

Mari Renteria
Artist Statement
May 2019

Concept

Throughout my work, the primary focus of each one of the pieces is the sense of identity. Identity is defined through my culture, faith, nationality, traditions, experiences, etc. Many things make up identity. Each piece reflects experiences and relationships. The piece, *Mi Mama, Ama, Hermana y Yo*, is a reflection on the influential women that impacted my life and how my relationship with each of them is different. The piece *Mi Identidad* reflects my identity as a Latina, a fiber artist, and the emotional state that I was in at that moment. Color plays an important part of my work. Colors that are chosen to define my culture, faith, nationality, tradition or an emotional status, such as loneliness, sense of belonging, or even emptiness. The relationship between material and/ or technique is explored in my work because as humans we build relationships and try to connect to others.

Technique

I manipulate the surface of through dyeing my own fabric in which I create organic forms. Through the process of naturally dyeing fabrics and yarns, I control the intensity of colors. I use different plants such as golden rod, madder, indigo, Osage orange, and other plants in order to create subtle, soothing or saturated, uncomfortable hues. I use quilting to manipulate the fabric and create an interesting composition. The natural dyes that I use are blue (indigo), red (madder), yellow (Osage orange, golden rod, and sunflower), and green (Osage orange with iron).

Using natural dyes is visually appealing to me because of the colors that is achieved through the plant material that is used. Manipulating the fabric through dyeing is visually appealing because I can create visual textures and interesting colorful compositions. Quilting is the dry form of painting, in which I optically mix colors and create multiple layers with the fabric and yarn.

Aesthetic Philosophy

As a Latina and an artist most of my work focuses on color, form and space. As a Latina there are many cultural ideas that I explore in my work. I use form in creating sculptures that are nostalgic comfort food that connect to others but convey a message of discrimination. Discrimination is an issue that is close to me because I have personal experience that I can put into my work. As an artist, bringing different material together and creating a unique visual experience to the viewer is something that I enjoy exploring my work. As I explore texture and rhythm through my work, the organic nature presents itself in each piece by the unique composition and rhythm. The organic nature along with color enhances expression, thoughts, and relations. Being organic not only in form and movement makes my pieces more dynamic and truthful.

Artist Influence

Janine Antoni is one of many artists that have influenced my work. She works within performance, sculpture and installation. She has influenced me through her process, because she uses her body as an instrument and even though you should use your entire body, she literally uses her body as a main tool. *Gnaw* was created through her gnawing huge chunks of chocolate and lard. It was the labor and her unconventional tools that influenced me in the beginning of my artwork. I was influenced by her to do a performance piece with my body as a true tool. By true tool, I mean the final product was done with my body. She helped me understand the different tools that are at an artist's disposal. Her topics of femininity, body, materiality, and process interests me because it challenges the viewer to see

the material, as the material and look deeper beyond the surface. Through her use of unconventional materials, it allowed me to understand how an artist can create their work, and that they don't have to be conventional tools or materials.

Doris Salcedo being from Colombia uses her history, Colombia's history in order to express feelings of mourning, loss and pain in her work. Her body of work includes sculpture and installation and I have had the opportunity to view her work in the Nasher Sculpture Center. The gravity of her work is shown because of how her work fills the room and the material that she uses is common and familiar to people. There is an eerie emotion that is evoked in her work that make you uncomfortable to see it and interact with. Although my tone tends to be more playful and colorful, there is gravity that is subtle within the work. I look at Doris Salcedo's work as a way for me to enhance that gravity and interaction, as a guide on how to achieve that gravity.

There is another artist that has influenced the way that I present myself as an artist, who is Tine Medina. She taught me in community college and she way of looking at art helped me understand who I am an artist. Being a Latina, I was able to relate on what she was going through and helped me understand my place as an artist. As an artist struggling to figure out what my concept was, she helped me understand that concept and medium relate together in order to create your piece. Your work is a story that is told in your words and through your eyes. The story that you tell is your own. Medina helped me realize that my story was important. Her work centers around her identity being a Latina/ Mexican- American, she represents the work that I want to achieve in my future pieces. Her story and mine are similar but different, we each have a voice, she has gained hers, while mine is still growing.

Goals

A goal I have for the future is to continue being a studio artist. Further down the line I want to have a loom, where I can continue weaving. I will continue quilting and hope to have a business with my mother one day. My future is unsure, but one thing is certain, I will not stop creating, as my future is unsure.