



“Wicked Kingdom” at RAFFMA

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Loma Linda native David Rosales' paintings are intriguing, colorful, touched by a hint of melancholia mixed with sarcasm and a summary of his experiences as a Southern California Chicano artist.

“Wicked Kingdom: Children of Politana” is part of a greater art exhibition, “PERSPECTIVES,” on display at RAFFMA, Cal State San Bernardino’s Robert and Frances Fullerton Museum of Art. The show runs through Dec. 15. RAFFMA also will hold a lecture with art collector and former executive director of the Mexican Museum in San Francisco, William A. Moreno, on Nov. 8, from 5-6:15 p.m.

The exhibit was part of CSUSB’s observance of Hispanic Heritage Month, which the university celebrated through Oct. 15.

The “PERSPECTIVES” exhibition, curated by Eva Kirsch, features four other artists – Linda Vallejo, Luis G. Hernandez, Kathy Sosa, and Gregg Stone – each of them in a solo exhibition with its own title. RAFFMA also will host a panel discussion with Vallejo, Hernandez, Stone and Rosales on Thursday, Oct. 18 from 4-6 p.m.

“Wicked Kingdom: Children of Politana” is intimately reflective and often uses farce and absurd type of humor to convey highly charged messages. Many of the earlier paintings in the exhibition are populated by wicked characters and frequently used motifs of flying saucer sombreros, robot zombies, aliens, flying saucers and clowns, which serve as witty metaphors for common racial and cultural stereotypes, misunderstandings, confusions or misconceptions.

Rosales’ artwork also combines various art-historical influences from many cultures and times, including the history of Western art, Spanish colonial art, Aztec and Mayan art and Mexican and Chicano folk art with snapshots of events or people from the artist’s own life. “Art history is important to my artwork,” says Rosales. “I enjoy referencing techniques and poses of artists I admire in my own paintings as a way of connecting to the art’s historical past.”

His newer paintings play with strong contrasts and juxtapositions, are more serious and somber, and more melancholic and nostalgic. Rosales is preoccupied with creating works that reflect the current cultural social collisions and deterioration that take place every day in cities like San Bernardino. Twenty years ago, he painted beautiful Spanish style houses, and now the same houses, still beautiful, are scarred by time and the current socio-economic conditions.

The images of desperate, lost, and often drugged or drunken people, as well as the ghostly images of derelict and abandoned houses covered with graffiti, reflect Rosales’ current artistic mood. Affected by his feelings on the state of society and culture around him, Rosales reflects, “As I drive around San Bernardino, I see people walking the streets with a dazed look about them walking aimlessly through life passing by boarded-up foreclosed property.”

With his newer body of work, Rosales has also changed his technique, attempting to achieve a less formal look and more feeling of spontaneity. “I have even loosened up my handling of paint, reaching back to my San Francisco Art Institute days of the late 1970s and [now] use paint as my professors, who were the students of the Bay Area figurative painters of the 1950s, explained it to me,” says Rosales.



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