



ROBERTO JUAREZ

Born in 1952, Chicago, IL

Lives and works in New York and Canan, NY

Roberto Juarez emerged in the 1980s as a vital voice in the East Village and downtown New York art scene, working alongside Jean-Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring, and David Wojnarowicz. Born in Chicago to Puerto Rican and Mexican parents, he studied at the San Francisco Art Institute (BFA, 1977) and then UCLA's Graduate Film Program (1978-79) before moving through Paris and eventually settling in New York. His work from this era—featured on the cover of the 1987 Whitney Biennial catalog—engaged with cultural and queer identities, the anxieties of the AIDS crisis and his ongoing inspiration from pre-Columbian ceramics, textiles and folk art. Although often referenced as neo expressionist, this work was more personal and self reflective on the chaos and complexity of the time. Blending abstraction and representation, he explores themes of mythology, nature, and cultural hybridity.

Currently living between New York City—where he and a group of artists purchased a building on 8th Street near Tompkins Square Park in the late 1980s—and Canaan, NY, Juarez first gained attention with a solo show at Robert Miller Gallery in 1981. He later expanded into large-scale public murals, creating works for Grand Central Terminal in New York, Miami International Airport, the University of Michigan, among others.

Notable solo exhibitions include a two-part survey at Apalazzo Gallery, Brescia, IT and Palazzo Tiepolo, Venice, IT (2024); *Processing: Paintings & Prints 2008-2018*, Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, CO (2018); *Roberto Juarez: Mural Paintings*, Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, MA (2011); *They Entered the Road*, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO (2004); and *A Sense of Place: Roberto Juarez*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL (2003). Juarez's work is included in public collections such as the Brooklyn Museum, NY; the Denver Art Museum, CO; El Museo del Barrio, New York, NY; J. B. Speed Art Museum, Louisville, KY; Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art & Design, Kansas City, MO; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; the Saint Louis Museum of Art, St. Louis, MO, and many others. Magenta Plains' solo presentation of Juarez's work at the Independent Art Fair will mark his first in New York since 2014.

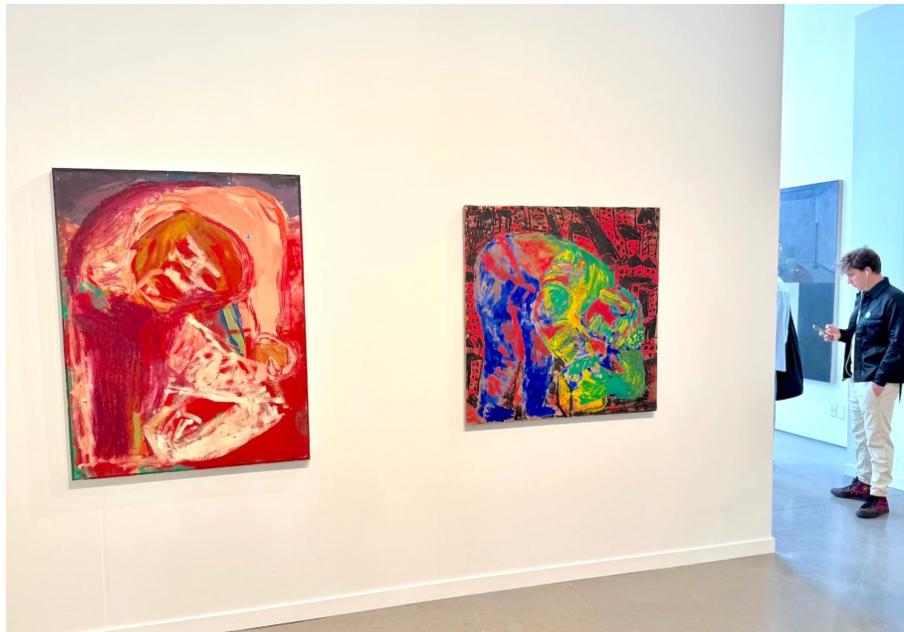
Artnet
May 9, 2025

artnet

Works to Remember From Independent's Elegant 2025 Edition

by Ben Davis • May 9, 2025 • [Share This Article](#)

Independent looks good. Good galleries, good art throughout, stuff that looks good on first glance, stuff that gets better when you dig in. The curated approach pays off—compared to many other fairs, the visual impact is like a photo where you have hit the “magic wand” button.



Two paintings by Roberto Juarez at Magenta Plains. Photo by Ben Davis.

At **Magenta Plains**, the colorful early-'80s Neo-Expressionist canvasses by **Roberto Juarez**, recently rediscovered in storage, are full of history and life. On the other end of things, generation-wise, the young painter **Suyi Xu** makes misty, mystical architectural paintings at **Europa**, which place you somewhere between pure abstract mind-palace and material world.

ArtReview
November 6 2024

ArtReview

Roberto Juarez's Family Album

Mariacarla Molè Book Reviews 06 November 2024 ArtReview

The Mexican American artist grapples with his own identity among the New York art scene of the 1980s in a book that is haunted by longing and loss



I suppose the word that comes to mind is ‘family’. As I leaf through the pages of this book, the names and voices of the American artist Roberto Juarez, his artist friends working in the East Village and the people who had the chance to meet them intertwine in a story that increasingly takes on the features of a family album. And like all family albums, this compelling collection of texts and artworks edited by Fabio Cherstich is entrusted with sampling places, people and situations: of the 1980s New York art scene, its studios and exhibitions, artists and galleries; the Lower East Side’s gay bars; pages from gay liberation magazine *Fag Rag* – a spiderweb composed of dazzling initial encounters and passionate friendships.

But it’s a paradoxical monograph, since while it’s ostensibly the story of Roberto Juarez, which contains within it the story of his group of friends, it ends up becoming a study of a group of artists. Cherstich comments on the relational nature of Juarez’s identity as an artist and person, such that his life and work cannot be separated from the East Village art scene and the New York queer community devastated by the AIDS crisis, nor from the glam-rock fluidity that informed him or his Latino roots. As it emerges from the materials that compose the book, Juarez is simultaneously an artist (whose paintings are analysed through the lens of art history by Edward J. Sullivan in a critical text); a friend (who poses with his arm around artist Jimmy Wright’s shoulder in a photograph taken during the early 1970s); and a confidant (of longtime friend Mark Tambella; captured here via an interview).

The book is published in conjunction with two exhibitions that opened in Italy during 2023–24 (at Apalazzo Gallery, in Brescia, and Palazzo Tiepolo, Venice). During lockdown, Juarez rediscovered oil-on-paper works made between 1981 and 1985. The paintings had been in storage for four decades. Twenty-five of these form the core of the book, and are recounted by Juarez himself through brief thoughts arranged alongside the reproductions. The paintings are an investigation of Latino identity in New York by a Mexican American who feels neither American nor Latin enough: *Pac Man Pico* (1984), for example, presents an orange ghost and a Pac-Man (respectively the victim and executioner from the popular 1980s videogame), surrounded by three packets of El Pico coffee, a drink popular with Latinos in New York. Thus, Juarez comments on Latino American identity as not comprising enough of either, and on the violence of their coexistence.

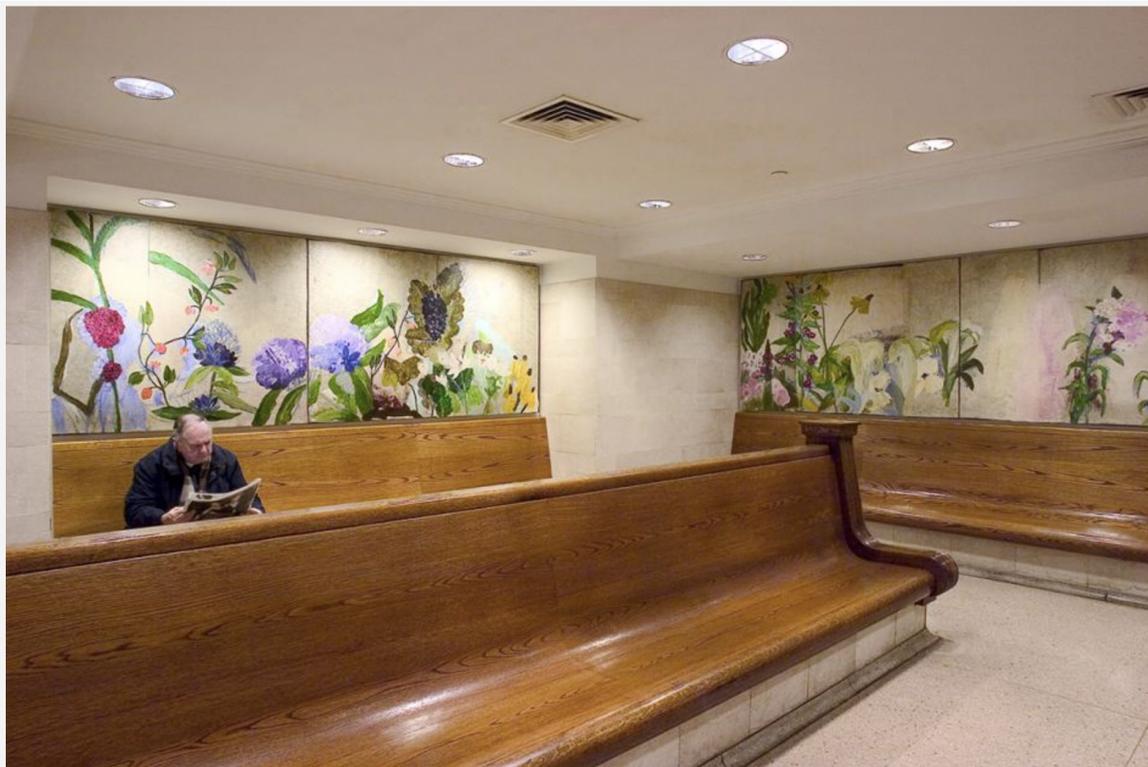
The book also deals with queer identity; bodies in the paintings are rendered in vivid colours like red and green, shapes are primitive, built with paint and layers of brushstrokes. The bodies are strong, mostly male – even Mother Nature in *Earth Mother* (1983) looks like a bodybuilder. Desire is palpable even if it always exists alongside a fear of contagion. In *Phone Sex* (1984), a little red man holds a disproportionately large erect penis in both hands, above a rotary telephone: an exiled desire, as well as a profound longing to be connected to another. This feeling haunts the pages of this book, and together with the frequent mention of his close friend Arch Connelly, who died of AIDS in 1993, inflects the narrative with a mournful tone. Through such haunted pages, the disappearance of a whole generation that vanished in a matter of years is felt – and it is still painful.

