Chicano art shown at Clark College

by Robert Lothian

Clark College in Vancouver is hosting the first region-wide group exhibit of the work of Northwest Chicano and Latino artists.

The unique exhibit captures the spirit, sense of struggle and connectedness to the land of Hispanic culture. It is on display in the college's Index Gallery, in back of the bookstore in Gaiser Hall, 1600 E. McLoughlin Blvd.

Nine artists are represented, most from Washington and Idaho. Their work includes painting, sculpture, photography and prints. Panels with statements by prominent Northwest Mexican-Americans describe Hispanic culture.

"Chicanos and Latinos are no strangers to the Pacific Northwest states of Oregon, Washington and Idaho," says a statement by Erasmo Gamboa, of the Chicano Studies Center at the University of Washington. Hispanics have lived in the agricultural valleys of the Northwest at least since the American Revolution, he said, adding that according to the 1980 census, 220,434 persons of Hispanic descent live in the Northwest.

Another panel informs the reader that Chicano art is influenced by the art of Mexico, Cuba, Latin America, Pre-Columbian art, the third world art of the 1960s and also the art of the "Movimiento," a Chicano political and cultural resurgence of the 1960s and 70s.

One mural-like painting is rich with Chicano racial, cultural and political symbols: the flag of the United Farmworkers Union, the cross of the Roman Catholic Church, black berets, scenes of farmworkers working the land, and Chicano heroes and heroines. A surrealist painting by Arturo Artorez, of Seattle, however, transcends those categories.

"Are you an American or a Mexican artist?", painter Jose Luis Rodriguez asks himself rhetorically. "I resist being called either or both, and draw upon the best that each can offer," he wrote. A huge pope or bishop looms gloomily out of one of his impressionistic paintings.

Chicano women are the subjects of painter Cecelia Concepcion Alvarez. One colorful portrait depicts a woman with Indian features in traditional dress. Another, with rich earth tones, shows two dignified Chicano women who could be twins, possibly posing the question of the two cultures, Mexican and American, that Chicanos live in.

Painter Jose E. Orantes was born in El Salvador and grew up in Guatemala before moving to Seattle. "Perhaps I'm seeing this earth with 'ojos de extranjero' (eyes of a stranger)," because of his movement between cultures, said Orantes. Mayan culture as well as the energy and technology of America figure in his bright acrylic paintings. A Mayan chief dominates one, and a wild and raucous freeway is the subject of another.

Clark College Spanish instructor John Calvert said a number of talks and other programs have been scheduled in conjunction with the exhibit, which leaves at the end of February to tour Washington, Oregon, Idaho, California, Texas and Illinois. "One thing this has done is to create a sense of community," said Calvert, who added that many of the artists didn't know each other prior to their collaboration on the exhibit.

The show was "terrific" for two women who came from Washington County to see it. "I think its wonderful to bring it to this area because there exists a real high Spanish-speaking population not too far from here in Washington County," said Donna Butler of Forest Grove.

(L-r) Donna Butler, John Calvert and Rosa Armendariz discuss works of art at Clark College's Index Gallery
(Photo: Richard J. Brown)

Fred Meyer joins child search

Fred Meyer, in cooperation with the National Child Safety Council will be the first local retailer to run information about missing children on half-gallon cartons of milk.

Gordon Johnson, Fred Meyer Dairy Buyer, said that approximately 100,000 of the specially printed cartons of 2% and 3.25% My-Te-Fine milk will begin appearing in Oregon and Washington Fred Meyer Food Departments on Thursday and Friday of this week.

Two missing children will be profiled on each carton. The child's name and photograph, along with a description, will appear on the side panel.

Johnson stated, "This program was initiated in California and back East. Because it's resulted in the recovery of several children, Fred Meyer felt it was a worthwhile project to support." In January and May of 1984, Fred Meyer provided parents with free fingerprinting kids, so they could keep confidential records of their children at home.

The milk carton program is implemented through the National Child Safety Council, which provides information on the missing children; and the International Paper Co., which makes the cartons. International Paper is donating the artwork and printing plates needed to make the special cartons.

The National Child Safety Council urges public support of the milk carton program. Anyone who recognizes a missing child should contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at this toll-free number: 1-800-843-5678.

NAACP February meeting planned

The Portland Branch NAACP will hold its first regular meeting under its new President, Ora Nunley, February 17 at the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, North Minnesota at Killingsworth at 4 p.m.

Rev. Felton Howard, the host pastor, has promised music from the Antioch choir. There will be reports from the delegates to the recent Northwest Area Conference of NAACP held in Bremerton.

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