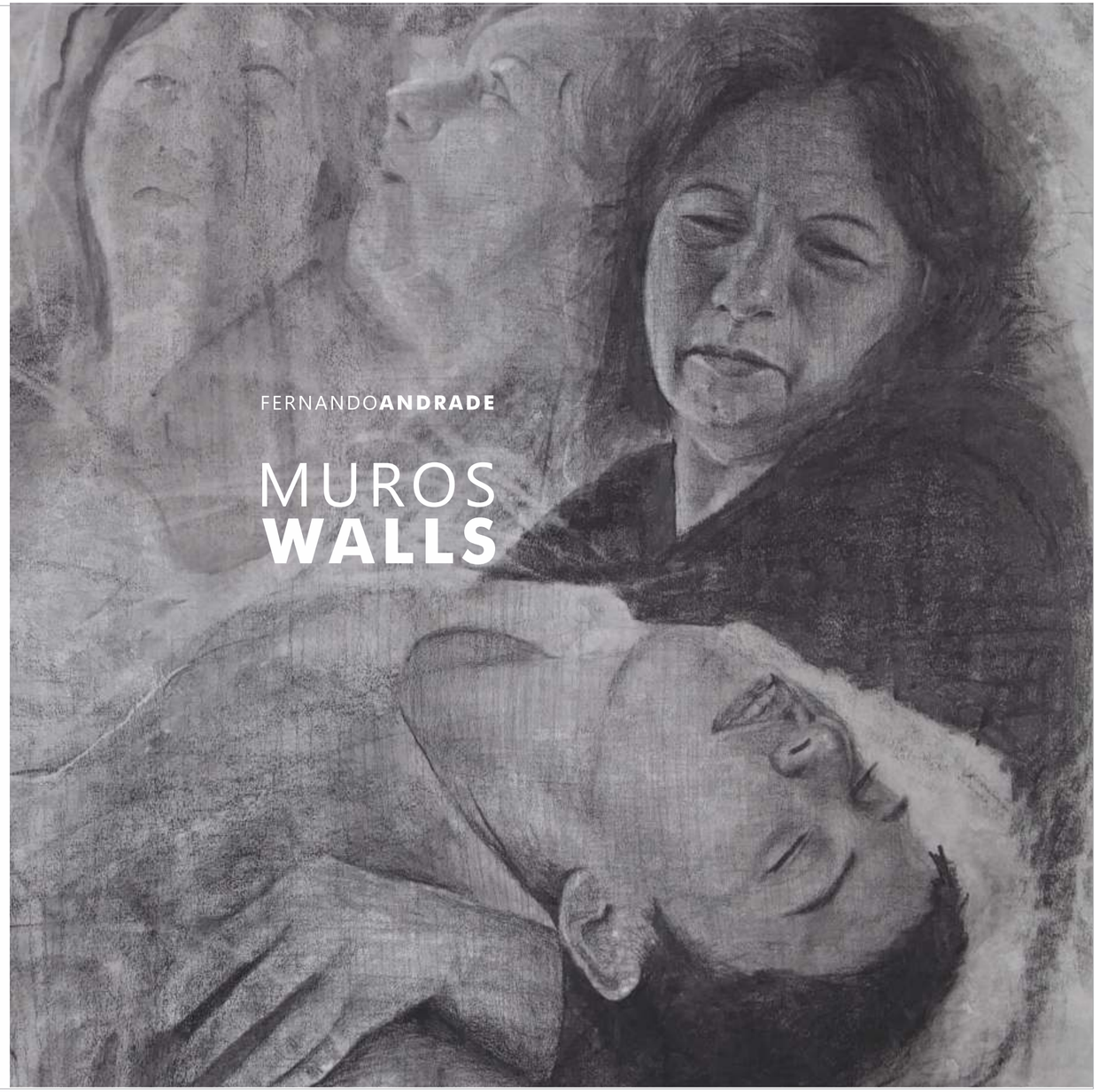
FERNANDOANDRADE
MUROS
WALLS

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MUROS
WALLS

February 6 - March 22, 2019

Acknowledgments

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Benevolence over Walls: Fernando Andrade's Humanitarian Quest

San Antonio based artist, Fernando Andrade was born and raised until the age of seven in the Mexican town of Acuña. This early childhood experience of living on the cusp of two distinct cultures has formulated most of his artistic narrative. Andrade's work in this exhibition, *Muros (walls)*, is the fruit of a National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures award. Undeniably, when we speak of walls today, we might immediately recall the campaigning rhetoric of our current administration. Andrade states that this was the impetus for the *Muros* project or at least the concept that sparked the title of the series; however, the idea quickly expanded to a global context.