Roberto Juarez '80s East Village Large Works On Paper + Downtown Amigos y Amigas.
***Edited by Fabio Cherstich* Fabio Cherstich, \$25 (softcover)**

MTA
December 2023



Grand Central Terminal
A Field of Wild Flowers
Roberto Juarez



"A Field of Wild Flowers" (1997) by Roberto Juarez at Grand Central Terminal. *Photo: Rob Wilson*

About the project

Roberto Juarez creates a place of refreshment and repose with his lush garden landscape, designed to appear as though it were seen through the windows of a slow-moving train. The work, located at the waiting area in the Station Master's Office, is one of the more fragile pieces in the system, executed in a multi-media collage that he describes as "consisting of layers of gesso, under-painting, urethane, and varnish. I also utilize natural materials — rice paper and a dusting of peat moss — to give my work added texture, strength, and beauty."

"A Field of Wild Flowers" was created to be compatible with the architecture of Grand Central Terminal, and it repeats some of its historic interior details such as the representation of fruit, acorns, and garlands. It also provides a contemporary work of art that stands on its own, bringing a touch of serenity to the surrounding whirl of activity.



Fashion Week Online

February 28 2024

FWO

FashionWeekOnline.

ROBERTO JUAREZ: CROSSING FIVE DECADES WORKS CREATED BETWEEN 1983 AND 2023

On view February 28 through April 15

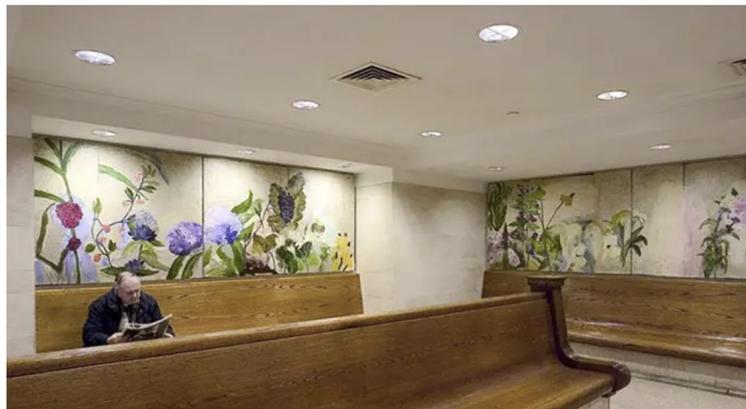
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he C. Parker Gallery in Greenwich, Connecticut presents the new exhibition *Roberto Juarez: Crossing Five Decades (Works Created Between 1983 and 2023)*, on view February 28 - April 15.

"This is the first time an exhibition chronicles five distinct eras of artmaking by Roberto Juarez," says Tiffany Benincasa, the owner and curator of C. Parker Gallery. "We are honored to present this group of exquisite paintings, illuminating his position in the canon of art history in the New York art world, for our tenth anniversary season."

The gallery is located at 409 Greenwich Avenue, near Manhattan (just a 40-minute train ride from Grand Central Terminal, where one of Juarez's public commission murals majestically holds court in the Station Manager's Office, pictured below).

New York Grand Central Terminal Public Commission



A Field of Wild Flowers, public commission mural by Roberto Juarez (1997). Located in the public waiting area of the Station Manager's Office at Grand Central Terminal. Photo by Rob Wilson. Read more about this major installation at new.mta.info/agency/arts-design/collection/field-of-wild-flowers

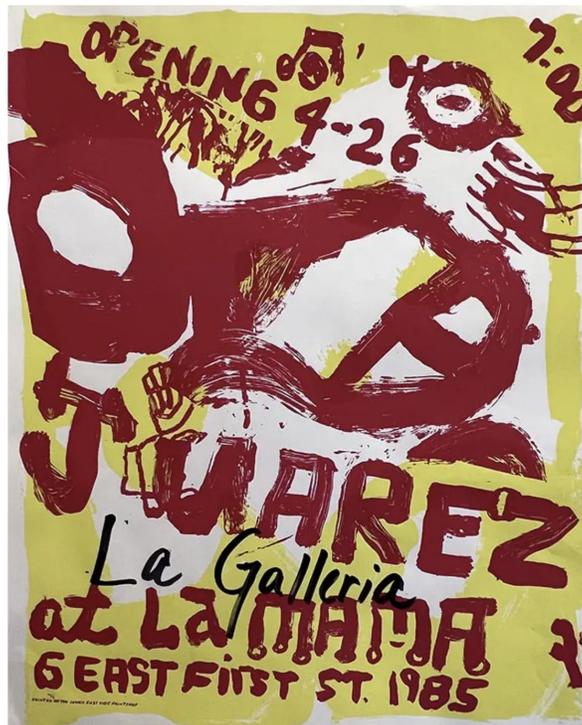
"This selection of artworks represents the feeling of crossing through different eras of my work," says Roberto Juarez.

"For me, it's important that my love of painting comes through. I want the joy in my work to always be essential."

"This new exhibition also points ahead, showing how change and growth are still where I'm at today," adds Juarez.

Juarez's artistic trajectory is the stuff of New York legends. In 1981, the East Village underground arts icon Ellen Stewart offered Juarez an artist studio in an abandoned garage owned by the La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club.

The space, on First Street between Bowery and Second Avenue, had no electricity and was offered to Juarez rent-free. Renowned costume designer Gabriel Berry lent Juarez an extension cord from her studio to his, to provide light and heating.



A 1985 poster designed by Roberto Juarez for his gallery show at La Galleria at La MaMa

That same year, Juarez was showcased in the New York/New Wave group show curated by Diego Cortez, who united the downtown scene for this history-making exhibition.

Cortez selected 35 works by Juarez for the 1981 New York/New Wave show, granting him an entire wall across from a wall of works by Basquiat (some of these original 1981 works by Juarez have been selected for an exhibition during the Venice Biennale this year).

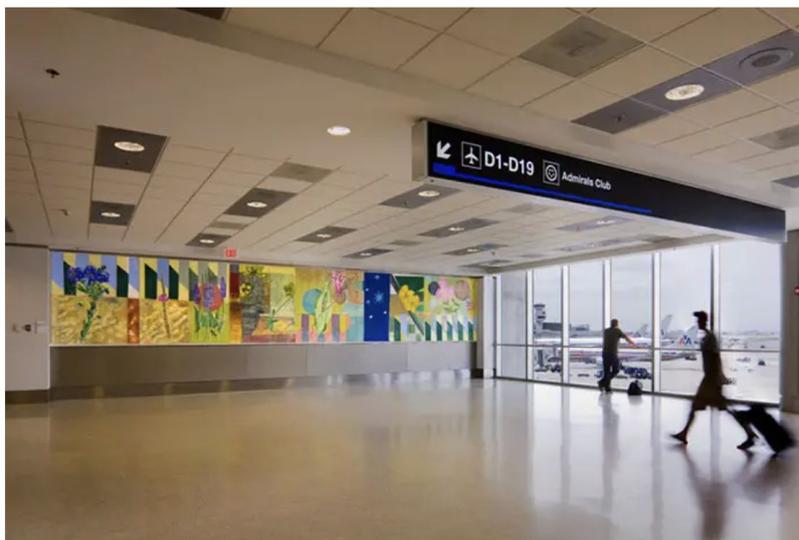
During the decades that followed, Juarez's milestones include:

A Guggenheim Fellowship in Painting . . . the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award . . . the Rome Prize Fellowship from the American Academy in Rome . . . one of his paintings was selected for the book jacket cover of the Whitney Biennale Catalog in 1987 . . . he was chosen for a public commission mural installation in Grand Central Station in 1997 (new.mta.info/agency/arts-design/collection/field-of-wild-flowers) . . . and several art in public places commissions, including Miami International Airport.

Works by Juarez are in the collections of major museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art (NY), Los Angeles County Museum of Art (CA), the Brooklyn Museum, El Museo del Barrio (NY), Perez Art Museum Miami, and the Denver Art Museum, among others.

