

Living

Bouncing into the heart of art

Exhibit shares Venezuelan artist's viewpoint on life and art.

By AMY WARD
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Symbolizing the joy and frenzy of life, red rubber balls illuminate the walls of Sylvia Riquezes' exhibit at the Coral Springs Museum of Art.

On one side, colorful red balls bounce in happy scenes, unified with family, rolling through the circle of life. On the other side, cement and twine ropes hold the orbs hostage, prisoners of a philosophical prison.

"Some people ask why a red ball," said the Venezuelan-born artist, who now lives in Boca Raton. "Round symbolizes life, and something that is red is alive. These two symbols, the round and the red color, are very important ... they are the emblem of humanity. The red ball is like the journey of man through life, and in all my works, it becomes a personage, a living person, a living character. My philosophical proposal is in the wall of the museum, that will tell you what I think about life."

Through mixed-media multi-dimensional installations such as "Escape" and "Dare to Pass," Riquezes challenges viewers to step inside themselves, using her artwork as a door to vanish from the hard-working world of material-driven success and reconnect with their inner selves.

"What I'm trying to say

is that we have to look internally and try to find the child spirit that everyone has inside," she said. "I'm trying to tell everyone that we need to break the ties that we have and to try to look inside ourselves."

Riquezes uses the separation of space in her exhibit to distinguish the different levels of consciousness.

"In the first space, there is very silent, museum-like traditional art, and the second space is more about installations," she said. "We have a lot of ties that you see in the work in the first space, there's a lot of artwork that talks about religious ties, family ties, and then you go through a very big net, and it's like I'm telling you: 'If you dare to go past the net, you are on the second space where everyone is happy, [there is] a lot of joy, a lot of children's memories.'"

The net Riquezes is speaking of is an actual installation in itself. "Dare to Pass" exhibits large red balls trapped in a net, dangling down between a doorway that leads into the second, more playful, space. In the second room, the enigma of life is fortified with the powerful red color bouncing off the walls.

Photographs of Riquezes and her two daughters line a wall, pictures taken while Riquezes is obviously pregnant, her full belly painted bright red to carry on the theme of her exhibit.

"What I'm trying to do is to bring back childhood memories where everything is possible," she said. "In the kids' minds, they think everything is possible. There's no good or bad or real or unreal;



ON TARGET: Sylvia Riquezes talks about her piece "Spiral" to patrons during her exhibition at the Coral Springs Museum of Art. The red circles are a re-occurring motif in her work.

Staff photo/Callie Henley

everything is possible. What I'm trying to tell the viewer is that we should go again to that state of mind to find our true selves, our true identity, to break all the ties that life has helped make around us."

Other works include a videotape of Riquezes and her family playing "Twister" on red mulch circles in bright green grass. While the video is playing, so is a special song that Riquezes' brother Eduardo Marturet composed for her when she was only 6 years old, making it truly a multi-media exhibit.

"I especially composed 'My Marionette has Three Faces' for my sister Sylvia, who was 6 years old at that time when she was starting piano lessons," he says in a letter displayed at the exhibit.

Transforming her entire family into her artwork is something that Riquezes loves to do. And her family doesn't mind it too much either.

"It's fun because it's not like it's a job, it's like it's a game..." said Riquezes' oldest daughter Maria, 10. "It's like [we're] really part of her artwork. Some of her artwork means family and unity and stuff, and so what's better unity than your family?"

Beyond the lighthearted first dimension of her work, critics say what lies within each piece is where the true energy is.

"Even though she works with a very playful object, there is a very deep concept behind all this playful artwork: humankind and the connection of human beings to the philosophical level of spirituality," said

professional art critic Milagros Bello of Miami. "All these red balls are a metaphor for human beings. You see them and they are connected to the concept of spirituality and the evolving souls of human beings, as they go from one state of mind or soul and go up. From hatred to love, from solitude to community, from rejection to getting together."

The exhibit is on display through May 17.

For information, call (954) 340-5000.

For information about Riquezes' artwork and future exhibitions, call her studio at (561) 883-3069.

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