Stylistically the work featured in *Muros* is a departure from Andrade's previous practice. Meticulous photorealism has been pushed into a gestural expression of line. His narrative is also a new exploration for the artist. In the past, he has focused his subject matter primarily on border politics and violence. In this body of work Andrade has expanded his focus to encapsulate the universal rather than a regionally specific thesis, although a poignant call for empathetic reaction to human struggle remains. Opening up a new creative chapter, *Muros* is a manifestation of an existential journey for Andrade as he discovers and expresses his true artistic practice..

Photorealistic drawings suspended in a location-less picture plane have been Andrade's signature style since an early class assignment during his studies at San Antonio College with one of his most influential instructors, Mark Pritchett. For the assignment, Andrade produced a still-life drawing in which he focused on a wooden stump with a bucket of nails in the center. Andrade utilized the technique of *trompe l'oeil* to create a visual illusion, and he recalls this drawing as his first work with a stark background. Many times in art school a work illustrated without an allusion to space would be frowned upon as an unfinished work; for Andrade, this conscious decision of leaving the background as an inactivated plane would catapult his success..

The artist debuted this style in his first solo exhibition in 2013, *Jugar La Guerrita (To play the little war)* displayed at Hausmann Millworks, and curated by the late art historian and former Worcester Art Museum director, Richard Teitz. Andrade used his younger brother as the model for all of the drawings and lithographs in the exhibit, posing him in action shots with sticks to mimic gun violence. In each image, a string of poignant text smokes from the barrel of the "guns" clueing the viewer to the fact that the work is not dealing with a matter of child's play.

The drawing En la Pinche Cabeza (In the [expletive] head)(Figure 1) is an excellent example of Andrade's single figure style. In drawings such as this Andrade deals with disturbing content and mimics true accounts of violence. The viewer is not instantly repelled by the images because they might not realize what brutality they encapsulate at first glance. The figurative style and playful gestures of the children make for an easy point of entry for the viewer. This dichotomy of sweet allusions and hallowing reality allows the onlooker to get hit with the gravity of the subject after a moment or two of contemplating in front of the work. Void of a landscape, Andrade allows the figure to become free of a specific place and time, providing the onlooker the space to have the greatest personal impact from the piece.

Figure 1. From *Jugar La Guerrita, En la Pinche Cabeza* 2012. Graphite on Paper 36 x 72"

Andrade's second solo-exhibition, *Tierra y Libertad (Land and Freedom)* curated by Mary Heathcott at Blue Star Contemporary Art Museum in 2014, placed the artist in the line of vision for many collectors and curators and may be credited with elevating Andrade's career. He was named "Artists to Watch in 2014" by the *San Antonio Express-News* and listed in "The Future of Art in Texas" by *Arts + Culture Texas* in 2015.

Just as in the works featured in *Jugar La Guerrita*, the drawings in *Tierra y Libertad* successfully employ the barren background, but this series expands the single figure compositions to multi-figure action scenes. The absence of environment in the more complex group settings heightens the intensity of what is occurring in the narrative. For example, *En Mil Pedacitos (In a million little pieces)* (Figure 2), two young boys aged somewhere between four and five, tug at a black garbage bag that appears stretched with an angular form. Tugs and strains in the material allude to a human knee or elbow inside the bag. The boys are unknowingly, or knowingly, being used to dispose of a body, all the while their faces express enjoyment. Andrade's conversation with violence increases beyond backyard games in *Tierra y Libertad*.

Andrade continued his practice of depicting isolated objects in the series *Palos y Piedras (sticks and stones)* and *God Bless America*. Continuing his presentation of violence under a cover of innocence, meticulously drawn sticks and stones are laid out to perceive the objects as weapons. Coupled with text, his background in graphic design is most evident in these bodies of work. The objects are placed in isolation as in product presentation and the phrases are taken from slogans of gun magazines. In the series *Palos y Piedras*, Andrade uses text as a word-play as many of the titles have a double-meaning in Mexican street slang.