Museums that have exhibited the work of Roberto Juarez include: Museum of Modern Art (NY); Whitney Museum of Art/Whitney Biennial (NY); Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LA); Brooklyn Museum; Peggy Guggenheim Collection (Venice); MoMA PS1 (NY); the China National Academy of Painting; Stamford Museum (CT); El Museo del Barrio (NY); McNay Art Museum (TX); Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art (CO); Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art (KS); Portland Museum of Art (ME); Center for the Fine Arts Miami; Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art; Austin Museum (TX); and Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami, among others.

Miami International Airport Public Commission



Above - M.I.A. Flower Fence, by Roberto Juarez (2011). Installation photo taken at the Miami International Airport. The Art in Public Places mural by Juarez juxtaposes botanical-style renderings of Florida wildflowers with patchwork designs of Florida's Miccosukee Tribe of Indians. Below - the work-in-progress, photo taken at the artist's studio prior to installation at the airport.



Juarez frequently employs painterly floral motifs, often inspired by the traditions of Hispanic and non-Western painting.

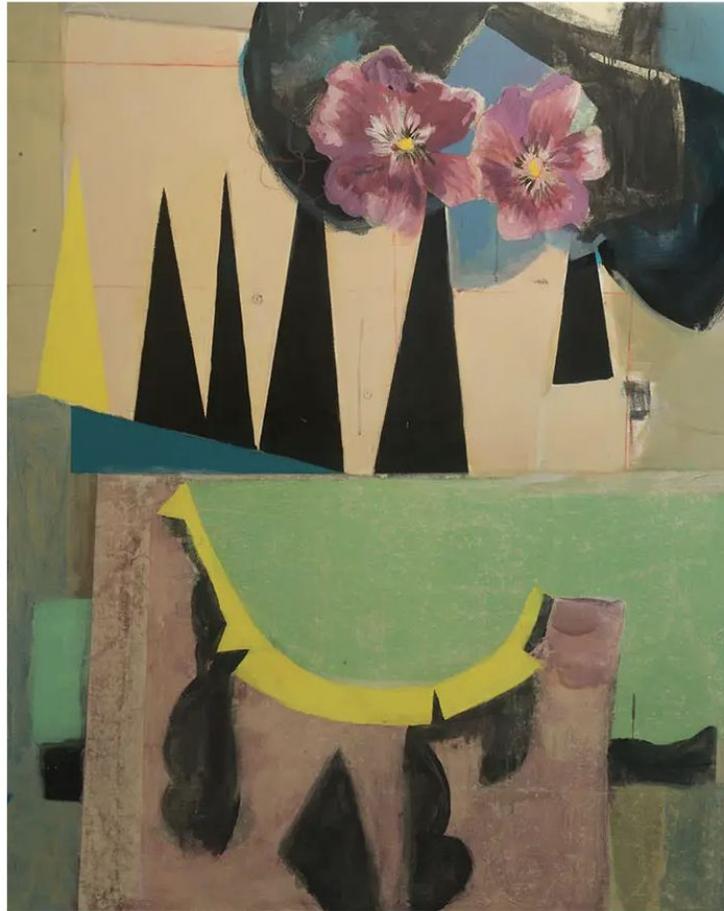
“Roberto Juarez is somebody I had long thought combined a sense of an engagement with the poetic, an engagement with the provocative,” said Edward J. Sullivan, Professor of Art History at NYU.

“A use of color which brings to mind not only images but emotions, in a way that is very convincing – also allowing us to enter into a certain subconscious emotional territory.”

“Roberto Juarez is somebody I had long thought combined a sense of an engagement with the poetic, an engagement with the provocative, a use of color which brings to mind not only images but emotions, in a way that is very convincing – also allowing us to enter into a certain subconscious emotional territory,” adds Sullivan.

Edward J. Sullivan curated one of Juarez’s solo museum exhibitions that included the artist’s Pater series (pictured below, one of the Pater works in the current gallery show).

Sullivan has worked for more than thirty years in the field of Latin American and Caribbean art, and has influenced many artists and curators.



Pater Painting, by Roberto Juarez (2017), mixed media on canvas. This work was also exhibited at the Boulder Museum, in the exhibition curated by Edward J. Sullivan, the NYU Professor of Art History who influenced many artists and curators.

The *Pater* works were produced over a number of years during which Juarez was dealing with the death of his father.

Read more about the artist and this series at the review by Clayton Kirking, former Chief of Art Information Resources for the New York Public Library - nadnowjournal.org/reviews/roberto-juarez-inspiration-and-process

Juarez's mother was from Puerto Rico, and his father was from Mexico. He was born in 1952 in Chicago.

Juarez has a BFA from San Francisco Art Institute (1975), and Graduate Studies at the University of California at Los Angeles (1978).
Read his full bio [at this link](#).

For this new gallery show in Greenwich, CT, the gallery owner wanted people to be immersed in color.

“What I’m painting is often tropical looking, and yet sometimes created in the dead of winter in my studio in Canaan, NY where we can have mountains of snow everyday.”

“I think part of this is responding to memory, to my experience of something colorful. The severity of the winter experience in my studio makes me enjoy colorful imagery even more,” adds Juárez.



Pine Branches Two Suns (Study), by Roberto Juárez (2023), mixed media on canvas.

The quotes above by Sullivan and Juárez and from this interview – robertojuarezstudio.com/roberto-juarez-interview-by-edward-sullivan.html.

Captured in Time

Juárez and his circle of artist friends were often captured in time by well-known photographers/artists of the era.

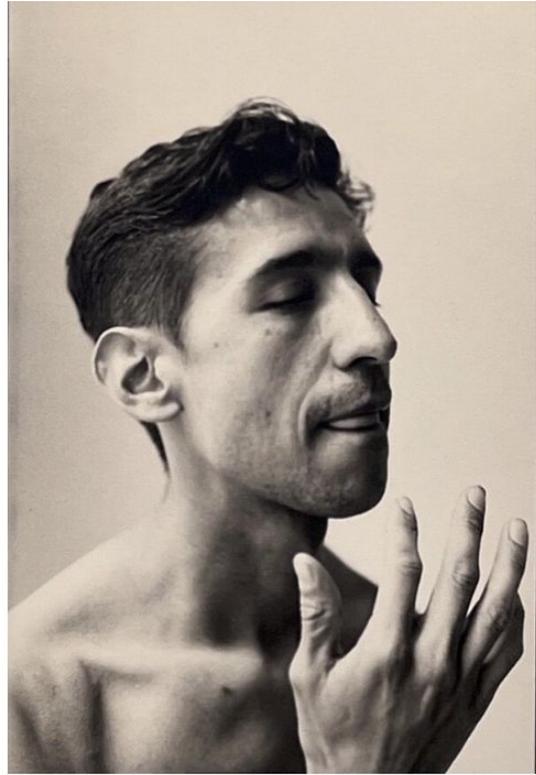
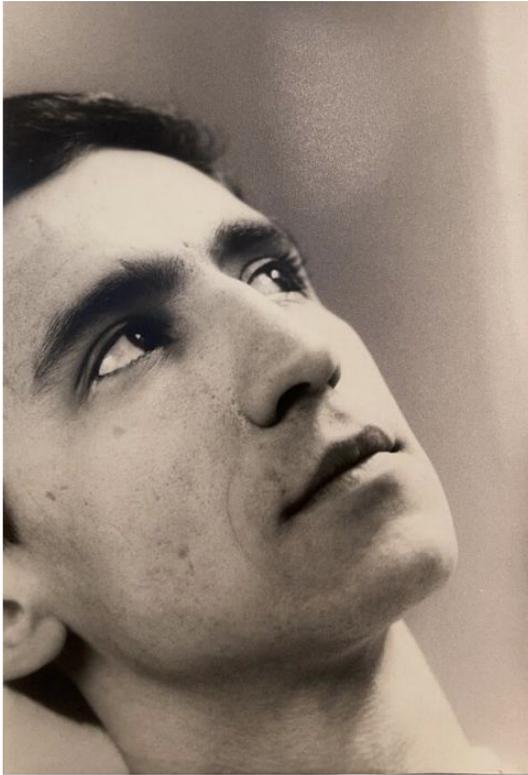
Pictured below are portraits of Juárez from the 1980s and 1990s by David Seidner, Jack Pierson, and Bruce Weber.

