted that the artist "uses the nuanced subtlety of abstraction to capture a regional Latino aesthetic that lives in the colloquial adornments of homes, businesses, and local architecture across the Southwestern United States." Perhaps a powerful example of this "nuanced subtlety" that Calderon refers to is Rosales-Silva's painting "Biblioteca" [2020]. Rosales-Silva's painting was inspired by The San Antonio's Public Library designed by the famed Mexican architect, Ricardo Legorreta. The library building was controversial from the start because of its "enchilada red" color, which some Anglos viewed as too Mexican for the Alamo City. By 2019 when Rosales-Silva spent extended time in San Antonio, that controversy had been laid to rest. Unburdened by the issue of color, Rosales-Silva focused his abstract painting on the blend of ancient and modern shapes and the geometric angles of Legorreta's stunning architecture. There is prominent employment of red in the "Biblioteca" painting. In addition, the artist combines blue, pink, and dark orange in a colorful play of shapes.

Rosales-Silva told art blogger Alyssa Alexander that he works on his art daily employing a planned routine that leads him to make 10 to 15 drawings a day. He explained that some are good and some have good ideas "but it's just a really nice practice to keep me loose and generate composition and different ideas that can then expand." The abstracted nature of Rosales-Silva's art makes his work different from other borderland artists such as Gaspar Enriquez, Richard Armendariz, and Zeke Pena, also natives of El Paso.

Calderon referred to Rosales-Silva's art as "rebellious abstraction." She noted that "by rejecting the representational figure in favor of a sensuous blending of eccentric shapes, architectural textures, and dramatic color, the artist broadens a visual lexicon related to identity and pushes us to reconsider the true, obscured foundations of modern art."