God Bless America was an extension of his previous series *Palos y Piedras* and consisted of drawings and prints with debossed text coupled with a sculptural series that was cast from found objects. The project was based on the artist's research into firearm advertisements and the debates around contemporary open carry laws. The title *Made in Texas* alludes to the guns being produced in America, not Mexico. For the sculptures, Andrade found sticks and stones from his travels that best mimicked weapons and tackled the laborious task of resin casting, then powder coating them with graphite. The results are weapons which appear to be constructed of natural sticks rather than plastic. (Figure 4) This series was made possible in part by a grant from the Artist Foundation of San Antonio and in part by the Surdna Foundation via the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center's Artist Lab.

God Bless America was later exhibited in a group exhibition, *Scene and Unseen*, at Cinnabar Gallery. Cinnabar had also exhibited the artist's work earlier in 2013 at the McNay Art Museum's *Art to the Power of 10*, and was an early advocate of the artist.

Figure 2. From *Tierra y Libertad, En Mil Pedacitos* 2014
Graphite on Canson Wheat paper 22 x 30"

Figure 3. From God Bless America, M1 Garand Semi Auto Rifle, 2015
Graphite on Solid Plastic. 22" x 11" x 4" Edition of 3

Figure 4. From God Bless America, Made In Texas, 2015. Copper Etching & Debossed Text on Wheat Tone Paper, 24 x 18" Edition of 25

The concept of drug cartel violence subtly alluded to in Andrade's earlier drawings and prints escalate in *Estudio de Un Cuerpo (Study of the Body)*. Exhibited originally at the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, the artist created an installation which incorporated drawings of body parts on black trash bags rather than paper. Rather than alluding to bodies in trash bags (as in *En Mil Pedacitos*, Figure 2), Andrade makes it clear bodies are being disposed in trash bags. The body studies continued into a project of drawings on black paper that were later exhibited in a four-person show at Ruiz-Healy Art.

Asi es la Vida (This is Life) departs from all of Andrade's previous works and demonstrates the artist's multifaceted practice. This series of abstract color meditation paintings were not something he previously exhibited (although they were collected). Andrade painted these to decompress from the intense content of his drawings and prints. In 2017, Hills Synder curated these works into the exhibition *Interval* at Ruiz-Healy Art.

In the fall of 2017, Andrade worked with the Peters Projects in Santa Fe, New Mexico for a solo-exhibition, *La Patria (Homeland)*. This body of work continued his well-established figurative style using a void background. New characters were introduced using more of his brother's friends for variety.

Besides exhibiting in a number of noteworthy galleries, Andrade has won some significant recognitions. His awards include the Artist Lab Residency from the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, The Artist Foundation of San Antonio Grant, Blue Star Contemporary Berlin Residency at Küstlerhaus Bethanien (which he had to decline for family health reasons), and the Vermont Studio Center Fellowship. And now most recently, Andrade is the recipient of the 2018 National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures (NALAC) Fund for the Arts (NFA) Grant.

Andrade's concept for *Muros* shifted to the universal struggles of being human. In this body of work Andrade contemplated not just physical walls, but the physiological concept of walls, or barriers, that we all internally employ in life and relationships. Consisting of six large-scale drawings measuring 96 inches x 54 inches, Andrade creates figurative compositions using graphite and a watercolor technique on paper. No longer utilizing the innocence of children, photorealism, or static action poses so often seen in his past works, these works use gestural marks and glimpses of movement to explore notions of tension and discomfort.

Figure 5. From Muros, Conciencia, 2018. Ink wash graphite, sepia Conte pencil on French watercolor paper 96" x 54"

In his earlier series Andrade worked by copying images from magazines, a technique to educate himself on proportions and anatomy. As Andrade started to develop a more mature style, he was still using photos to aid in his practice; however, he started to arrange his own compositions and take the photos as he envisioned. Looking for a way to break from his stringent realist-drawing technique, Andrade used video interviews as his visual aids for this body of work. Recording in slow motion, he catches different angles as he pauses the video. In this process Andrade can amplify a fleeting emotion, essentially catching a faint reaction in motion rather than freezing the action into a still.

A person grappling with a spiritual plight is evident in *Conciencia (Conscience)* (Figure 5). A philosophical and humanistic struggle has manifested physically in the body language of this figure,as if in a fusion of the two central figures from the famous Renaissance painting, *The School of Athens* by Raphael, where Aristotle and Plato are shown debating their different philosophies through hand-gestures. However, in this picture plane, the deliberation is internal and central to this solitary figure. Ghostly, astral bodies are caught in moments of radically different direction and expression; the figure turns in laughter on the right, but on the far left he looks quite somber, and the fully rendered central figure looks up as if to ask some divine being for guidance.