When Juárez was recently invited to present his work in celebration of the 50th anniversary of Time & Space Limited, the not-for-profit arts organization serving the Hudson River Valley Region, he expressed his vision for artmaking and how it continues to evolve —

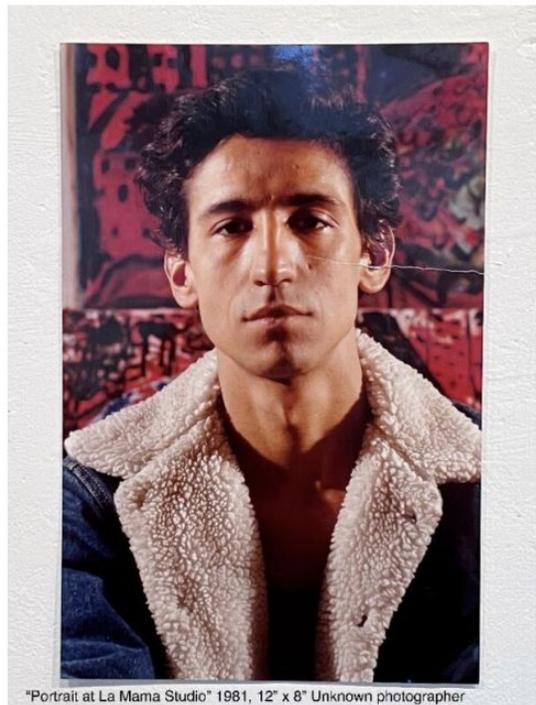
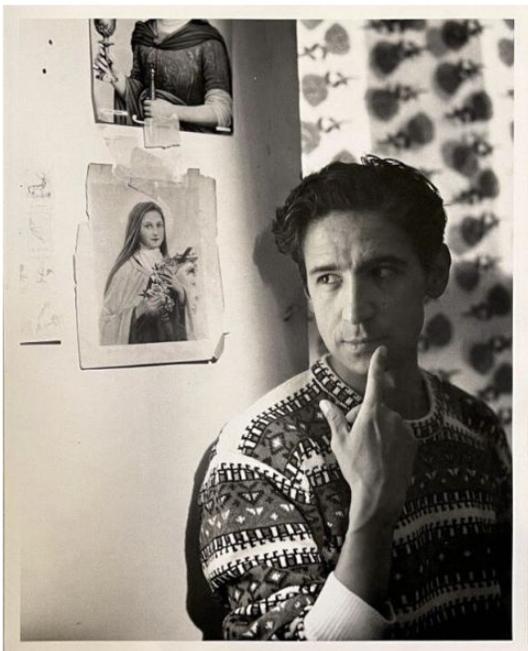
“The sanctuary I envision through my art is a place where unexpected things happen, where ancient stories intertwine with contemporary experiences, and where the audience can participate, almost dance, with the paintings,” says Juárez.

MAGENTA

PLAINS



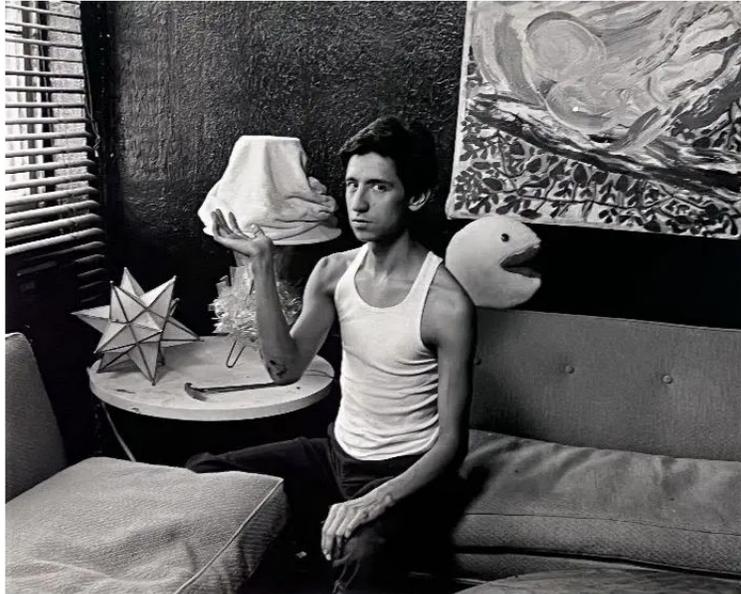
Above left: Portrait of Roberto Juarez (1985) by David Seidner, for Interview Magazine. Above right: Portrait of Juarez (1989) by Jack Pierson.



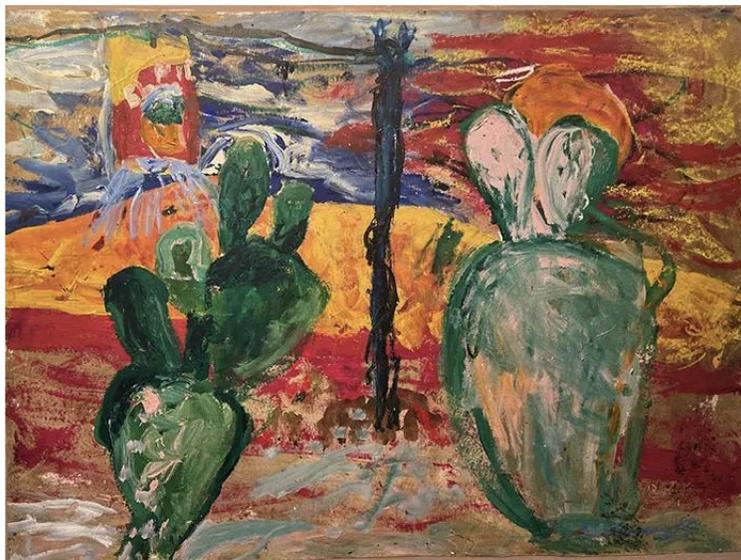
"Portrait at La Mama Studio" 1981, 12" x 8" Unknown photographer

Above left: Portrait of Roberto Juarez (1990) by Bruce Weber. Above right: Portrait of Juarez at La MaMa Studio (1981) unknown photographer.

“My intention is to invite viewers to connect with the rich cultural tapestry of human history and the boundless possibilities of creativity.”



Above: Photo taken in 1981 of Roberto Juarez in his NYC Houston Street apartment.



Pico Landscape, by Roberto Juarez (1984), paper.

Also featured in the new exhibition are works from the artist's VP era - paintings inspired by the Vesica Piscis, a symbol thought to bridge geometry and spirituality.

Used throughout history in various cultures and religions as a form of sacred geometry, Vesica Piscis shapes are objects of fascination due to their deep symbolism.

In these works, Juarez feels that the shapes created when his circles intersect symbolize to him the eye of God.

VP era works from the gallery show are pictured below.

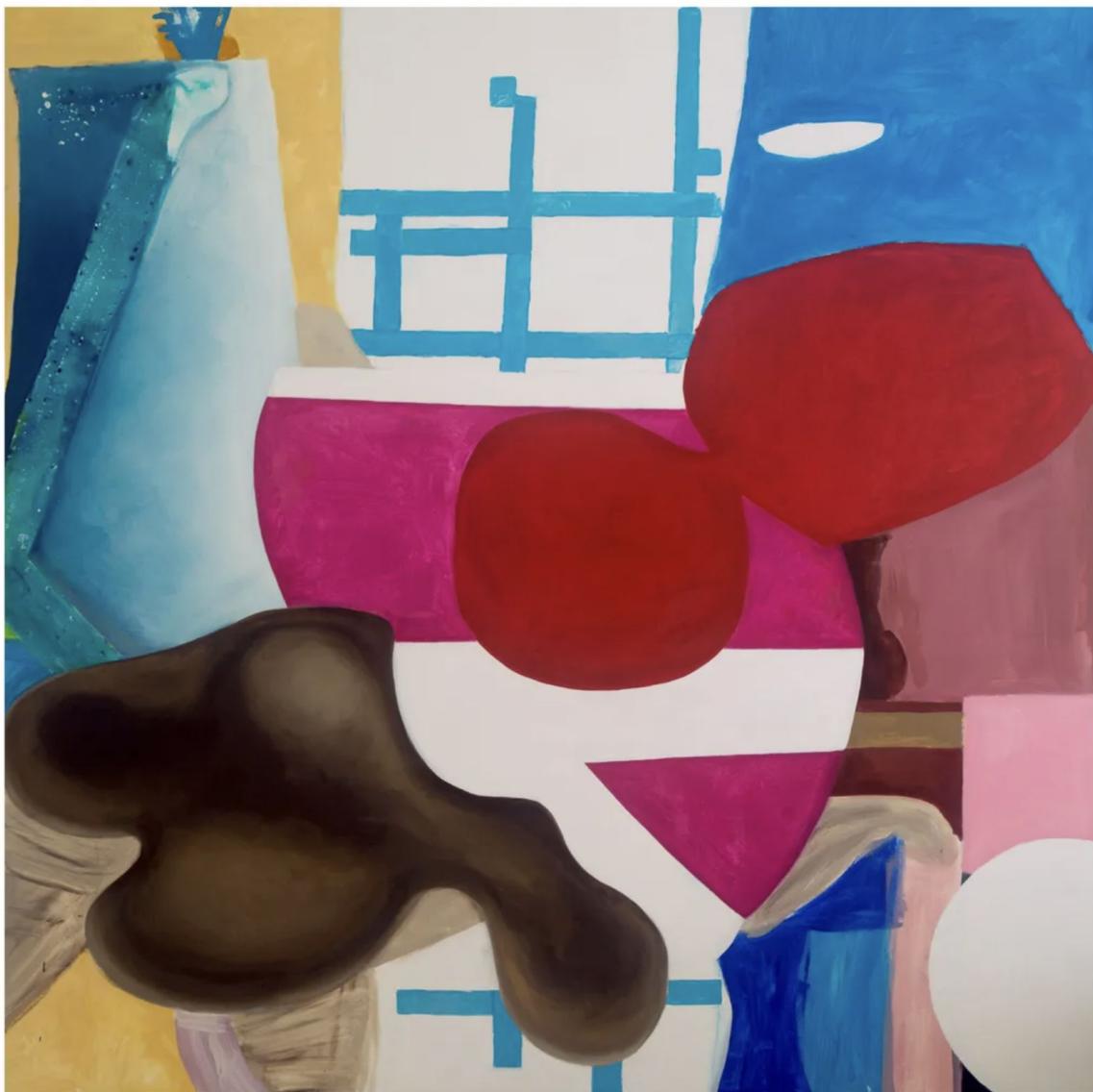


Left: V.P. Blue Sky, (2010), oil on wood panel. Right: V.P. Yellow & Black, (2010), oil on wood panel.

