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Q&A with Andrea Muñoz Martínez

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1. Let's start with the basics, tell us about yourself.

My name is Andrea Muñoz Martínez. I am a visual and performance artist currently living and working in Austin, Texas. I was born and raised in Uvalde, a rural Texas town 45 minutes from Piedras Negras, Coahuila, Mexico, where my mother was born. I grew up in the borderlands of South Texas. Borders, boundaries, and people that live in the borderlands are the subject of my paintings and performance art. After completing my MFA at UC Davis in 2013, I moved back to Texas and continued my series of works on landscapes, dogs, targets, roaches, *chispas* and *caras malas*.

BDOG, 48" x 41", acrylic and gouache on canvas, 2020

2. What media do you mainly work with?

Acrylic, gouache, canvas, ink, video, and photography.

3. What got you started on your current path?

I started out by drawing on walls as a kid. Then, my seventh-grade art teacher encouraged my mom to buy me a camera. That's when I started taking pictures and a documentary on race relations in high school. I took my first painting class as an undergrad at Brown University. Inspired by Oscar Zeta Acosta's [*Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo*](#) and [*Revolt of the Cockroach People*](#), I began to paint what I was observing in daily life and what was changing in my own self-identity. Acosta was an attorney, politician, and novelist who used animals as a metaphor and wrote about racial conflict, Latino discrimination, and the struggle for equality. That summer, I returned to my hometown of Uvalde and set up a painting studio in my parent's garage. One day, I found myself looking into the mirror and saw that I had changed and that I had been changing. I began painting the landscape that I was born and raised in. I called this place Borderlandia.

Stay, 24" x 18", acrylic and gouache on board, 2021

4. How have things (artistically, life, whatever) changed for you over the past year?

At first, the pandemic changed everything. I had symptoms of depression and my studio practice stopped altogether. I knew that making art would help relieve my symptoms. So, I ordered 10 small canvases and an easel and paints from the art supply, and I slowly started to get back into my practice making one mark at a time using colors that I really enjoy. I learned how to transform my art practice. I learned how to host virtual talks, how to take photographs of my paintings so I could share my work during a pandemic, and also how to interact with people on social media, which I had not had to rely on before to network and stay connected to the artist community.

5. Who to/Where do you look for inspiration?

I am inspired by the vast landscape of Uvalde, Texas, and the writings of the theorist Gloria Anzaldúa, who described the border as a “1,950 mile-long open wound.” Anzaldúa wrote the books, [*Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*](#) and [*Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color*](#).

6. What are your major concerns with the world today?

The US-Mexico border and the people who live in the borderlands continue to be misrepresented, misunderstood, and targeted with hate. Latinx individuals also continue to be vulnerable to COVID-19. Xenophobia and anti-immigrant hysteria has caused so much harm. How do we meet the needs of unaccompanied migrant children

crossing the border and detained all over the United States? We are all witnessing these atrocities and have a responsibility to call for change.

7. How does your artwork connect with your larger purpose?

My landscape paintings are abstract. Abstract painting can be a way of observing the hope and horror of the borderlands and help us imagine a better future for this land. In my paintings, I am able to express a range of emotions through repetitive mark-making and resonating, vibrant colors. These paintings are based on principles of color theory, including the “Bezold effect,” an optical illusion, named after a German professor of meteorology, Wilhelm von Bezold, who found that a color may appear different depending on its relation to adjacent colors. I use this understanding of colors to create movement and vibration between small marks of colors in my paintings. My *tia* once encouraged me to make paintings with color, paintings of hope. Her advice guided me to find and create *Borderlandia* as a vibrant, colorful land. I realize now that colors have healing potential.

Borderlandia, 20" x 16" inches, acrylic and gouache on board, 2021

8. Advice for beginners (of any age)?

You don't have to spend a lot of money to make art. Get a small notebook and a nice pen and draw in it every day.

9. Work/shows we should look for?

My painting “Valentine” can be seen in Brazos Hall at the Center for the Study of the Southwest at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas. My painting exhibition, “Dogs Heal in Borderlandia,” can be seen on my website xoxoammo.com and at Link & Pin Artspace on East Sixth in Austin. Women and Their Work hosts a virtual program called “Fresh from the Studio” which is really great! And go see, Deborah Roberts’ *I’m* at the Contemporary Austin.

10. Final comments? Additions?

*Floating Dog Head (Papo), 48" x 41",
acrylic and gouache on canvas, 2020*

People should be supporting and learning from Latina artists and authors. My favorite Austin artist right now is Lydia Garcia. [Buy her art](#). I love the [poetry of Kimberly Alidio](#). [Michelle García](#) is my favorite journalist and filmmaker.

Andrea Muñoz Martínez is a visual and performance artist currently living and working in Austin, Texas. She has an MFA from UC Davis and a BFA from The University of Texas at Austin. Her work can be found in private collections around the United States and has been exhibited at ICOSA Collective, Artspace111 and at Camiba Art. Martínez paints a colorful, vibrant imaginary space she calls Borderlandia. Her works include series on dogs, targets, roaches, chispas and caras malas. Martínez grew up in the borderlands of South Texas and her paintings and performance art take the border and boundaries as their subject. Her painting exhibition, “Dogs Heal in Borderlandia,” can be viewed online and at Link & Pin Artspace in Austin. Her paintings are available for purchase at xoxoammo.com.

William O. Pate II is the founding editor and publisher of San Antonio Review. He lives in Austin.