

dirty pictures and neon breasts at zacks



E.F. Elder

An example of Sonia Mejia's work currently on display at the Samuel J. Zacks Gallery

by Nancy Bevan

Dirty pictures and neon breasts spiral into conflict with God and Mr. Potato Head. These opposing forces constitute the focus of Sonia Mejia's mixed media exhibit currently held at the Samuel J. Zacks Gallery in Stong College from

January 18 to February 2.

Crowds of Spanish-speaking supporters, and serenades by two Andean folk musicians, created a decidedly Latin-American ambience for opening night.

Mejia, a second-year fine arts student and wife of the Ecuadorian Consul in Toronto, says her two years in Canada have encour-

aged her to explore a variety of media including oils, glass, poetry, ink, pastels and even good old homegrown Canadian dirt from her backyard (hence the dirty pictures — you were thinking pornography weren't you? Tsk, tsk.)

Well, you were almost right. According to Mejia, "The artists unfastens his clothes, becomes

uncorporal and remains between the silence and the words . . . comprehension without knowing . . ." The artist uses the images of female bodies in several works to investigate the relationship between women and the earth, and the role of both as nurturers of humanity.

"Kingdoms of Jade," a glass-enclosed sculpture of sand broken mirrors and thumbprint photos, "I: the Graceful One," a brilliant torso with the previously mentioned neon breasts outlined in sand, and "The Perfume," a pastel with more naked breasts are all works which explore these ideas.

Natural materials are used in pieces like "Time and Love," rendered in oils with a stone and a piece of wood. Tinges of orange and brown explode into light from a nucleus of sod in the way that both time and love build up and overflow, only to reinitiate the same process.

A clump of neon-green grass clings stubbornly to a roller-coaster highway in the painting "The Rain's Song." In this work, Mejia makes a poignant comment on the perseverance of nature in spite of our attempts to pave her over in the name of industry and progress.

"The Howl and the Silence" finds an oval-shaped rock posed on six layers of glass — Mr. Potato Head for adults!

As I attempted to determine whether he was howling or being silent from my perspective, I nearly bumped into an inconspicuous treasure. "The Four Seasons" is actually a book made out of glass. Each page contains a painted line of poetry in Spanish and English which can be seen

from the outside of the book in a cyclical format to represent the movement of the seasons.

In art, as in life, we constantly strive to attain perfection, but reality opposes us, making perfection impossible. The rapid pace and confusion of the modern age may impel us to seek Divine Assistance. These philosophies are united in the watercolour "Invisible Spring," which epitomizes the principal concepts of the collection.

In tones of blue on white, a girl sits in a wintry park. Although they are hidden by snow, elements of life still surround her.

The scope of Mejia's talent in such a range of media is impressive. Mejia has looked to philosopher Hugh Kenner to articulate for her the essence of this collection: "To grasp a piece of something is to grasp all that." In each work, Sonia shares with us a part of her soul, then leaves it to us to reach out and take hold of it.



Artist Sonia Mejia.

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