ARTnews
June 26 2018

ARTnews

Roberto Juarez at Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, Colorado



Roberto Juarez, *Window / Pater*, 2016, mixed media on canvas.

Today's show: "Roberto Juarez Processing: Paintings & Prints 2008–2018" is on view at the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art in Colorado through Sunday, September 16. The solo exhibition, curated by Edward J. Sullivan, presents work by the artist made in last ten years of the New York–based artist's career, including works from his "Pater" series, made around the time of the death of the artist's father.



Roberto Juarez, *Study for Pater Painting*, 2017, collage on wood.



ROBERTO JUAREZ, *STUDY FOR GLAD CONTAINER*, 2016, COLLAGE ON WOOD.

BOMB
August 17 2011

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INTERVIEW

Roberto Juarez

AUGUST 17, 2011



Roberto Juarez and Edward J. Sullivan

Edward J. Sullivan

How would you define these works as public art, and maybe you could talk a little bit about the origin of them, how these commissions came to be and what you think about them in terms of their “public-ness”?

Roberto Juarez

For "Times square Tiles" and "New Building" I didn't want to make a window or a picture that sat on a wall, and so the limitations of the size of the wall of my loft became my project, which was a private commission for Whitman College in Walla Walla, WA. They are fairly abstract paintings, and I composed them using pieces of rice paper tiled onto the surface which became the language that allowed me to expand the vision of what a picture was to fit the dimensions of what I needed it to be. So after I did these for myself, so to speak, and then exhibited them in New York, Bonnie Clearwater showed these pictures at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Miami, and from there the G.S.A. asked if I would propose something for a courthouse. That's how I got this commission in Washington. I had also done other public commissions for Grand Central Terminal, which helped me be able to compose something as large as this.

Edward J. Sullivan

Well, the whole idea of this conversation is for us to have a dialogue, mainly about ideas, and it's such a treat to be with the artist at this extraordinary exhibition. Roberto is somebody I had long thought combined a sense of an engagement with the poetic, an engagement with the provocative, a use of color which brings to mind not only images but emotions in a way that is very convincing but also allows us to enter into a certain subconscious emotional territory about which I am going to ask him, along with questions I've been thinking about relating to art in the public sphere. I think if we begin to think about this, we have to use our historical acumen and think about various definitions about what public art is from the Western classical tradition to manifestations of mural art in the Renaissance, all the way into the 20th century in places like Mexico and the United States, where artists like Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros were working as part of a mural tradition that spurred American artists during the Depression to create their own series of public works. And I think to a certain extent the importance of reception, the importance of a space in which there are images that communicate ideas . . . it is to this tradition that Roberto belongs, particularly in the work that we see in this museum. So we should probably start this conversation by my asking you: How would you define these works as public art, and maybe you could talk a little bit about the origin of them, how these commissions came to be and what you think about them in terms of their "public-ness"?

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Roberto Juarez, Times Square Tiles, 2000 (left) and Natural Justice, 2011 (right).

EJS

Do you consider these paintings “murals” in the traditional sense or do they come out of the experiments with both figuration and abstraction that you’ve been doing now for decades from a more private sense? How do you conceive of these things as images to be consumed by a large public?

RJ

I think when you paint paintings for a public situation, such as a courthouse building in this instance, you absolutely have to think about who the audience will be and how they will live in a building. These particular paintings were painted for either end of a very large lobby which is very cold, very institutionalized, and I thought that it could use some life by bringing in color and plants. There are flowers, there is a movement that could be about growth, or the relationship of vegetation in nature, but it is a very abstract thing that makes me excited. In “Cultural Law” I wanted to use something that described the abstract nature of the legal system, which is the situation that these paintings will live in. When you leave the building, you see this green, more natural painting, “Natural Justice” as a beckoning back into nature, back into life, as something bigger than the situation that you were just in. Hopefully, bringing you back into the real world.

EJS

I had an experience the other night at the courthouse. I was to go to a meeting of the town of Taghkanic in Columbia County. The meeting was to take place in one building and I went into the courthouse next door by mistake where they were having traffic court and it was a pretty scary situation. People are very nervous, they're waiting for the judge to come, they're sitting in a very stark room and I began to think of Roberto's paintings because the painting that we see to our right will be destined for a children's courthouse in Miami. So, it is the contrast of my brief experience in the town of Taghkanic courthouse the other night with thinking about what would it be like to have this sense of being agitated or the tension which inevitably accompanies a legal experience. Did you have that in mind when you created these very soothing and very beautiful semi abstract flowers and plants and birds?

RJ

I actually sat in some hearings at the children's courthouse in Florida and it's a pretty scary situation. The kids looked scared. So, from that experience I realized that if I was going to make paintings for a children's courthouse I had to respond to what the children wanted; and also a lot of social workers, the lawyers, the people that worked there were really saintlike, and they were really working to try to help these kids.

EJS

How did you go about finding out what would evoke a positive response among children?

RJ

Well, I interviewed them. Previously, I worked for a junior high school in Brooklyn where I did a painting for the ceiling. I had proposed a fairly abstract black and white painting and the kids hated it. They did not want a black and white abstract painting. They wanted life, living things, and color. I mean the obvious things, but I had to be very focused about having images that they could recognize so when you look at the painting, all those birds are actual birds that are found in that part of Florida, and there is a kind of floaty-ness and soothing color to it that makes you feel good.

EJS

These are immense paintings. If you could, outline a little bit about your technique, how you start, how you delegate, and just a bit about the process in creating these extraordinary images?

RJ

Well, I start out with a *maquette* as a way to work out my ideas on a smaller scale, which usually has to be approved by the committee that agrees that it could be made for them. I also have two main people that I have been working with right now: Mark Tambella, my technical assistant, who helps me to physically make these big things. There are a lot of challenges as an artist. You think you know something and once you start actually doing it to this scale you realize you can't plan for everything that needs to be done. It's a lot of work, and it couldn't have been possible without Mark Tambella. I also have the help of Nicholas Freberg in the studio who helps with a lot of the gridding and transferring of imagery that is involved in making these paintings.



Roberto Juarez, *Natural Justice*, 2011 (left) and *Cultural Law*, 2011 (right).

EJS

Who are some of the artists in the back of your mind that might have inspired you?

RJ

I think the initial inspiration to work large comes from pre-Columbian art. Traveling as an art student to Teotihuacan and Mexico City, seeing Frida Kahlo and things that were not being taught at the art school at the time and then coming back to San Francisco with this kind of richness of how the pre-Columbians painted their walls. I think it was the directness, the different kind of stylization of the figure and color that was and continues to be an inspiration to me. You also can't ignore someone like Georgia O'Keefe as part of an inspiration just for how she dealt with the subject and the locale of the Southwest because, you know, this is something that keeps coming up in my work. The idea of using nature and investigating nature, playing with scale, and the whole idea of what is a flower. It's this little thing that becomes so immense inside of you and how big that thing can become as an image, and how to communicate the experience of this plant to someone else.

EJS

So would you say that you are an artist that responds very directly to nature? Maybe you could talk to us a little bit about how you respond to the natural elements that you see around you, or the locale that you've been painting in?

RJ

It's funny because what I'm painting is so tropical looking and it was painted in the dead of winter in Canaan, New York where we happened to have mountains of snow everyday. I think part of it is responding to your memory or your experience of something instead of directly describing or illustrating something you're looking at. So maybe the severity of the winter experience made me enjoy the colorful imagery even more. It's contrast, I think, partly.

EJS

In these paintings there are certainly passages that are very representational as well as abstract. I am curious to know about your process of research for the flora and fauna of Florida. Did you look at a lot of books?

RJ

I have lots and lots of books, but it's more formal for me. I mean, there is a form I want, such as a line to do something, and if a wild plant breaks off or branches off across the plane the way I want it to, then that will be the plant that I'm drawn to. The hibiscus flower in that painting is such a big decal of what Florida is, but to undercut the obviousness of it, I cut it and used it as a hard edge on something that is not hard-edged at all. So it's kind of playing with some things and altering how something relates to something else that may or may not be so obvious. Those are kind of intimate things when you're working small, but somehow I have to envision that as a large experience also.

EJS

Let's continue that subject of scale. Do you have a different way of conceiving your small canvases? What is the difference for you between working on a large scale and a very small scale?

RJ

Well, the small can always be big, but its not like the big becomes small. To be able to keep all of these little occurrences or experiences on a small scale is a way to envision larger things. Even if it isn't a large thing, I always think it could be. I realized that that was the kind of experience of painting that was most challenging to me at the time, to make something that covered the whole wall. I recently did some small paintings at the John Davis Gallery in Hudson, NY, which were different because they were oil paintings on cardboard. For me, that was kind of poetic because as a child we painted on cardboard because it was an available material and I love how delicate it is, kind of like drawing more than painting.



Roberto Juarez, *White Ibis with Spoonbill*, 2011 (left) and *New Building*, 2000 (right).

EJS

I wondered if you could just talk a little more to us about the role that various techniques play in your work or any other aspect of the technical preparation that would elucidate us in terms of understanding these and your larger production?

