

CSUS Student
Responses to

ARTE  TRAORDINARIO

CROCKER
art museum

The responses in this booklet were created by students at California State University, Sacramento. The Crocker Art Museum collaborated with students in the fall 2018 Latin American and Latinx Art class to develop written responses for three artworks in the Arte Extraordinario: Recent Acquisitions exhibition. Like the exhibition, students' responses to the artworks reflect fresh and diverse perspectives; they also offer new ways to view the work.

Please enjoy reading a selection of the students' responses.

Special thanks to Professor Mya B. Dosch for her collaboration on this project.



Diana Guerrero-Maciá (American, born Cuba 1966), *Devoured by Symbols*, 2008. Wool, vinyl and cotton on unstretched canvas. Crocker Art Museum purchase with funds from Barbara and William Hyland, Monterey, California, 2018.95

Fancy that! *Devoured by Symbols* makes a bold egalitarian statement as it stares down the viewer. Understated yet fierce, Diana Guerrero-Maciá uses symbols of femininity to break down gender-normative tropes. At the focus of the work, a crouching white lion defiantly lays in wait to pounce on anyone who dares to challenge its gaze. The creature commands respect, and although it is disarmingly beautiful, it is showing its teeth as to ward off those who approach with ill-intent. Dripping from the lion's paw is a streaming rainbow, a statement of diversity. The message is clear: Make way for inclusiveness or get out of the way.

Contrasting with the lion is a collection of patchwork flowers and letters that form the phrase “fancy that.” The witty quip embodies the unapologetic timbre of the piece's social statement. Much more an empowering call to arms than a specific threat, the attitude has a quality more commonly found in a patch-laden punk rock jacket. Guerrero-Maciá takes a no-nonsense approach, using only materials easily procured at the craft store to create an anti-elitist work of art for the proletariat. This is art for the people, by the people.

AUTHOR: MIRANDA ZIRBEL

Diana Guerrero-Maciá's *Devoured by Symbols*, 2008, is crafted from mixed materials, woven fabrics, and ribbons sewn together by hand. As an artist, Guerrero-Maciá dedicates her life to her craft. Why she has chosen to showcase fabric work rather than traditional paintings is simple: sewing was considered a woman's craft during the time Guerrero-Maciá was raised; the big names in the art community were men. To critique this, Guerrero-Maciá includes sewn letters throughout the artwork spelling out the words "fancy that." The goal for her work is to legitimize her crafting as an art-form within the art community. She directs her criticisms with the sarcastic quip "fancy that" to bring attention to the fact that art made by a woman and from craft-materials is uncommon and should not have to be.

To correct this view and prove that crafting is a legitimate form of art, Guerrero-Maciá makes her protest known through the very symbols she has chosen to sew together. Guerrero-Maciá includes daisies in this artwork; daisies are commonly associated with young girls, symbolizing innocence and purity. Guerrero-Maciá uses this symbol as a way to empower femininity. To further this empowerment, Guerrero-Maciá makes the main focal point of this piece a crouching lion, growling, and ready to strike. The symbols in this artwork brings attention to the idea that power and femininity are not mutually exclusive.

AUTHOR: SARAH VELIZ

Diana Guerrero-Maciá's *Devoured by Symbols* is created with materials that are found at any craft store. Items such as the thread, the felt, and the plastic vinyl are easily accessible and can be touched through the process of creation. Materials like these are often connected to women: soft, delicate, and transparent. But by using these materials, Guerrero-Maciá breaks down labels often associated with women. She also creates visual opportunities for the viewer. The needlework is like a road map, guiding your eyes around to every stitch. The felt provides a view of the layers stitched together. The plastic vinyl is clear like a window, providing structure and giving the viewer a look inside. Materials such as these make art accessible for everyone to enjoy and are proof that delicate materials can also be strong and supportive.

AUTHOR: TATIANA WASHINGTON

The biggest, most striking part of this image is the lion creeping out from beneath the draped blue cloth. The lion is a male, based on its mane, though it is decorated in symbols and fonts that would be considered feminine. Why would the artist do this?

Diana Guerrero-Maciá is challenging the ideas of gender and what is considered feminine and masculine, through the use of her imagery. This is apparent through the words that spell out “Fancy That”, which connotes elegance and, often, femininity. Her materials are also considered feminine, as they are craft-related and used commonly in textiles, not fine art. Through this combination of materials and ideals, she has composed a piece that could be considered androgynous. It challenges the ideas of gender in an art world that has historically been predominantly male.



Juan Carlos Quintana (American, born 1964), *Celebrating Hubris with Hijinx*, 2017. Ink and acrylic on canvas paper, 108 x 80 in. Crocker Art Museum purchase with funds provided by Loren G. Lipson, M.D. and the Michael Himovitz Fund, 2018.33.2 © Juan Carlos Quintana

C*elebrating Hubris with Hijinx* is a display of Juan Carlos Quintana's appreciation for what is considered "bad art." This is a painting that you wouldn't normally see in someone's living room or your local coffee shop. However, it does not mean that the art is done without thought. In this piece, much like other aspects of Quintana's life, he goes against the norm. He resents the American dream and culture it feeds, has a different view on what is art, and is primarily self taught. The style resembles graffiti in an alleyway or on the side of an abandoned building. He lets paint run down the canvas and leaves paint smudges throughout the piece, leaving impurities that other painters might see as unfinished or lacking polish. This application reflects Quintana's views on current culture. Quintana battles the cultural norms, bringing light to the hubris of today in an almost morbid, humorous way.