Andrade views all difficulties, challenges, and hurdles that face a collective group of people or individuals as walls. In his youth, his classmates would tell him to "go back to his country" as he struggled with the proper pronunciations of words in English. He felt that these were walls that he needed to overcome to move forward. In *Conciencia (Conscience)* the viewer is not privy to the specific obstacles or barriers that the figure faces personally, but as if a palimpsest (or a manuscript page with previous marks), remnants of preceding emotions for the individual are visible.

The figure is not captured in a continuous direction of movement like in Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase,* rather there are multiple poses of a single figure expressing different attitudes as if for a study. Observing the burnished sepia Conte, the gestural nature, along with the humanistic and philosophical content, I asked Andrade if he took inspiration for this body of work from the exhibit *Michelangelo: Divine Draftsman & Designer* (the artist made a trip to New York City in 2018 driven specifically by the desire to view the exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art first hand). However the parallels, Andrade responded that he was influenced more by the work of the contemporary British painter, Jenny Saville.

Connections can be drawn to both Michelangelo's and Saville's work with Andrade's drawing *Misericordia (compassion)* (Figure 6); the pose pays homage to Michelangelo's *Pietà*, the famous marble sculpture of Mary holding Jesus across her lap housed in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Throughout the history of art many artists have undertaken the sacred image of the Virgin Mary holding her dead son, perhaps none with the equivalent grace. Saville has also sampled from Michelangelo along with other great masters, including Leonardo da Vinci and Diego Velázquez. Her nod to Michelangelo includes a mother and child scene. In Saville's *Study for Pentimenti IV (After Michelangelo's Virgin and Child)* 2011, multiple layers of images and line encapsulate the energy and exhaustion of caretaking.

Andrade's Pietà also portrays the grieving mother with tremendous pain for the loss of her progeny, but Andrade's composition has a curious added element—an empty chair. Is this the spot for an interrogator to sit? Or is the extra seat a spot for the omnipotent power that the central ghostly figure of the mother begs up towards? Or is the chair for the viewer to join in an astral projection to complete the trinity in line with Pantheism? Andrade's marks in *Misericordia* look like carved impressions and rubbings. Mark making with an eraser as a subtractive process has created an atmospheric texture for a phenomenological experience. The background exists now in a spiritual sense with marks encapsulating the energy of the maker. (Working in this scale is a much more physical practice for the artist as he needs to wrestle with the life-size drawing.) Andrade's journey as an artist and our collective universal passage as humans are both explored in *Muros* with energetic mark making on a large scale and exquisite technique.

Figure 6. From Muros, Misericordia, 2018
ink wash, graphite, sepia Conte pencil
on French watercolor paper 96" x 54"

In a world of such conflict, Andrade hopes to convey the common ground attributes of humanity and the power of the individual to overcome difficulty. There are many universal events and feelings people experience, no matter their backgrounds. We all suffer from losing a loved one; this is universal and inevitable. Many of the pains of life are things people from anywhere in the world can relate –borders and physical walls do not change that we are all humans experiencing similar events and emotions. Andrade's works entice emotional reactions to universal adversities, so that we as a collective may embrace a world of compassion and kindness despite the many walls we build.