RJ

I think most of my technique has to do with layering or creating a certain amount of conversation between layers. I work on large sheets of paper and paint on top of them as a way to create this layering and that's something that I've developed in the studio over many years. It initially started by painting on sand to absorb the paint and to create a different kind of texture or gluing things to the surface to keep them fresh. From there I worked with a print maker, Chip Elwell, in New York who was a master printer who introduced me to Japanese paper, which really became the surface that was able to hold very delicate marks and stains and transitions of layers that are ultimately what fascinate me in making a painting. So technically everything supports that kind of formal conversation.

EJS

You very recently completed a commission at the University of Michigan. Perhaps you could say a word about that and what other public commissions you have had?

RJ

The commission in Michigan was really interesting. It's the exterior of a forty-foot dome that is the top of a wind tunnel at the University of Michigan School of Engineering. They wanted me to make a painting for them because they saw wind in my work, which I thought was a compliment. The idea of movement and how things move in a painting is something that is very exciting to me, but it certainly was a challenge. We will be going out there this September for the inauguration, so if you're anywhere near Ann Arbor, check out the School of Engineering. It's hard to describe because it relates to what we have in the room but it's actually a little more graphic with less nature in it.



Roberto Juarez, Order of the Spheres, 2011, University of Michigan.

EJS

What are some of your future plans?

RJ

Right now I'm working on one more mural. I keep thinking this is it . . . I want to stop making murals, I want to go back to making paintings, but I'm working on a new mural for Miami International Airport that I will install in November. This is a project that has been coming and going for a long time and it's finally happening, so that's what's in the studio right now.

The New York Times

December 21, 2001

The New York Times

ROBERTO JUAREZ, Robert Miller, 524 West 26th Street, (212) 366-4774 (through Dec. 29). With a suavely relaxed, brushy touch Mr. Juarez covers free-standing folding screens and conventional canvases with loose, layered grids, impacted Cubist compositions and fields of cellular elements in palettes of subtle grisaille, lush pastel and high-keyed dissonance. His work is pleasing if not challenging (Johnson).

The New York Times

July 7 2000

The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW

ART IN REVIEW; Roberto Juarez

By **Grace Glueck**

July 7, 2000

Robert Miller Gallery

524 West 26th Street

Chelsea

Through July 28

Gone are the lush blooms and botica that flourished in Roberto Juarez's richly-wrought paintings. His current works are New York-based abstractions that play on the garish mix of buildings in the new Times Square along with elements from his recent paintings of Rome, now pared down to linear essence.

True, the mosaics of loops, mazes, convoluted whorls and calligraphic writhings that characterize some paintings don't always make direct allusions. Some still suggest floral buddings, as in "Caprice," whose orange skeins of lines sprout podlike endings. There are a few whose patterns are more evocative of geometric textiles or Roman tile floors, like "New Building," in which gray and black triangles are framed by linear squares in an eccentric arrangement.

In "Food Court" rough concentric circles of white lines tipped with yellow rectangles spread out from a central core on a soft green ground to form a schematic sun disk. In this and other arresting works there is a contrast between the softness of the grounds -- blends of transparent and opaque materials in muted colors -- and their strong geometric-organic motifs.

The biggest canvas, "Times Square Tiles," suggests a huge, relaxed coil of beadwork made up of tiny black and white modules. It evokes strands of genetic material swimming in a primal soup more than it does Times Square. The liquescent effect comes from the pale ground of pink, green and other less distinguishable tonalities, skillfully laid down. These are strong paintings, a nice change in pace for Mr. Juarez. GRACE GLUECK

BOMB
July 1 1990

BOMB

SUMMER 1990 ISSUE

PORTFOLIO

The Days of the Year

Portfolio of Roberto Juarez's work assembled
and introduced by Edward Albee.

BY EDWARD ALBEE & ROBERTO JUAREZ



Roberto Juarez, *Three Stars*, 1990, acrylic, charcoal, and gilded paper on
linen, 58 x 49½ inches. All images courtesy of Robert Miller Gallery.

Many years ago when I first lived in New York City and began to move around in the creative world—not yet as a contributor but as a very quiet learning observer, absorber—I was struck by how coherent a community it *was*—a group of artists, writers, composers working their minds off (often only for the benefit of each other) with great seriousness and dedication, with enormous hope if not with much rational expectation.

Oh, there were hustlers even then, of course, manipulators, those who sensed that a big game was forming, that the brass ring—like some grail—was brightening in the murk, and probably there were a few of us who knew who they were and what they were up to in that compact, unselfconscious environment, but there was no haste among the rest of us, merely engagement, no teeth-grinding career anxiety, merely self-assurance and persistence.

The composers gathered at the Carnegie Tavern, the painters at the Cedar Street, the writers etcetera at the San Remo and the Caffe Cino. It was a community within a city of seven million; we all knew each other, and seldom were brows knit in career planning, eyes narrowed in suspicion. Were we naive, or merely deeply engaged? I'm not sure. Nonetheless, it was a complete world . . . and then it all fell apart.

Overnight—it seemed—our innocence was gone: the arts had become big business; careers were manufactured rather than being allowed to evolve. Most destructively, the concept of the arts as commodity upset the proper hierarchy and constructed a system in which the buyer—formerly the grateful recipient—in tandem with ambitious critics and shrewd middlemen (dealers, publishers, producers, whatever) became king, and the creator became an artisan, scrambling to satisfy the not necessarily sophisticated taste of the purchaser.



The you-know-what hit the fan, and when the stuff was scraped off the blades it looked and smelled suspiciously like money.

Now, very few creative artists like being poor, and popularity is probably preferable to obscurity, and power and fame are a swell fix, and now and again the buyers, the critics, and the middlemen have proved to be right (though usually long after the creative community has known where the absolute value sits), but there is this Faust thing running around, and too many souls have been bought and sold in the world of the arts in the past 20-or-so years to make one particularly comfortable about the public aesthetic of this country.



Roberto Juarez, *Days of the Year, 2-26-90, 1990*, 72 x 48 inches.



Roberto Juarez *Days of the Year, 2-12-90, 1990*, acrylic, charcoal, and gilded paper on linen, 72 x 48 inches.

I visit the studios of young painters and sculptors with some frequency, and I have noticed (noticed, indeed!!, have had forced on my consciousness) far too many of them sitting blankly, not waiting for inspiration to strike but for an answer to the great mystery . . . “which way is the bandwagon heading now?”

These are bright folk; they know that one does not climb on the passing vehicle, that that scramble is for the third rate. No, they sit and ponder which way the bandwagon might be coming and once they have figured *that* out, they go to work to be there when it arrives.

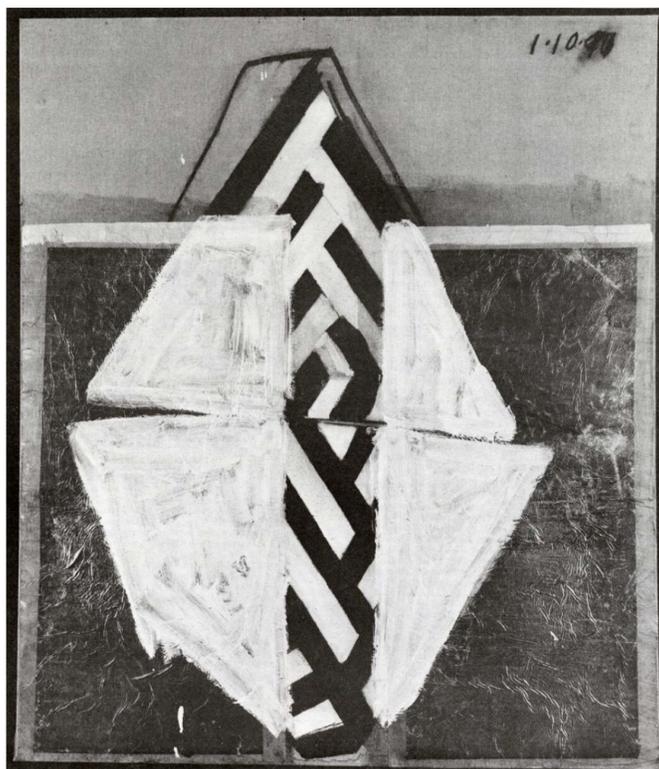
How do they do this?—throw dice? ponder the course of art history? buy dinner for a few critics who . . . ? examine the entrails of sitting ducks? Any or all of the above are equally helpful in avoiding the only course that matters: mastering the past and inventing the future.

Of course, there are a lot of bright, very gifted young artists at work out there who hear their own drummer and understand the need to march only to it. Roberto Juarez is impressive; clearly he has understood the conscious and unconscious aims of his precursors, and equally clearly he has stared at his own navel with essential accepting self-absorption.

The newest paintings—the *Days of the Year* series—surprised him, Juarez says, by which he means (I am certain) that he thought about them considerably without being aware of it and then had the courage to let them come into being without second-guessing them, guided only by his eye, his hand and—in a very non-sectarian sense of it—his faith.

This is not a con artist at work; the paintings are not slick, nor are they glib. They are the achievements of a man who knows his craft, who knows his art, and who knows his mind.

—Edward Albee



Roberto Juarez, *Days of the Year*, 1-10-90, 58 x 49½ inches.

