

"El Tecolote" by El Moises. The painting is part of "La Ultima Exhibición," now open at the National Hispanic Cultural Center.



'Ultima' exhibit displays artists' interpretations of Anaya's novel

BY ADRIAN GOMEZ
JOURNAL ARTS EDITOR

Augustine Romero took advantage of a second opportunity. And he's making it bigger and better.

Romero is the guest curator for "La Ultima Exhibición," which is on display at the National Hispanic Cultural Center Art Museum. It runs through Nov. 11.

The exhibit features visual interpretations of Rudolfo Anaya's celebrated book "Bless Me, Ultima" — a portrait of life in rural New Mexico as seen through the eyes of a young boy during World War II.

All the 24 artists in the exhibit have their own interpretations of what the book meant to them. The exhibit is a mixture of all mediums.

In the novel, rural life is hard but it is also magical. Ultima, a spiritual healer, helps her grandson Antonio create his own moral balance and independence. Through many trials and tribulations, Antonio learns that he must come to his own moral conclusions about the struggles and tragedies of life.

"It's a revisit of an earlier show that took place in 2006 at the South Broadway Cultural Center," Romero says. "There seems to be more interest in 'Bless Me, Ultima' now than there was in 2006."

The novel became a focal point of cultural identity and inspiration for Romero, who draws parallels in his own life to the characters created by Rudolfo Anaya.

For Romero, the coming-of-age aspect of the novel is similar to an artist finding his or her own voice, and as an artist, he is keenly aware of how the written word can inspire other artistic expression.

He became a curator to support himself as well as to encourage other artists, and the 2006 version of this exhibition, "La Ultima Grande," was one of his first shows.

He says the goal then, as it is now, was to organize an

Cultural impressions



MARLA BROSE/JOURNAL

"La Grande" by Jesus "Cimi" Alvarado is part of the new exhibit at the NHCC.



MARLA BROSE/JOURNAL

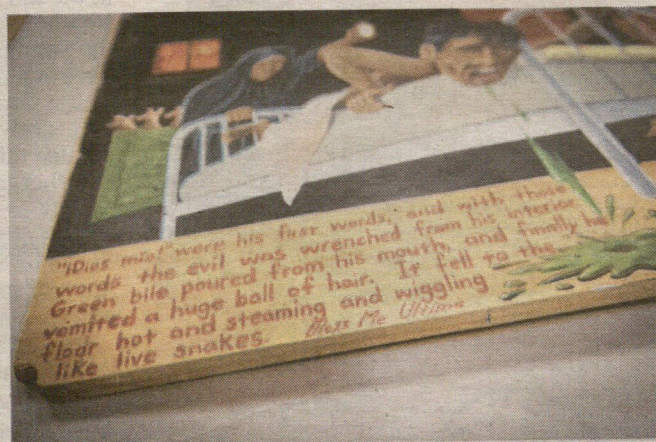
Troy Bradley, the graphic designer for the event, looks at some of the pieces that are ready to be installed, including "Spirit of Ultima" by Chris Rivera.

exhibit rooted in regional perspectives of symbolic identity as we relate to our territorial surroundings and cultural values.

"The fact that there's a lot of new artists who are bringing a sense of emotion and sensibility is great," he says. "The book has meant so much to so many. And a younger generation of artists are finding the book and tapping into it as well."

Some of the artists featured are Jesús "Cimi" Alvarado, George C de Baca, Sylvia Ortiz Domney, Christian Michael Gallegos, Roberto Gallegos, Eric Garcia, Kristina Gonzales, Nacho Jaramillo, Al Na'ir Lara, Chisim Bernal Lujan, Oscar Lozoya, Chris Ray Melendez, El Moisés, Derrick Montez, Paloma Paz Nava, Gabriel Luis Powers, Chris Rivera, Rebecca H. Hernandez Rosser, and Catalina Salinas.

Alvarado's piece is titled "La Grande," and it was commissioned by Arenas Marketing for the premiere of the film in El Paso in 2012. The painting used to create billboards for the premiere of the movie



"La Cura" by Eric Garcia.

focused on the symbolism created by Anaya in the novel.