AUTHOR: MELISSA GONZALEZ

Juan Carlos Quintana uses cynical humor in his artworks with the use of cartoon-like characters, such as the hand with eyes and legs. The figure on the right depicts Donald Trump; undressed, only wearing the iconic red cap of “Make America Great Again.” He is ridiculed in only underwear, a fanny pack, and tall socks with Birkenstock sandals. Trump represents the U.S. today, as the rest of the world sees it: as a joke or something unpleasant to look at. The other figures represent America in times when there were no civil rights or women’s rights. For example, the dark outlined figure of the woman with tall hair, tall knee-high leather boots, and a dead expression on her face may symbolize domesticity. An African American man playing the banjo represents the South and stereotypical views of Black people. And a police officer made of wood stands in the middle, denying entrance to three small figures who carry a bag of money, begging the officer to let them in. Below them, a hand with human characteristics stops a cactus from getting close to the brick wall. Therefore, the U.S. is depicted as a joke, and the cartoon characters exaggerate the past. The wall keeps people with offerings of prosperity and money out.

AUTHOR: AUSTIN HERITAGE

He is the embodiment of hubris, the least clothed and least in shape, and yet he is the focus of the piece. A caricature of our current president, a soft-bodied mask-wearing man leading the populous with deceitful smiles and trickle-down lies that flow from his cup to the people below. The half-naked man smiles as he toasts his stein of beer with PBR, dressed like a trashy neighbor without a care in the world. He is trying to act as though he is just a regular guy, yet he alone stands taller and more dominant than any other individual in the scene. His deceitful smile is the only smile in the scene: a juxtaposition to the clear faces of agony and despair of all those beneath him.

AUTHOR: JUAN GONZALEZ

The depiction of Pinocchio-like figures in the painting is a clear representation of the current persecutory American government. The colors of the American flag — blue, white, and red — protrude from between the figures. Pinocchio, an animation of a living puppet, represents all the citizens of the United States. The persecution of undocumented people by the government is reflected in this painting. A Pinocchio-like figure appears in the artwork with a frightened face wearing a red hat, under a glass of beer. This figure represents the fear of undocumented people crossing the border seeking the American dream. Pinocchio reappears in this piece personifying a police officer wearing a blue hat with a white star. Here, Juan Carlos Quintana is representing the central power of the nation by painting the police in the center of the artwork.



Matt Gonzalez, *Quince-yellow, outside*, 2018. Found-paper collage, 24 x 18 in. Crocker Art Museum, gift in memory of Mary Beth Hagey

AUTHOR: CELINA BROWN

Matt Gonzalez composed *Quince-yellow, outside*, as part of a dynamic series of collages, each in their own vibrant color. Each is visually satisfying to the viewer as a result of the interweaving of found mixed-materials in a bold landscape. Each image tells a subjective story, specific to the viewer and confined only by the limits of their imagination and experiences. When looking at this piece, I see a beautiful equality in the composition of the materials. It lacks a hierarchy, offering a message of harmony in the overall image. What do you see? What emotion does yellow evoke? Would you feel differently if the image was blue? Or red?

AUTHOR: CHRIS DUFFY

The geometric design of *Quince-yellow, outside*, evokes an engineered cityscape or an urban plan. Using refuse as a medium enables the representation of the objects that really make up a metropolis. Matt Gonzalez draws attention to a world of boxes within boxes: not only a physical structure of buildings in space, but a hierarchical structure of individuals in society. This work deals with the outcasts, the forgotten, and the refused. The image of the Bay Area today is one of money, technology, and innovation. Gonzalez flips this concept on its head by forming his city out of the unwanted. The piece of trash quietly waiting to be found under the Tesla Roadster becomes the homeless man sleeping in the doorway of the Twitter headquarters. He reminds us of the poorest of the poor, the small business owner, the undocumented immigrants, the long-time citizens of the Bay, and the devalued subcultures that are all too often run over by the ever “forward” thrust of capitalist economics. Gonzalez is not challenging the greatness of San Francisco. He is challenging a notion that business, profits, and bottom lines should be valued over individuals.

AUTHOR: NATHANIEL YAMAMOTO

When using each material, such as paper and packaging, Matt Gonzalez looks at the potential of each by considering their qualities. Using variations of yellow, the pieces are used to create a golden artwork. The way it is pieced together pulls the viewer towards viewing it as a structure. The image can be viewed as very organic, and almost as a sensuous experience, despite its geometric and structured construction. The contrast of the various lights, darks, and saturations of yellow creates a composition that seems to have infinite possibilities of how it can be viewed. The different textures and sizes of the individual pieces also allow for a sense of depth as they contrast with one another. All of these details come together in *Quince-yellow, outside* to bring life into the piece. These discarded pieces, seen by many as trash, are given new life.

AUTHOR: EMMANUEL MARTINEZ

Much like the city of San Francisco, which the artist calls home, this abstract interpretation echoes its landscape through a network of utilities that make up the city. The straight horizontal and vertical lines resemble the streets of the city, which are inorganic and designed to solely be efficient. Yet through this order, we find organized chaos that the citizens have deemed to be necessary for cultivating and nurturing of life. While urban landscapes are often seen as cold and lifeless, this bright landscape is a celebration of everything that makes these places unique and individual. Through a shared identity, we find a well-established sense of personal pride, emotional attachment, and sense of belonging throughout the city.