

ANA FERNANDEZ

Real Estates and Other Fictions



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

MAY 10 - JUNE 21, 2012

AUSTIN, TEXAS



11:50. Oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches, courtesy of Dr. Ricardo Romo.

Cover Panel: *210.* Oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches, courtesy of Joe A. Diaz.

Ana Fernandez
Real Estates and Other Fictions

The first images Ana Fernandez remembers making, as a little kid in the '70s, were of custom vans with murals on their sides. She can still tell each one of her aunts which car they drove.

Cars represent aspiration, value, self-expression, "and are individual, almost like people—they have some kind of living energy," Fernandez says. The auto-identities she renders in paint are flamboyant and slightly surreal, notes of frenzied color rendered with an almost fetishistic edge.



You Ain't Ready. Gouache on paper, 9 x 12 inches,
courtesy of Joe A. Diaz.

Fernandez also paints portraits of the faces of American houses. Each house has been touched by unseen hands. They've been hung with holiday decorations, enlivened with potted plants, or lorded over by protective lion statues. But with rare exceptions, not a living soul can be found on her canvases of the last several years. Each of her carefully rendered domestic landscapes echoes with loneliness, even as they bustle with evidence of human presence. Fernandez gathers the raw data for these

images through a personal ritual using photography. She drives San Antonio's streets, pausing to photograph a particular fence railing here, a custom-painted pickup there, a cloud formation, a light bulb's glow. With no set destination, Fernandez wanders and drifts, turning left or right seemingly arbitrarily, stopping and shooting a photo of whatever catches her eye. She relishes and cultivates this fugue state and believes in it, citing the automatic writing of early 20th century Spiritualism. She describes herself behind the wheel as "the planchette of a Ouija board. I'm not directing it with my hands at all. Something else is moving it."

Fernandez stores the resulting photographs in a database of digital images that she browses through when she researches a new painting. She chooses a sky from one photo, a lawn decoration from another, a truck from an image from five years or three weeks ago, recombining the visual elements and composing set designs for myriad implied narratives. The paintings' narrative is predicated on what you bring to

the artist-viewer equation, whether a childhood memory or a set of expectations.

"I don't always know what the story is," she clarifies, adding "I don't think that's as important [as the fact that] I know which objects mean something to me in particular. But the viewer can build the puzzle from these pieces in any way they want...I want to draw them into the story, and give them detail after detail so that they just want to find out more."

After graduating from Roosevelt High School in San Antonio, Fernandez trained in studio practice at San Antonio College during a kind of golden age; the faculty in the mid 90's had built a rigorous and incredibly useful curriculum of studio technique, and SAC had a tradition of turning out highly skilled art makers. Many of South Texas' foremost contemporary artists, including Ed Rodriguez, Kimberly Aubuchon, Jason Willome, and Erik Parker, all studied there before acquiring a more theoretical university arts education.

Fernandez then earned her BFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She talks about the change in urban surroundings and the alien climate. She relates the experience of riding in an elevated train in winter as darkness fell, and seeing half-seconds of other people's lives, a melancholy sensibility she brings even now to her work.

She went on to earn her MFA in painting from UCLA, and lived there for almost ten years. She returned to San Antonio after years of experimentation with abstraction, prints, and collage. Back home in Texas, Fernandez turned her eye towards the world around her with the zeal of a convert. She brought her whole tool kit to bear in re-experiencing San Antonio as an adult, and re-configuring it as a contemporary painter.

Fernandez' paintings stop short of connecting the dots, politically. What she puts forward about race, class, and gender is more ambiguous. Using more magical realism than social realism, she lays out imagery like a deck of Tarot. Modest homes. Trucks seemingly more expensive than the houses they're parked in front of. Spurs and Whataburger logos.

Home and love and family and tradition are the mainstay of America's concept of Mexican-Americans—that's the stereotypical positive side, mind you—but Fernandez isn't necessarily celebrating anything, either. She doesn't want you to be reassured; she doesn't want to educate you; she wants to captivate you, and make you an accomplice to hidden and obsessive fantasies, the moods she drives through and captures.

