

MONUMENTUM

Drawings + Paintings by Ramon Ramirez

My work has been centered on the built-environment, specifically that of the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area. Born and raised in Los Angeles, the urban landscape has made a tremendous impact on the development of my psyche. I paint the urban environment, not to replicate it, but to digest it and to understand the trends and social conditions that it generates.

The visual arts have allowed me to perform reconnaissance and interpret my environment. Not only do I aim to satisfy an internal need to better understand who I am, but I also hope to communicate to a larger forum my observations of the environment's effect on our aesthetic values and its constant evolution.

In analyzing our city, the realization of multiple authors has become a key ingredient of my work. No one single entity is responsible for our urban landscape. There are circumstantial forces at work that weave an unintentional aesthetic. This observation has led me to explore the use of multiple materials as a means to communicate the rich urban texture around us. In my approach, I always start with an inspired image; however, I embrace various elements, including gravity, to help manifest the image, often changing course from the initial intention. As our environment is continuously expanding and contracting, I similarly see my work in a constant state of flux, aiming to bring a visual understanding to our changing community.

– Ramon Ramirez/Artist's Statement

Artist Gallery Talk

Thursday, January 29, 2014 6:30pm

www.jaguarland.com

SUSTAIN

Drawings + Installations by Terry Arena

Based on childhood memories, my experience working in the public school system, and the media, it has become apparent that food culture is radically shifting to accommodate different lifestyle choices and health concerns. This body of work evolved from these observations and questions the complexities of contemporary food culture.

The graphite drawings consider ideas of seasonality (*The Four Seasons*), genetically modified organisms (*Process/GMO*), homemade meal preparations (*Recipes*), and most recently, the plight of the bees (*Symbiotic Crisis*). My subjects are natural or "slow" foods that I have purchased from the farmer's market, collected from friends' home gardens, or have procured from my yard.

For the *Recipe Series*, each drawing is one ingredient, or a component, of a multi-generational recipe that has been passed along to me from family and friends. I draw these objects from life with assistance from magnifiers and, with the bees, enlarged photographs. The isolated ingredients are drawn life size with intense rendering and reflect a complex web of relationships. The symbiotic bond (*Symbiosis*) between the consumed and the consumer can involve ethical questions. From where is our food derived? how it is produced? who benefits economically and otherwise? and, what will affect our environment and the health of the population over the long and short-term?

My most recent work, *Symbiotic Crisis Series*, explores the vulnerability of the honeybee and, in turn, our food sources. The growth of one-third of the crops we eat is supported by pollination from honeybees. This is to include direct consumables such as fruits, vegetables, and nuts and indirectly in the crops that are grown to facilitate the production of meat and dairy products. The role of the honeybee is so integral to crop propagation that bees are transported by trucks to farmlands in need of pollination. Though studies have been conducted to determine the cause of the vanishing of the bees, causes are not yet definitive.

Considering the ideas of our relationship with the environment and the impact bees have on our food sources, the detailed *Symbiotic Crisis* renderings are drawn on food tins and repurposed materials. The reductive, yet analytical nature of the graphite drawings is reminiscent of nature studies and botanical drawings of old masters. Though the appearance and quantity of drawings is somewhat mechanized, each one is unique and handmade from collected source materials. The elemental approach in the work reflects simpler methodologies and examines a more direct and intimate relationship with our environment.

– Terry Arena/Artist's Statement

Artist Gallery Talk

Thursday, February 5, 2014 6:30 pm

www.terryarena.me

MONUMENTUM

Drawings + Paintings by Ramon Ramirez

unofficial monuments captured through reconnaissance of the urban environment
December 14, 2014 - February 22, 2015

The title for this the largest exhibit to date of Ramon Ramirez is based on a made-up word by the artist. *Monumentum* has the gravitas of Latin echoing the importance of Roman “monuments” combined with the propelling energy of constant change denoted by “momentum”. It perfectly encapsulates the first full showing of Ramirez’s cityscapes of Los Angeles on-the-go, especially his chosen subject of East L.A. Everyday homes, shops, multi-storied offices and industrial buildings are presented as historical monuments of architectural import. Indeed with his architect’s eye, wooden telephone poles are not suppressed but stretch as stately as any palm tree. Spare, strong lines amid volumes of empty space lend vistas stature that at twilight gain magical glow. Indeed these buildings form a part of his own history, the landscape of his neighborhood and his beloved city.

