

Expansion in the art world

REVIEW

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STAR Art Critic

Freddie Mercado
The Gallery, School of Plastic Arts

Freddie Mercado is probably one of the best-known characters in our local art scene. You will find Freddie exotically dressed as a woman at every opening night of our San Juan Galleries. He is indeed a one-man show, a happening, a walking work of art. His costumes are fascinating artistic creations that go from the aristocratic to the bizarre. One day he is in the 19th century and the next day he will be exploring Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet.

Mercado had a fabulous opening night at his exhibition in the Gallery of the School of Plastic Arts. He paraded and changed his costumes again and again. The problem with Mercado is not himself as a work of art — or his weird altars, or his Santería dolls, or his hilarious kirsch artifacts, or his impressive mannequins/installations, which are all very interesting and intelligently conceived.

The problem is that most of his paintings are quite amateurish and some of them are plainly bad.

Mercado is very good with nudes. His female nudes and his few male nudes are powerful and possess some magic. He is also good with portraits. His best paintings are the ones in which he is straight forward and does not try to be baroque or sexually defiant.

I think that this young man has enormous talent. In the field of installations he could surpass even Toño Martorell in few years. As a painter he needs much more work, patience and respect for the profession.

A new exhibit space at the University of Puerto Rico

Doña Gloria García Morín, who has been the Director of the Faculty Center at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras campus, for the last 21 years, has decided to allow artists to use the facilities of the Faculty Center for periodical exhibitions.

The Faculty Center is a handsome building and some of its walls are perfect for displaying drawings or paintings. This first exhibition consists of the work of

four very different but interesting artists: Andrés Batista, Luis de Jesús, Roy Kavetsky and Edwin Mauras.

Roy Kavetsky is well known for his colorful and dramatic scenarios but in this show his best pieces are the smaller paintings on paper — especially "Sin título" and "Flores para ti." De Jesús' drawings are powerful because he succeeds in combining rough organic elements with a certain degree of lyricism. His two best pieces are "Cocoloba" and "Torso."

Although the work of Batista and Maura's is weaker, it is important to see what they are doing at this point in their careers. Maura's colorful abstractions — horizons? — need more texture and a higher degree of poetry.

Batista, on the other hand is excellent in the field of drawing. However, as soon as possible he has to get away from the type of folkloric illustrations he is doing right now and try new and more daring avenues.

Opening the Faculty Center for exhibitions is a great idea and Mrs. García Morín and her staff should be commended for carrying on the kinds of projects a university should sponsor.

8 artists exhibit their works at Casaca in San Juan

Eight artists were awarded the 1994 Award from the Endowment for the Arts. Towards, which are also the Institute of Puerto Rico went to visual artists.

The artists who were honored are José Salabarrías, Daniel Cotté, Roberto Matos, Raúl Castrillo, Rafael Colón Morales, Edwin Velázquez and Elías Adasme.

In order to celebrate the achievements of these artists, the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture has organized a collective exhibition where the public will be able to see representative works by each one of these artists.

Although the works are not very well displayed — they are indeed too crowded — one gets a sense of the energy and the talent most of these artists have.

I was happy to see that four of the most outstanding members of the "generación de los novísimos" — José Jorge Román, Aarón Salabarrías, Carlos Rivera and Daniel Cotté — were chosen for this honor.