Alana J. Coates
Art History & Criticism, MA

permanecer
remain

PLATE I

conciencia
conscious

PLATE 2

plenitud
plenitude

PLATE 3

memoria
memory

PLATE 4

lamentación
lamentation

PLATE 5

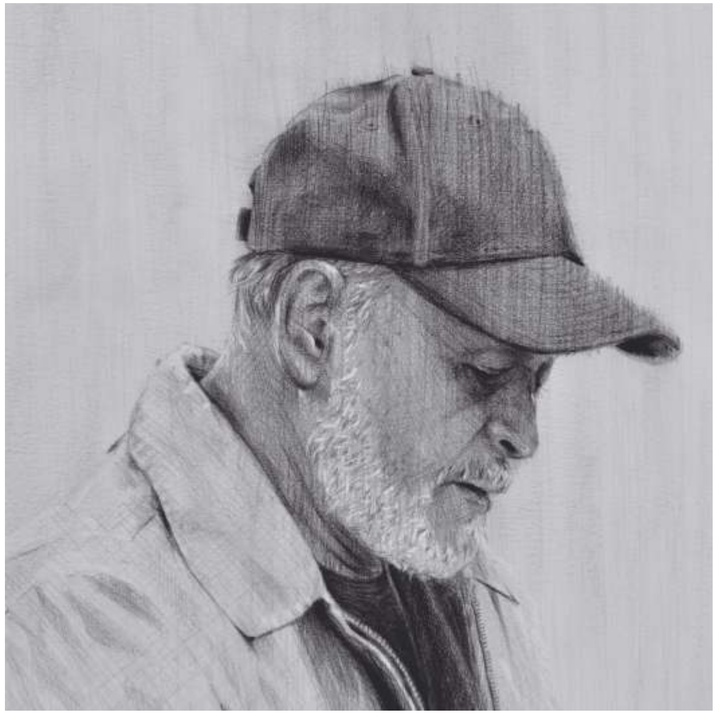
misericordia
compassion

PLATE 6

permanecer no.2
remain no.2
PLATE 7

conciencia no.2
conscious no.2
PLATE 8

plenitud no.2
plenitude no.2
PLATE 9



lamentación no.2
lamentation no.2
PLATE 10

memoria no.2
memory no.2
PLATE 11

misericordia no.2
compassion no.2
PLATE 12

MUROS

Permanecer / Remain
Ink wash, graphite, sepia Conte pencil on French watercolor paper 96" x 54", 2018
Plate 1, Page 11

Conciencia / Conscious
Ink wash, graphite, sepia Conte pencil on French watercolor paper 96" x 54", 2018
Plate 2, Page 13

Plenitud / Plenitude
Ink wash, graphite, sepia Conte pencil on French watercolor paper 96" x 54", 2018
Plate 3, Page 15

Memoria / Memory
Ink wash, graphite, sepia Conte pencil on French watercolor paper 96" x 54", 2018
Plate 4, Page 17

Lamentación / Lamentation
Ink wash, graphite, sepia Conte pencil on French watercolor paper 96" x 54", 2018
Plate 5, Page 19

Misericordia / Compassion
Ink wash, graphite, sepia Conte pencil on French watercolor paper 96" x 54", 2018
Plate 6, Page 21

WALLS

Permanecer No.2 / Remain No.2
Graphite and Charcoal on paper 9" x 9", 2018
Plate 7, Page 22

Conciencia No.2 / Conscious No.2
Graphite and Charcoal on paper 9" x 9", 2018
Plate 8, Page 23

Plenitud No.2 / Plenitude No.2
Graphite and Charcoal on paper 9" x 9", 2018
Plate 9, Page 24

Memoria No.2 / Memory No.2
Graphite and Charcoal on paper 9" x 9", 2018
Plate 11, Page 26

Lamentación No.2 / Lamentation No.2
Graphite and Charcoal on paper 9" x 9", 2018
Plate 10, Page 25

Misericordia No.2 / Compassion No.2
Graphite and Charcoal on paper 9" x 9", 2018
Plate 12, Page 27

Fernando Andrade b. 1987, Acuña Coahuila, México

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EDUCATION:

2008 San Antonio College, San Antonio, TX, Associates in Graphic Design.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

2019 *Muros/Walls,* San Antonio Central Library, San Antonio, TX (Catalogue)

2017 *La Patria*, Peter's Project Gallery, Santa Fe, NM (Curated by Mark Del Vecchio)

2015 *God Bless America*, Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, San Antonio, TX

2014 *Tierra y Libertad*, Blue Star Contemporary Art Museum, San Antonio, TX (Curated by Mary Heathcott)

2013 *A Jugar La Guerrita*, Hausmann Millworks, San Antonio, TX (Curated by Richard Teitz)

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS:

2018 *Culture Commons,* Plaza de Armas, San Antonio, TX (Curated by Sebastian Guajardo)

Aún Recordamos Aquel Hogar, Meadows Museum of Art, Shreveport, LA (Curated by Sean FitzGibbons)

Exhibit traveled to: Forsyth Gallery Texas A&M, College Station, TX and Art Room Gallery, Fort Worth, TX

Future Currents, Dock Space Gallery, San Antonio, TX (Curated by Bill FitzGibbons)

2017 *Interval*, Ruiz-Healy Art, San Antonio, TX (Curated by Hills Snyder)

Latino/Latina de Tejas, Louise Hopkins Underwood Center for the Arts, Lubbock, TX (Curated by Linda Cullum) (Catalogue)

2016 *Perennial Boundaries*, Ruiz-Healy Art, San Antonio, TX (Curated by Patricia Ruiz Healy) (Catalogue)

SATX/MX, Centro de Artes, San Antonio, TX (Curated by Sebastian Guajardo) (Catalogue)

Texas Draws, Southwest School of Art, San Antonio, TX (Curated by Mary Mikel Stump)