One unsettling large-scale painting, *Caninus*, shows a house shrouded in hedges, with two stone dogs facing each other. "It could be a witches' house," says Fernandez, who counts Goya's *The Flight of the Witches* as an inspiration for another painting, in which a gaggle of pointy-hatted piñatas hover above a roof. Another unlit house, 717, is framed by a white-and-red balloon heart, which references both San Antonio's exuberant public face, its love for celebration and knack for rasquache decor, and something deeper, darker, and more ambiguous. Fernandez' tribute to San Antonio could be read as affectionate, or terribly critical.



717. Oil on canvas, 72 x 96 inches, courtesy of University of Texas at San Antonio.



313. Oil on canvas, 30 x 36 inches, courtesy of University of Texas at San Antonio.

"Whenever I'm in somebody's house, I want to look through their cabinets, I want to open the drawers of their dresser and see how they've got their stuff arranged. What pills are they taking? What have they got in the refrigerator?"

She's more than a little fascinated by the mystery and true crime that is part of the

American cultural makeup. Her paintings arouse the kind of curiosity, which, she says, "Feels a little bit wrong, like I don't think I should want to know, but I do want to know."

Fernandez deliberately complicates the dialogue. The kind of art most critics think a gay Chicana should make, based on accepted principles and stereotypes, couldn't interest her less. She wants to breach the boundary between private and public. As a storyteller, she seems to be covering territory similar to that of Sandra Cisneros, but she designs her scenes of existential unease with the metered suspense of Alfred Hitchcock.

While her paintings also evoke the mystery and ominous dread of Edward Hopper, Fernandez draws viewers into her work with familiar imagery. Deeply rooted in a sense of place and a sense of culture, the paintings reflect Fernandez' abiding interest in the people around her even when they themselves are never in view.

Sarah Fisch is a writer living in San Antonio, Texas.

ANA FERNANDEZ

ana@anafernandez.com

b. Corpus Christi, TX

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 2012 *Artists Looking at Art Series*, McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, TX
Staged, L2kontemporary, solo exhibition, Los Angeles, CA
Contemporary Artists Series: Ana Fernandez, Institute of Texan Cultures, San Antonio, TX
- 2011 Joan Grona Gallery, *Ana Fernandez*, curated by Aurturo Almeida, solo exhibition, San Antonio, TX
Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, *100 Palabras*, San Antonio, TX
- 2010 2nd FLR Gallery, *Texas*, solo exhibition, Chicago, IL
Winslow Garage, *Texas*, solo exhibition, Los Angeles, CA
Centro Cultural Aztlan, *Las Mujeres de Aztlan*, San Antonio, TX
Gallery 16, *Sonny Smith: 100 Records*, San Francisco, CA
- 2009 MorYork Gallery, *Selected Works*, solo exhibition, Los Angeles, CA
Chicago Tourism Center, *Exquisite City: City of Cardboard*, Chicago, IL
- 2008 The Viaduct Theater, *Exquisite City: City of Cardboard*, Chicago, IL
- 2007 The Naional Museum of Mexican Fine Arts, *Pilsen Chamber of Commerce Art Auction*, Chicago, IL
Lill Street Art Center, *Small Works*, Chicago, IL
mn gallery, *Material & Light*, Chicago, IL

- 2006 L2Kontemporary, *i feel good, i feel great, i feel wonderful*, Chinatown, Los Angeles, CA
L2Kontemporary, *LA Libertine Society Presents: The Nature of Excess*, Chinatown, Los Angeles, CA
- 2004 Patricia Faure Gallery, *Project Room*, Santa Monica, CA
Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), *ARSG*, Los Angeles, CA
Art Center, *SUPERSONIC*, group show, Pasadena, CA
UCLA, *MFA Thesis Exhibition*, Los Angeles, CA
- 2001 Group Painting Show, *Gallery Two*, Chicago, IL
Water Tower Place, *Art Windows Marshall Fields*, Chicago, IL
- 2000 Group Painting Show, *Gallery Two*, Chicago, IL