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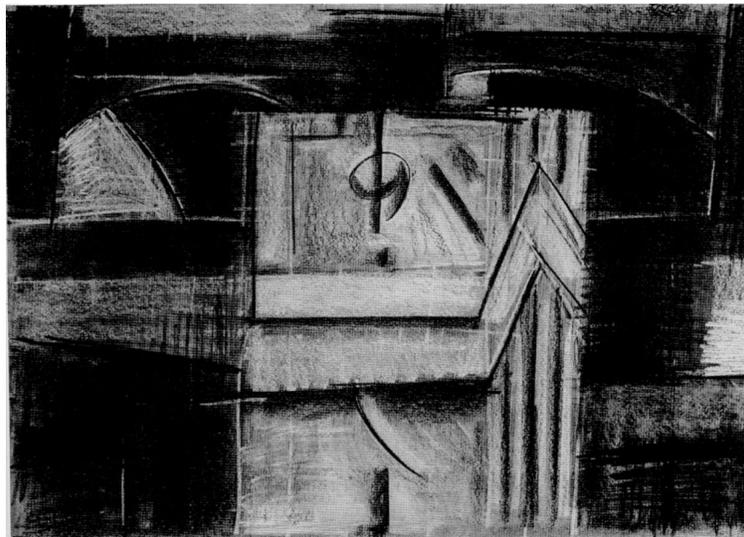
WINTER 1987 ISSUE

PORTFOLIO

Selected Similarities: Notes and Drawings

BY ROBERTO JUAREZ

JANUARY 1, 1987



Michael Hurson, *The French Lesson*, 1986, conte crayon on paper, 15½ x 21½ inches.

After spending the first five years of my artist “career” in New York City, I have learned a lot about what it is to be a “young artist.” When you are a new face in town, your work, your art, is open to any and all comparisons. The most frequent one being, “your work looks so much like so and so’s.” So and so is most likely to be an established historical figure in contemporary art. So as the years pass you learn to have fun and enjoy ‘stupid similarities.’ Here I present the work of 12 artists, six established well-knowns and six new faces for your provocation and pleasure.

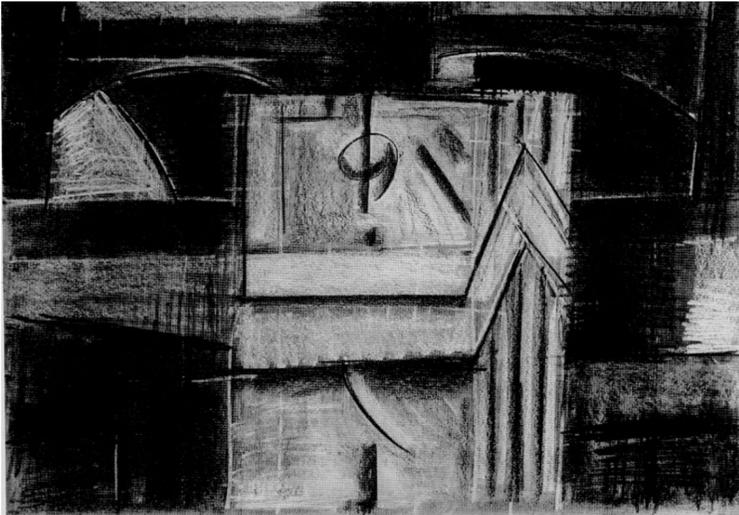
Notes on the artists:

Michael Hurson has made drawing the center of his art making activities: He has created drawings that are beautiful to look at for their nuances of line/forms and crisp edges. They are almost always funny and full of truth. A truth that is strange and simple. I often want to laugh even though they are meticulous and internal.

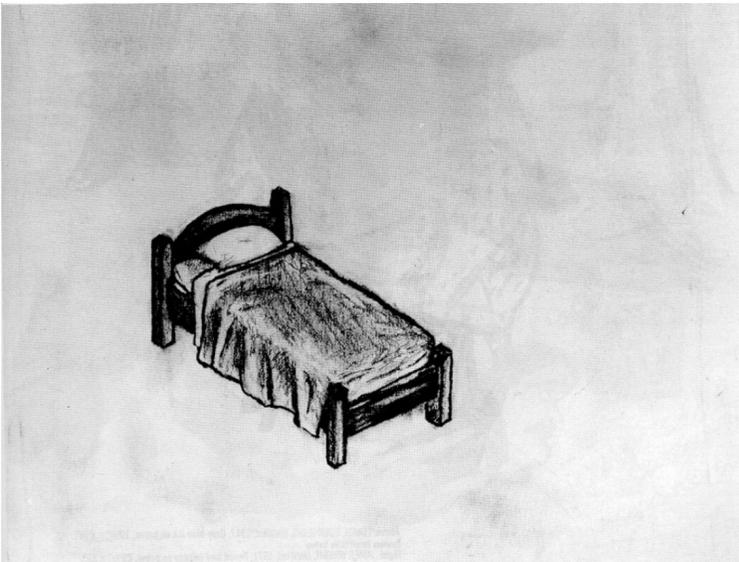
Robert Gober has made many drawings that on the surface, resemble Michael’s because they are neat-looking with internal humor which is quick and deep. Bob Gober’s drawings are not an end in themselves. They are plans for the sculptures which have occupied his exhibitions in New York City. The drawing of the little bed was a plan for a bed to be made full size for one person.

Louise Bourgeois has made many different kinds of drawings. Drawings that are purely abstract with poetic illusions, drawings of landscapes of surreal dimensions, drawings of structures, sculptures, figures, and houses. She has what I would call material awareness. The paper, the ink, the pencil, all play an equal part in the configuration that are her drawings.

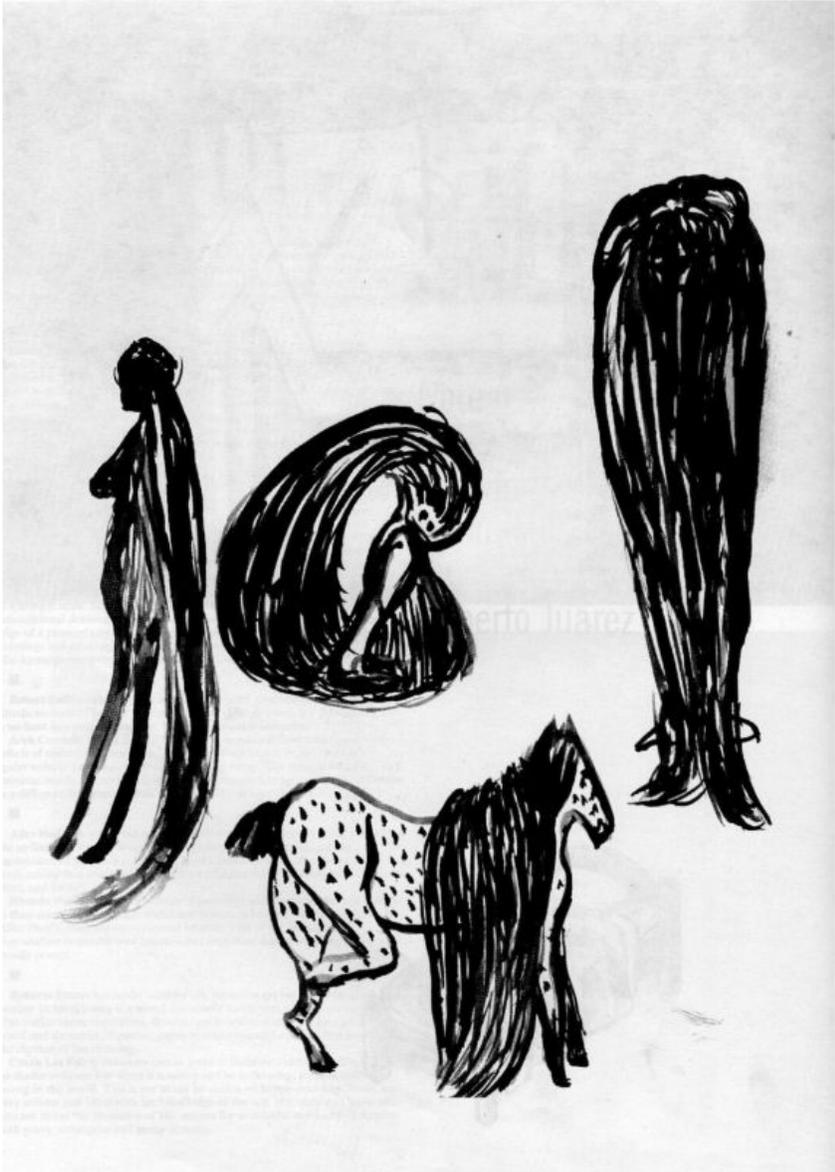
Jimmy Wright was educated at the Chicago Art Institute at a time in which the Hairy Who were wild. He traveled in India and North Africa absorbing the mythologies and sculpture of these cultures. His constant qualities are a lightness of touch with mythic dimensions (connotations). These are not psychological drawings but rather they reveal a sensuous knowledge of the icons he has created.



Michael Hurson, *The French Lesson*, 1986, conte crayon on paper, 15½ x 21½ inches.