"Antonio is portrayed as he watched Ultima releasing her owl," Alvarado says. "Although in the novel the owl is killed by Tenorio, I wanted to show the close relationship that Ultima had with the owl. Ultima is the one who performs the healings and provides guidance to others. She is the one who nurtures Antonio's spiritual awakening. In a way, she's the scapegoat of a cosmic struggle between good and evil."

IF YOU GO

WHAT: "La Ultima Exhibición"

WHEN: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday. Runs through Nov. 11

WHERE: National Hispanic Cultural Center Art Museum, 1701 Fourth SW

HOW MUCH: \$6 adults, \$5 for NM residents, free for 16 and under; New Mexico residents admitted free on the first Sunday of each month

'ULTIMA' EVENTS

The National Hispanic Cultural Center is hosting a series of events in conjunction with the exhibit "La Ultima Exhibición." Here are a few of the events.

2 p.m. March 24 and 2 p.m. April 28 — Seeing Double: Paired Perspective Museum Tours will be led by Maria Teresa Márquez, retired librarian from the University of New Mexico, and Augustine Romero, curator of the exhibit.

5:30 p.m. April 5 — ¡HAH! Happy Arte Hour will feature artist Al Na'ir Lara, whose work is in "La Ultima Exhibición," will lead a 2-D mixed media workshop exploring texture and environments.

10:30 a.m. April 7 — ¡Vamos al Museol has a workshop led by artist Al Na'ir Lara, whose work is part of "La Ultima Exhibición."

10:30 a.m. June 16 — Jugamos Juntos presents "Vamos Afuera: Ultima's Garden," in which visitors can help plant the NHCC herb garden, taste some tea and make some plant-inspired art to take home.

2 p.m. June 16 — Family Museum Tour with Ultima, led by Maria Dolores Gonzales, who represents Ultima's perspective.

10:30 a.m. July 21 — "Who, Who was Ultima's Owl?" will have owls that live in and around the Albuquerque bosque and learn about what makes them special.

5:30 p.m. Aug. 2 — ¡HAH! Happy Arte Hour features artist Catalina Salinas, who will lead an Ultima-inspired mixed media project.

5:30 p.m. Sept. 6 — ¡HAH! Happy Arte Hour features Augustine Romero in exploring the light from darkness, with scratchboard techniques.

2 p.m. Sept. 15 — Family Museum Tours with Ultima will be led by Maria Dolores Gonzales, who represents Ultima's perspective.

7 p.m. Nov. 8 — Film: "Bless Me, Ultima" This is a free, ticketed event.

Galleries

ALBUQUERQUE OPENINGS

Tuesday

516 ARTS, 516 W. Central, continues "The US-Mexico Border: Place Imagination and Possibility," a group exhibit and an indoor mural by guest artist Curiot Tlalpazoti of Mexico City, from noon to 5 p.m. The exhibition and mural are on view through April 14. Call 242-1445.

Thursday

Central Features, 514 W. Central, second floor, continues the solo installation "Nora Wendt: I Listened for the Echoes of Your Voice" and "Boundless: Experimental Artist-Made Books" from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Runs through March 10. Call 252-9983.

New Mexico Humanities Council, 4115 Silver SE, hosts a reception and discussion for "Ernie Pyle: A GI-Wise Gypsy," an exhibition of photographs and news clippings, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Pyle won the Pulitzer Prize for journalism in 1944 as a World War II correspondent. Show runs through March 30. Call 633-7371.

SANTA FE OPENINGS

Today

Museum of International Folk Art, 706 Camino Lejo, Museum Hill, hosts the "Year of the Dog" Annual Lunar New Year Celebration from 1 to 4 p.m. A series of events includes Tibetan Prayer Flag Hands-on Printing activity with Lama Gyurme, Quang Minh Temple Lion Dance and taiko drumming. Admission is free. Call 505-476-1200.

Friday

Form and Concept, 435 S. Guadalupe St., and Strangers Collective host a reception for "Mirror Box," a group exhibition of works by artists and writers, from 5-8 p.m. The mixed-media show features work by 36 artists and writers through April 14. Call 505-982-8111.

LewAllen Galleries, 1613 Paseo de Peralta, hosts a reception for "In Memoriam: Ed Mieczkowski (1929-2017) — Vibrations of the Eye and the Soul" from 5 to 7 p.m. Runs through March 25. Call 505-988-3250.