



# RUIZ-HEALY ART

Contemporary Art from Latin America & Texas

Patricia Ruiz-Healy, Director Ruiz-Healy Art  
Gallery: 210-804-2219

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## *In the Belly of the Beast: Ricky Armendariz*

The exhibition will be on display November 6 through December 6, 2014  
RUIZ-HEALY ART 201-A East Olmos Drive, San Antonio Texas 78212  
Opening reception 6 -- 8 pm Thursday, November 6, 2014  
Artist Talk Saturday, November 15th, 1:00 pm

Ruiz-Healy Art is pleased to announce a solo exhibition of new works by Ricky Armendariz. *In the Belly of the Beast* opens Thursday, November 6th with an artist reception, 6 -- 8 pm. Armendariz will talk about his work Saturday, November 15th, at 1 pm.

Born in El Paso, Texas, Armendariz is known for his carved paintings and text-based imagery. The artworks begin as moody depictions in oil on panel of desert sunsets or night skies: subjects much beloved by Romantic painters such as J.M.W. Turner, but Armendariz landscapes contain power dynamics, Native American stories intertwined with Greek mythologies, and a thread of tragedy runs throughout. The text is inscribed in the discourse of the U.S./Mexico border using a dialogue combining both Spanish and English grounding Armendariz in his roots.

Into this lush backdrop, Armendariz cuts intricate images of birds, animals, totems of life in the Southwest and emblems of motion and conflict. Phrases of his own invention or culled from song lyrics are added; in some pieces, words dominate the work. In one of Armendariz's recent paintings *Haiku paño* the text reads "*no necesita un weatherman sabes que which way the wind blows*" dances among tokens of good and bad luck repeating Bob Dylan's famous line in code-switching brilliance. In another, a sailing ship voyages onward proclaiming *No tengo suerte for Love* (I don't have luck for Love). Bisons--images of Indigenous America--abound, garlanded by flowers, butting heads, and pecked by birds. A raven, bird of omens, fills one painting rendered in fine cuts that recall *papel picado*, cut-paper folk art. From its beak, a banner spills, emblazoned with a single word: *sucio*. Used to admonish a child, *sucio* means dirty, filthy--or sinful. Things have clearly gotten out of hand. Whose fault is that?

"Hollywood told us who we were," explains Armendariz. "There is a Southwest aesthetic that everyone understands, even in Europe: carved wooden signs." Created by the movies and embraced by corporate America, the carved sign motif has found its way onto restaurant menus and tourist hotels. As inspiration for his cut images and text, in



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Armendariz's hands it is a tool to interrogate received ideas about identity and place with disruptive humor, and a challenge to notions of artistic propriety, as well.

Armendariz developed his tiered technique early in his career. His appropriation of sunsets--a trope of landscape painting--has symbolic power for the artist. "Landscape is synonymous with our culture," says Armendariz, speaking of the Tejano identification with the staggering expanse of land and sky that is Texas.

Like the marks of civilization in the wilderness, the incision of words, images or both, "scars, tattoos--literally defaces the painting," Armendariz says. "The painting surface is usually sacrosanct--something you don't want to mess with. There is risk involved--when you carve, you cannot repair the cut. If there is a misstep, a misspelling, you cannot reverse it."

In addition to the oil on carved panel works, the exhibition includes wood block prints. The title, *In the Belly of the Beast*, refers to a painting by Francisco Goya known as *Saturn Devouring His Son*, a disturbing portrait that illustrates the Roman myth of the Titan Saturn eating his children one-by-one as they were born in order to thwart a foretelling that he would be overthrown by one of his offspring. His son Jupiter, hidden by Saturn's wife, fulfilled the prophecy.

Armendariz received his Bachelor of Fine Arts from The University of Texas at San Antonio in 1995 and his Master of Fine Arts from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1999. In 2008, he received the Artpace Supplemental Travel Grant for travel to Mexico City, Mexico. In 2013 he was an artist in residence at Künstlerhaus Bethanien Berlin, Germany. His work is in the permanent collections of the Denver Art Museum, San Antonio Museum of Art, and has been exhibited at The Dallas Contemporary; Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogota, Colombia; Ningxia University, Yinchuan, China; Academia de San Carlos, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México D.F. and Mexic-Arte Museum in Austin, among many other venues.

*In the Belly of the Beast* will be on view through December 6, 2014.

Founded in 2004, and located in the historic Olmos Park District of San Antonio, Ruiz-Healy Art specializes in contemporary and modern art with an emphasis on Latin American and Texas connected artists. To request high-resolution images, or to arrange an interview with the artist, please contact the gallery at 210-804-2219.