Momumentum also implies the rapid movement, reaction and raw emotion behind Ramirez’s abstract work which he compares to Jazz. This exhibit is the first simultaneous display of his abstract art and realism-derived cityscapes. Music is crucial to Ramon’s art creating and he cannot paint abstracts or objective works without listening to music. Many of the artworks’ subtitles are inspired by popular lyrics and titles of songs he never wrote as a member of a high school Punk band. Ramirez’ process for abstract paintings is “improvisational” in opposition to the methodical planning invested in his cityscape designs. The crossover benefits between the styles, however have given a compelling sophistication to his abstract series.

Two seminal works stand out in the development of each style. The six paneled *After the Fire* of 2011 launched the abstract series. Arising from “a visceral place” after his son’s success over cancer, the painting encouraged him to allow emotions to drive his creativity. The drawing *Monument 1* of 2002 is likewise the oldest painting of the cityscapes series. An industrial site Ramon sees on the way to his sister’s house, it is the “father of everything” to follow. Both series share being reminiscences of visual moments viewed fleetingly while riding in a car or stopped at a light. Ramirez grew accustomed to this way of seeing when he accompanied his father, a truck driver, on summer delivery routes.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, the city has served as the artist’s muse from the onset. Ramirez received his B.A. in Architecture, M.A. in Visual Studies and M.A. in Architecture degrees from the University of California at Berkeley. With over fifteen solo exhibits, he is one of the featured artists in the book *Contemporary Chicana/Chicano Artists*. Along with numerous galleries throughout the country, such as Wallspace Gallery, Ave 50 Studio and ChimMaya in Los Angeles, institutions that have exhibited his art include: Boise State University, Fowler Museum at UCLA, Mesa Southwest Museum in Arizona, Ohio State University, Queens University at Charlotte, Snite Museum at University of Notre Dame, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Self Help Graphics & Art and Southwest Museum-Autry National Center in Los Angeles and Woodbury University in Burbank. The Bilingual Press at Arizona State University, the Business Journal of Hispanic Research, New York University Press and recently UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center have published his paintings and drawings.

SUSTAIN

Drawings + Installations by Terry Arena

December 14, 2014 - February 22, 2015

All my work is related in some way to food. For the recipe and bee colony collapse projects, I feel there is a unifying sense of loss and also wonderment. It is truly fascinating to me to consider these shifts, as in fewer home cooked meals at the table with family to individual ready-made meals on the fly. - Terry Arena

Terry Arena's quietly detail-packed drawings are exquisite for using the pathos of fallen bees and desiccated persimmons to bear witness to the environmental vulnerability of our food sources. They may be even more exquisite for contemporizing the academic drawing by marrying it to the modern use of empty space. The result is a renewed admiration for the beauty of classic drawing in the service of the critical issue of sustainability of contemporary food culture.

In 2007, Arena took a year-long sabbatical from her job as a high school art teacher to gain her Master's degree at California State University Northridge. Although a scary financial decision, it was one of the "best decisions" the artist had ever made. Her drawings began as a respite and a way to work through her struggling with a painting. Arena had switched to doing a study in graphite to gain objectivity but then made it her preferred medium realizing that the monochrome approach carried her work "to a more effective place conceptually".

Terry Arena is an artist living and working in Ventura, California. She received her B.A. in Art Education from California State University, Long Beach and her M.A. in Painting at California State University, Northridge. Among her solo exhibits are *Culinary Inheritance Revisited* at UCLA Kerckhoff Hall and *G.R.A.S (Generally Recognized as Safe)* at Moorpark and Ventura College. Her work has been included in various group exhibits at the Long Beach Museum of Art, Chinatown's Red Pipe Gallery in Los Angeles, Chain Letter at Shoshana Wayne Gallery in Santa Monica, and Orange County Center for Contemporary Art. This past summer, Arena had a solo exhibit at Sinclair College in Dayton, Ohio.

The incredible time investment Terry Arena makes to create her series by working from life with basic pencil and paper can be likened to her grandmother's soup recipe made from scratch with simple ingredients and tools. Both have turned out to be deliciously well worth the effort.