

Ramirez turned photos of everyday objects into art

By Elda Silva / Express-News
Published 07:01 p.m., Tuesday, September 13, 2011



"Inner Shell" by Chuck Ramirez. COURTESY BLUE STAR CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER

Comments (0) 0 tweets 0

Larger | Smaller

Printable Version tweet Share

Email This

Font

The last time Chuck Ramirez's work was installed at the Blue Star Art Center was at the artist's memorial in November.

"We had several of his pieces up and had the shrine outside and a little altar here," says executive director Bill FitzGibbons, indicating a small nook in the main gallery.

A chain-link mosaic of a multicolored heart with "Chuck" spelled out in plastic cups made by the students in the Blue Star's MOSAIC program under the guidance of artist Gary Sweeney still stands outdoors near the gallery entrance.

"At that time, we were talking about how we wanted to honor him," FitzGibbons says. "We were always going to do an exhibition. We just didn't know it was going to be this soon."

Part of Fotoseptiembre USA, Minimally Baroque is the first posthumous exhibit of Ramirez's work and his first solo exhibition in the Southtown venue. As a board member, Ramirez was ineligible to have a solo show at the Blue Star because of conflict-of-interest concerns, though he was featured in a number of group shows.

The Blue Star's Fotoseptiembre shows were already lined up when Houston-based art duo the Art Guys, who were

Just Outside Loop 410 On Bandera Road



800-299-5286

ANCIRA.COM

Most Read | Most Commented

1. Aggies Insider: SMU player's act draws praise from Aggies
2. Fatal shooting on Monday may be case of self-defense, police say
3. SEC set for 13th team in 2012-13
4. Body confirmed to be that of murderer
5. Teen takes plea for dead baby left at fire house
6. Shooting at auto repair shop kills woman
7. Apartment blaze displaces 24 residents

More Information

Also at Blue Star

The Blue Star Contemporary Art Center has a full house for Fotoseptiembre USA.

Along with Minimally Baroque, the gallery has exhibits of work by Carlos Betancourt, Rodolfo Choperena and Debra Sugerman.

The Miami-based Betancourt is the only artist to have two solo shows during Bill FitzGibbons' 8-year tenure as executive director of the Blue Star.

"This is a really new body of work he's doing now," FitzGibbons says.

Archaic Substances in the Middle Gallery includes kaleidoscopic floral images and Of Kenya and Candies, a dizzying wallpaper collage of imagery that stretches out 7 feet.

In the Project Space, Recent Work, an exhibit of abstract photographic works by Choperena, a Mexican artist who lives in

2011 Silverado 1500

0% APR FOR 60 MONTHS
+ \$1,000 bonus cash for qualified buyers

SEASON OF DOING

*Monthly payment is \$16.67 for every \$1,000 financed. Example down...

GET TO IT >

NEWS



Woman, daughter dead in morning fire

ENTERTAINMENT

San Antonio, includes Chacras, a video of what looks like subtly shifting light currents.

Sugerman's Looking Back, a continuation of her Minutia series in Gallery 4, is a close-up look at the detritus of a life that is by turns creepy, poignant and amusing.

The exhibits of work by Betancourt and Choperena continue through Nov. 6. Sugerman's exhibit runs through Sept. 30.

— *Elda Silva*

Recent Headlines

- 📌 Gary Clark Jr. basks in the 'Bright Lights'
- 📌 Jeanne Jakle: Saying goodbye to familiar faces
- 📌 The Music Beat: Rachel Laven has grown up
- 📌 Review: 'Reverb Babylon,' Terry 'Buffalo' Ware
- 📌 Which of the four remaining acts has the best chance to win America's Got Talent?

set to occupy the main gallery, decided to postpone. At the same time, Ruiz-Healy Art, which exclusively represents Ramirez's estate, was interested in exhibiting his work.

"That's how it fell in place," FitzGibbons says.

A companion exhibit featuring series not represented at the Blue Star is on display at Ruiz-Healy's Olmos Park gallery.

That Ramirez was good friends with San Antonio-based Mexican artist Rodolfo Choperena and Miami-based Puerto Rican artist Carlos Betancourt, whose work is also at the gallery for the photography festival, felt like "even more serendipity" Fitzgibbons says.

Gallerist Patricia Ruiz-Healy tapped noted Latin American art curator Victor Zamudio-Taylor to curate the show, which brings together works from some of Ramirez's best-known images, all everyday objects photographed against a stark white background in the artist's signature style.

Zamudio-Taylor, who was not available for interview, selected works from five series, including Trash Bags, Brooms, Quarantine, Santos and Coconut. Entering the gallery, the brooms are lined up against the far wall, weary sentinels with worn handles and splayed heads that testify to the labor of the unseen people that once wielded them. To the left, bunched trash bags filled with refuse squat in their frames. The black ones give off a surprisingly elegant, leathery sheen, while the more sheer bags offer a blurred view of their guts.

"One of the things that I think is a truism of San Antonio, there is a long history of artists taking junk or lowly objects and turning them into art, whether it's Henry Rayburn or Henry Stein or Chuck Ramirez - taking the ordinary and making it extraordinary," FitzGibbons says. "I mean, look at these brooms. Half of them were probably thrown away, probably found in dumpsters, and, of course, the trash bags were headed to the dumpster."

Works from Ramirez's Santos and Coconut series are installed directly across from the Trash Bags images. The former is a set of photographs of the pocked and scored geometrically shaped bottoms of saint statues used in home altars. The latter is made up of a trio of images of a coconut half - the outer shell covered in coarse brown fibers; the concave moon of white flesh inside; and the pinkish scraped-out shell. With its reference to a slur aimed at Mexican Americans - brown on the outside, white on the inside - Coconut is Ramirez's most overtly political work. The wilted floral arrangements of Quarantine round out the show.

"We do have certain limitations in terms of linear feet in here," Fitzgibbons says. "So do you take a series that you feel is particularly important like the brooms or the trash bags and make a powerful statement or do you chop it all up? ... I think when an artist is working on a series, it's important to see a number of works, not just one or two, because that artist has a message they're working through. And Chuck, when he was finished with a series, he was finished with a series.

Those who want more can find it at Ruiz-Healy Art. The companion show includes works from five other well-known series, including Candy Tray, Piñatas and Purse Portrait.

All of the series in the dual exhibits are represented in a catalog featuring essays by Zamudio-Taylor, Frances Colpitt, Franco Mondini-Ruiz, Carla Stellweg, Jennifer Davy, Ariel Evans, Sarah Fisch, Hills Snyder, Anjali Gupta and Chris Sauter.

Minimally Baroque continues through Nov. 6 at the Blue Star Contemporary Art Center, 116 Blue Star, 210-227-6960, www.bluestarart.org; and through Oct. 10 at Ruiz-Healy Art. The gallery is open by appointment only. Call 210- 804-2219 or go to www.ruizhealyart.com.

esilva@express-news.net



Gary Clark Jr. basks in the 'Bright Lights'

SPORTS



Serena tweets 'emotions' got best of her