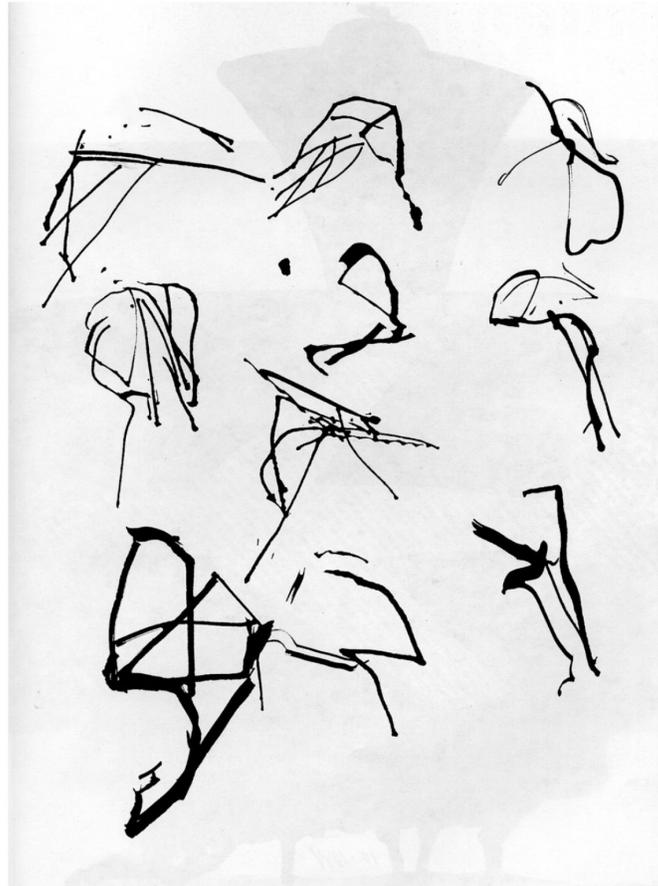


Robert Gober, *Untitled*, 1986, pencil and latex on paper, 6¾ x 8¾ inches. Courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery.



Louise Bourgeois, *Untitled*, 1947, grey-blue ink on paper, 10.63 x 8.25 inches. Courtesy Robert Miller Gallery.

Brice Marden's drawings were done on the Island of St. Barts. As the artist explained to me, they were drawn from nature—from looking at a palm grove. The strokes look oriental. They were made with twigs and black ink. He is left handed and out of logistic necessity, he works right to left, top to bottom, much in the tradition of oriental calligraphy.



Brice Marden, #7, St. Barts, 1986, ink on paper, 16½ x 14¾ inches.

Daniel Mahoney makes elaborate, encaustic paintings usually of two colors at a modest scale. His drawings are like Marden's in that they are made with untraditional drawing tools. In the drawing that follows, he uses the rough edge of a piece of cardboard with black ink. Unlike Marden, he is making paintings and drawings about his own internal nature, not looking out but in. His drawings are records of quiet articulations.

Arch Connelly is best known for three-dimensional floor pieces and wall reliefs of embellished surfaces. As a friend mentioned, from Connelly's spiderwebs to Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* is a big jump. The jump is internal—to a universe inside a decorated living room. Connelly's imagination is as immense in a different direction. Plastic as all natural—product reality.

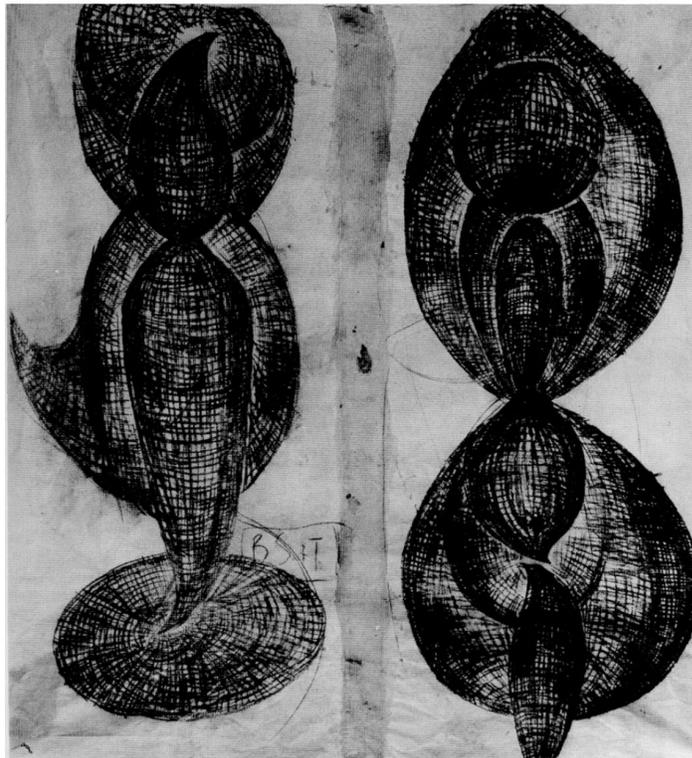
Robert Smithson's drawings are often projects, descriptions of ecological situations created by him. The materials of these projects are natural. There is no limit in a project drawing. His imagination is immense.

Alice Neel was not afraid to tell it like it was and is. Certain human qualities are so fine and high or so low and disgusting that they remain on the parameters of human life. In Alice Neel's drawings I am often touched by the stark reality that overshadows her masterful drawing (the thing that is there in black and white).

Rhonda Wall has created a circus of paintings and drawings that are truthful in their courage to illustrate social and private relations. Never as specific as Alice Neel's, they are more current because a lot of the damage and degradation in society now has no other face than that of a smiling clown with deadly power.

Roberto Juarez has made outsider art, primitive art his model for truth and beauty. In his drawing is a search for simple forms that are organic and poetic. This makes them vegetables, flowers, rocks, and seascapes. Charcoal is burnt wood and scratches, Japanese paper to make a sound and feel that is part of the rhythm of the drawing.

Curtis Lee Fairley draws on cars in front of Roberto Juarez's studio. He has no studio or home but when it is sunny and he is drawing, there is nothing wrong in the world. This is not to say he makes all happy drawings. Some are very serious and filled with his knowledge of the sea. His birds and boats and lists are about the pleasures of life, menus for wonderful lunches and dinners with gravy, sweetpeas, and many desserts.



Roberto Juarez, *Long Rain*, 1986, charcoal on paper, 77 x 84 inches.

Artforum
May 1986

ARTFORUM

Roberto Juarez

Robert Miller Gallery

By Suzaan Boettger ☒

Most of Roberto Juarez's large, lushly painted abstractions of vegetative abundance evoke an earthy fertility. Some, with which Juarez seems to have been more intimately connected, also project a more profound sense of fecundity, and the artist's robust assurance in his own creative—and procreative—powers. These vital compositions appear to have emerged from what Lewis Hyde has called the “gifted state,” in which “the imagination has the power to assemble the elements of our experience into coherent, lively wholes: Juarez's pictures especially recall Hyde's syntheses because Hyde views the creative imagination as a “gift” and an “emanation of Eros.” He relates the creative spirit to the life-force of the libido: neither is lost or exhausted in use, but in their reciprocal nature they are replenished by being expressed. Similarly, Juarez's imagery also displays an identification with the continuum between erotic and creative strengths.

Some of these radiant jumbles of painterly patches, suggestive of flowers or foliage, fruit or vegetables, could be simply enjoyed for their sensuous beauty. In *Three Mushrooms*, 1986, the overlay of bold organic shapes and the tonal subtleties of charcoal, chocolate, forest green, and dusty pink have all the grace of a fabric of gorgeous silk. Juarez plays with the allure of textiles and patterns by sometimes adhering terry-doth towels directly to a

canvas for a plush, tactile effect, or checked paper towels to surfaces to conflate the Modernist grid with the weaver's warp and woof. In others, he seeks control by imposing a geometric structure, an irregular checkerboard plane penetrated by organic volumes.

All this visual play, however, is trivial in comparison to the works' metaphorical effects: the simply beautiful becomes simple-minded without the recognition of the mushroom form as a repeated motif. It dominates *Three Mushrooms*, of course, and the thick trunk—more than a stem—and broad cap of the fungus is the sole focus of the vertical *Three Days*, 1986. In *Egg Fountain*, 1986, a large mushroom with an alate cap is juxtaposed with signs of fruitfulness such as eggs and a tuliplike fountain, which in turn echoes the upward thrust of the mushroom. Obviously, the form bears phallic connotations, but it would vulgarize both Juarez's images and his creative process to conclude that these paintings are about macho prowess. Rather, the shape suggests the artist's identification with a surging élan vital.

Juarez demonstrates the organic, holistic aspect of this life-force most clearly in *Applepeppers*, 1986. In the middle is a group of half a dozen green peppers, which recall the mushrooms in their similar elongation, charcoal crosshatching, and compositional prominence. They hang from a vine that rises from two blood-red apples, Eve's totem, one at each lower corner; the vine connects the forms like a stem, but it also suggests umbilical cords running from tumescent bellies, or the engorged nipples of lactating breasts. The triad is closed at the bottom by the curving edge of the tabletop. Juarez directly unites the masculine forms of the peppers with female generative powers; the peppers themselves could also be taken as pendulous udders. Even the title's merging of words connotes an integrative perception.

In his use of elements of nature to portray an idyllic unity, Juarez looks back to such early-20th-century painters as Franz Marc and Henri Matisse. What's remarkable, in contrast to prevalent late-20th-century demonstrations of image depletion, is not only Juarez's affiliation with natural forces, but also his belief in the power of art to communicate them, and in his own ability to find motifs to convey personal concerns within them. In doing so, Juarez's gift—in Hyde's sense—is a fulfilling experience of organic and creative powers.

—*Suzaan Boettger*