

# RUIZ-HEALY ART

Latinx, Latin America, & Texas Contemporary Art

## ***Alejandro Diaz: Words for White Walls***

May 11, 2022, to June 24, 2022  
74 East 79th Street, 2D, New York, NY 10075

Tuesday – Friday  
11 AM - 5 PM and by appointment



**Alejandro Diaz**, *Untitled*, 2019, Acrylic paint on canvas, 36 x 36 in, 91.4 x 96.5 cm

Ruiz-Healy Art is pleased to announce *Alejandro Diaz: Words for White Walls*. This is the artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery. Grounded in his Mexican American heritage and South Texas aesthetics, Diaz presents a recent series of text-based paintings and prints as well as found object sculptures from the late 2000's. Diaz will also showcase a series of cardboard signs, which he began making and selling on the streets of Manhattan in the late 1990s.

*Alejandro Diaz: Words for White Walls* opens on Wednesday, May 11th from 6 to 8 pm. Please contact the gallery for details regarding our opening night reception. To request high-resolution images and more information about this exhibition please contact the gallery at [info@ruizhealyart.com](mailto:info@ruizhealyart.com) or 646-833-7709.

Since returning to painting in 2014, the artist's recent body of paintings and prints rely on the ability of text to conjure mental images. A moody red canvas inscribed with the lyric "A room in Mexico with enamel pink interior and red velvet furnishings" evokes the warmth, vibrancy, and eclecticism associated with Mexican architecture and interior design while "X-Rays of 80's Masterpiece Reveal Seven Layer Dip Recipe" offers a humorous social critique on the sometimes silent, subtle integration of Mexican and American culture. Other works might resemble newspaper headlines, logos, or redacted documents. Writer, curator and art historian Carla Stellweg writes, "Diaz's decision to embrace painting resulted in a stunning body of work. The works are further strengthened by several suggestive or unassuming deadpan titles that reveal much of the artist's mindset behind whatever the imagery turned into. They seem to reflect Diaz's desire and dream of a journey to seek freedom, that of letting his hands and mind take off to encounter what may be next in store."

A series of found object sculptures crafted in the late 2000s during the Great Recession evoke surrealist and post-conceptual art practices, speaking to the complex and irrational realities that accompany national crises. These concepts find relevance yet again in the Pandemic-era. *Lost Our Lease* features an empty

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Mexican birdcage and a miniature cardboard sign scrawled with the title. *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* reimagines René Magritte's 1929 painting with a cardboard sign and candelabra. On his use of high and popular art references Kathryn Kanjo, Director and CEO of the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego states, "Diaz deploys art historical references to critique not only visual culture but also socio-economic issues...Through such layered references, Diaz crafts works that are simultaneously sophisticated and shrewd. His is the gently subversive visual patois of a south Texas kid stepping into the grown-up world of high art."

Diaz's conceptual, campy, and political cardboard signs-which he began making and selling on the streets of Manhattan in the late 1990s-are emblematic of his recurrent use of everyday materials and his continuing involvement with art as a form of entertainment, activism, public intervention, and free enterprise. The cardboard sign series started when Diaz moved to New York City to study at Bard Curatorial Studies and work as an intern at the Whitney Museum of American Art. The artist remarks, "In art school there are many things they don't teach you but most importantly they don't teach you how to make a living... I did end up making a little extra cash but more importantly I discovered that through these signs I was able to engage with a broad public outside of the art world." The cardboard sign series is ongoing and continues to evolve with some of the sayings now being produced in neon.

## About the Artist

Based in New York, Alejandro Diaz was born and raised in San Antonio, Texas where he developed a unique and pertinent body of work exemplifying the complex and visually rich cultural milieu particular to South Texas and Mexico. Diaz received an MFA from the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY in 1999 and a BFA from the University of Texas at Austin in 1987. He was an Artist-in-Residence at Artpace in 1996 and co-founded Sala Diaz Gallery that same year in San Antonio, Texas. In both his artistic and curatorial practice Diaz has prioritized the inclusion and representation of lesser-known or rarely validated cultural expressions. His artwork is often tinged with humor, sometimes making self-deprecating jokes about the "seriousness" of artmaking, other times delivering biting socio-political commentary under the guise of light-hearted wit.

His work is in the permanent collections of Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), CA; Smithsonian Museum of American Art, Washington, DC; El Museo del Barrio, New York, NY; The National Museum of Mexican Art, Chicago, IL; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, CA; RISD Museum of Art, Providence, RI; Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, AZ; Fundación Colección Museo Jumex, Mexico City, Mexico; Ruby City, San Antonio, TX; Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, TX; McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, TX.

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## **About Ruiz-Healy Art**

Founded in San Antonio, TX in 2006 Ruiz-Healy Art represents an international roster of artists and places emphasis on Latinx and Latin American artists, as well as working with prominent Texas-based artists. Biculturalism and identity discourse plays an important role in several of the artists that we collaborate with. In the spring of 2019, Ruiz-Healy Art opened a gallery space in the Upper East Side of New York City that works in tandem with the San Antonio gallery as a platform to disseminate the artist's work. The continuous investments in these underrepresented areas have remained a longstanding signature of the gallery program.