

## Art Notes: Ernest Silva and May-Ling Martinez

The San Diego Art Prize is a cash grant which recognizes excellence in the visual arts. The prize is dedicated to the idea that the visual arts are a necessary and rewarding ingredient of any world-class city and a building block of the lifestyle of its residents. Conceived to promote and encourage dialogue, reflection and social interaction about San Diego's artistic and cultural life.

Notes by  
**ANN BÉRCHTOLD**  
Director of L Street  
Fine Art Gallery

The third exhibition in the series, *Domestic Deviation*, *Featuring Works by Ernest Silva and May-Ling Martinez* will begin March 3rd with an opening reception from 7pm - 9pm at the L Street Gallery and will be on view through May 21, 2007. The psycho-analytical term Object Relations Theory in many ways defines the work of both artists. This theory states that the building blocks of how people experience the world emerge from their relationship to loved and hated objects. Both use images as a visual language to tell a story. The viewer then interprets the story based on their own frame of reference. Each image invokes a different dialogue within the individual that is significant to his or her life.

### ERNEST SILVA

Ernest Silva received a BFA from the University of Rhode Island in 1971 and an MFA from Tyler School of Art in 1974. Since 1972, his work has been shown in over 45 one person shows and over 150 group shows. In 1989, he was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in Painting and in 1995; he was the artist in residence at the National Workshops for Arts and Crafts, Copenhagen, Denmark, known as Gammel Dok.

Mr. Silva has been commissioned to construct several public art projects in the San Diego/Tijuana region. His public projects include a permanent installation at the Children's Museum of San Diego, 1995; the Casa de la Cultura, Tijuana, 1994; and the Centro Cultural Tijuana. Mr. Ernest Silva has been a Professor of Visual Arts at the University of California, San Diego since 1979. Silva's recent paintings and sculptures are being shown at the Patricia Correia Gallery in Santa Monica, CA.

Notes by  
**MARY BEEBE**  
Curator of the Stuart Collection at UCSD

Ernest Silva is a consummate painter, sculptor and installation artist with an individual vision and distinctive vocabulary. His work is an expression of mankind's eternal longings and fears, and in his world human beings are restless souls on a lonely journey through a sometimes-dark environment filled with risk and danger.

All is in flux; there are, however, real signs of hope and safety, shelter, beacons of light and colors of sunshine and peace. We see and feel in Silva's work a human voice and a coming together of nature and mankind. There is a sense of searching, longing and belonging; a sense both of fragility and of strength. Silva has a dis-



tinct vocabulary and has developed it for decades. Its components are often familiar: human figures, a house, a lighthouse, boats, families, trees, deer, fire and water. These images come from very personal and intimate sources, yet they are images which are universal and inspire an instant connection with the viewer.

The picture of a campfire is a reminder that gathering around a fire in nature can be a wonderful and cozy experience, yet when it includes a small boy, one thinks also of the potential for danger. A boat ride can be soothing and lovely, a real adventure... or a terrifying rough sea tossing. There are references to history: a roughly carved kind of Cycladic fig-

ure; a coliseum-like structure, generic man and woman being sent from somewhere, Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden? Guns, war and torment. This is the human story, one of survival and one in which we all take some comfort. Life is always about perishing, but it is always more about making sense of living.

Domestic Deviation  
March 3rd - May 21st

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(Image) Ernest Silva, Living Room; 2006



Notes by  
**MAY-LING MARTINEZ**

I enjoy and appreciate the opportunity to exhibit my work alongside the artist Ernest Silva. I love the intriguing way he represents a broad range of issues from the personal to the universal. Through his strong sense of narrative, I am invited to become part of an event, an observer of something unraveling in front of me. Whether it is a startled deer, a man chopping wood, people rowing in an unknown body of water or an enigmatic domestic scene, I am seduced into becoming part of the action and suspense that invites my interpretation.

**MAY-LING MARTINEZ**

Born and raised in Puerto Rico with a bachelor's degree in Communications and Visual Arts, May-ling's work consists of mixed media installations, sculptures and collages that function as triggers to evoke memories, precious personal recollections. Her work relates closely to storytelling, but the stories and events are suggestive of vague memories, a strange mix between reality and fantasy. May-ling has found comfort and humor in collecting and working with home related elements and objects and says, "Philosophers, psychoanalysts and poets have perceived the House, or the home as a magical place full of contradictory wonder."

Notes by  
**TINA YAPELLI**  
Director of SDSU Art  
Gallery/Foundation

A fine gold-colored thread runs through several of May-ling Martinez's collaged images—a metaphor, perhaps, for family tradition coursing its way through successive generations and across geopolitical borders. The thread, sewn in a running stitch through the watercolor paper on which Martinez composes her work, often acts as a dotted line connecting disparate images that the artist brings together on the page. Boys and girls, mothers and fathers, tract homes and birthday parties—all familiar archetypes of 1950s suburban life appropriated from the Dick-and-Jane variety of elementary school primers—combine with schematic drawings of '50s-era radios and televisions, as well as diagrams of period do-it-yourself building projects. Along with actual vintage wallpaper, wooden bingo markers, and doilies made of plastic, paper and yarn, these montages images create provocative scenarios of social interaction that question, with nostalgia and dismay, the attainability of the classic American dream.

The trappings of mid-century, middle-class, suburban America surrounded Martinez during her childhood in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Her parents and grandparents had furnished their houses with American products during the 1940s, '50s and '60s, and their homes retained the styles of those decades throughout Martinez's youth. Her artwork evidences the impact of the cultural aesthetic with which she grew up, as well as the effect of her strong family ties. From her father, an engineer, she inherited an interest in logic



and mathematics, which is reflected in her repeated use of numbers, ledger paper and mechanical imagery. After a brief career as a secretary, her mother became a homemaker, and inspired Martinez's fascination with household objects and the concept of "home" as a symbol for domestic happiness. In her work, she conflates her parents' influence with her own perspective on life in Puerto Rico and, since 1996, the U.S. The resulting compositions are intentionally open-ended, demonstrating Martinez's preference for multiple interpretations of a single scene. For May-ling Martinez, art making is a vehicle for understanding herself, the people she knows, and her place in the world.

Notes by  
**ERNEST SILVA**

I sense May-Ling Martinez and I, are drawn to images for some of the same reasons. Our works make reference to the 1950's, May-Ling's from her grand parents' generation and mine, from my child-

are synthesized, drawn from disparate sources, suggesting post war optimism and including pictures from children's books, basic readers and a variety of other sources – that range from the toy-like to the malevolent. They share an emphasis on the ambiguous – overlaps and collisions of the personal and the collective - they are seductive, recapturing only enough of the past to invite the viewer to construct their own web of associations. Our works function as invitations – drawing the viewer into them, to the elusive and consequential, allusions to an idealized past - and the inevitable process of comparing it to the reality of the present and immediate.

Art Notes edited by  
Ingrid Hoffmeister