2015 *Scene and Unseen*, Cinnabar Gallery, San Antonio, TX (Curated by Susan Oliver Heard)

2014 *Artist Lab: Inaugural Exhibition*, Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, San Antonio, TX (Curated by Mark Anthony Martinez)

ARTIST RESIDENCIES:

2017 *International Artist Residency at Künstlerhaus Bethanien*, Germany. Sponsored by Blue Star Contemporary (Unable to attend)

2016 *International Artist Residency* at Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, VT

2015 *National Artist Residency Eleverte Community Studio,* Chicago, IL

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS:

San Antonio Museum of Art

ARGO Group

City of San Antonio

AWARDS, GRANTS, AND HONORS:

2017 National Association of Latino Art and Culture Artist Grant

2016 Vermont Studio Center Fellowship

2015 Artist Foundation of San Antonio Grant - Linda Pace Foundation Contemporary Artist

2014 Fellowship - Artist Lab at the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center - San Antonio, TX

CATALOGUES:

2019 *Muros/Walls,* San Antonio Central Library, San Antonio, TX (Essay by Alana Coates)

2017 *Latino/Latina de Tejas*, Louise Hopkins Underwood Center for the Arts, Lubbock, TX (Essay by Dr Ann Leimer)

2016 *Perennial Boundaries*, Ruiz-Healy Art, San Antonio, TX (Text by Alana Coates)

SATX/MX, Centro de Artes, San Antonio, TX (Essay by Dr. Teresa Eckmann)

PUBLIC ART:

2018 *Misericordia Time-lapse Process Screening*, Luminaria Arts Festival, San Antonio, TX

2014 *Dia de los Muertos Chalk Mural,* Elevarte Arts Studio, Chicago, IL

Corazón, "Chalk It Up" Feature Artist, San Antonio, TX

2012 *Dia de los Muertos Chalk Mural*, Elevarte Arts Studio, Chicago, IL

2011 Featured chalk Artist at Ambleside School of San Angelo Private School, San Angelo, TX

Featured chalk Artist at Lamar Elementary, San Angelo, TX

Dos Camisas Chalk Mural, "Chalk It Up" Show Case Artist, San Antonio, TX

2010 *Time Mural*, Heaven for Hope Homeless Shelter, San Antonio, TX

2008 *Playground Community Mural*, 60ft x 10ft at Edgewood Square San Antonio, TX

Working Together Community Mural, Jefferson Neighborhood San Antonio, TX

2007 *Hands Community Mural*, Jefferson Neighborhood San Antonio, TX

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY:

2018 Kathryn Whitlock "Latinx artists visually delve into memories of home", *The Battalion*, Jan. 30, 2018

Bryan Rindfuss "Common Currents", *San Antonio Current,* Jan. 24, 2018

Bryan Rindfuss "Dazzling Installations, Roving Performers, Live Tattooing and the Ghosts of Hemisfair's Past Converge at Luminaria's Tricentennial Edition" *San Antonio Current,* Nov. 7, 2018

2017 Glasstire "Top Five", *Glasstire,* July 6, 2017

Neil Fauerso "Interval at Ruiz-Healy Art", *Glasstire*, July 28, 2017

Jennifer Levin "The territory of childhood: Artist Fernando Andrade", *Pasatiempo,* Sept. 8 2017

2016 Marco Aquino "Rising Local Artist Fernando Andrade Draws Dark Inspiration from Border Violence", *San Antonio Current*, Oct. 25, 2016

David S. Rubin "Fernando Andrade's War on Violence", *Glasstire*, Jan. 12,2016

2015 Haydee de la Rocha "The Future of Art in Texas", *Arts & Culture Texas*, Sep. 25,2015

2014 Elda Silva "Artists move out of comfort zone in Guadalupe show", *S.A. Express News*, Dec. 16, 2014

Jack Morgan "Beautiful Drawings of children At Play, But There's More Happening Here", *Texas Public Radio*, Dec. 23, 2014

Gabriel Diego Delgado "Playful Provocations of Land and Liberty", *Arts & Culture Texas*, Dec 17, 2014

Sarah Fisch "Blue Star Risen: Director Mary Heathcott Demonstrates Depth and Range", *San Antonio Current*, Dec .17, 2014

KENS 5 "Artist Series: Fernando Andrade", https://vimeo.com/114298342

Elda Silva and Steve Bennett "Five San Antonio artists to watch", *San Antonio Express News*, July 12 2014