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

UCLA Alumni Association
The School of the Art Institute of Chicago Alumni Association
American Watercolor Society

EDUCATION

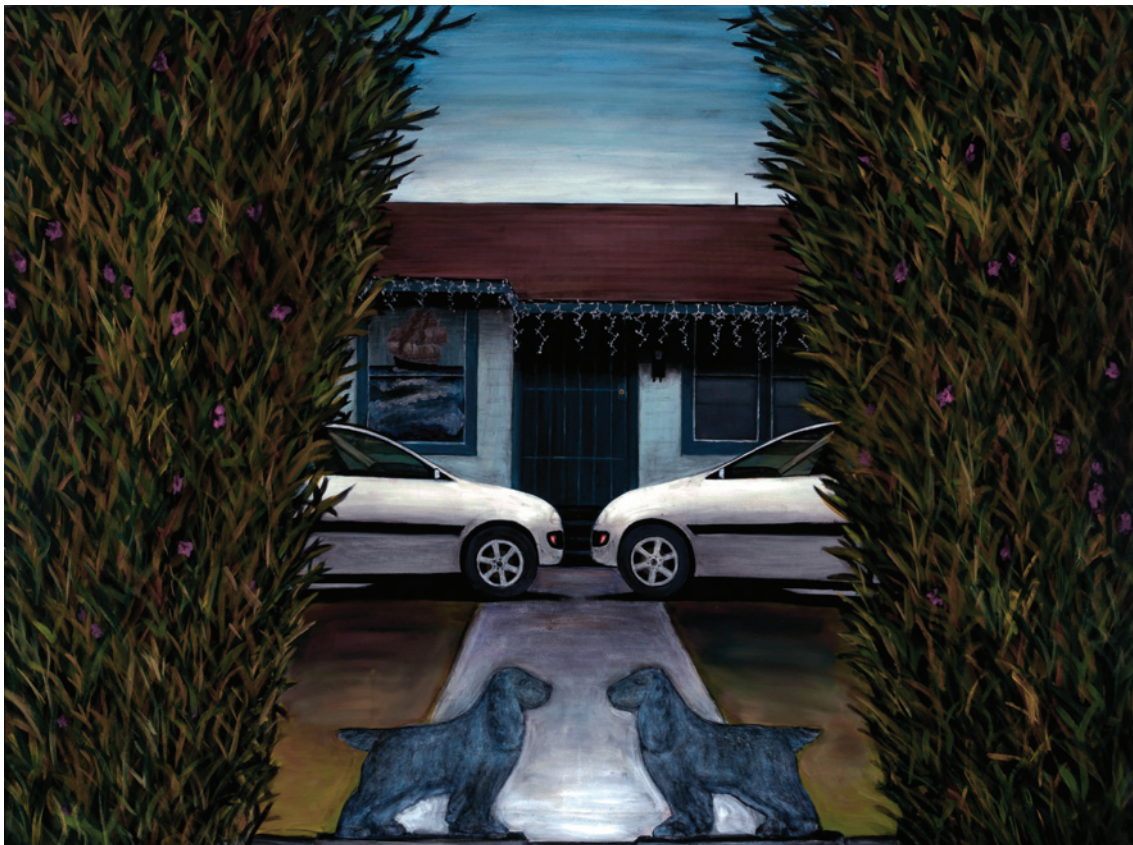
- 2004 MFA UCLA
2000 BFA The School of the Art Institute of Chicago

FLAT FILES & SLIDE REGISTRIES

- 2007- The Drawing Center, New York, NY
Present



Lions. Oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches, courtesy of University of Texas at San Antonio.



Caninus. Oil on canvas, 72 x 96 inches, courtesy of University of Texas at San Antonio.

Women & Their Work

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Gemma Marangoni Ainslie
Tom Cronk
Quincy Adams Erickson
Sandra C. Fernandez
Lindsey Hanna
Janet Kastner

Suzie Page
Talitha Newman Phillips
Carolyn Porter
Stephen Redman
Deborah Sayre
Sherry Smith

STAFF

Chris Cowden, Executive Director
Rachel Koper, Program Director
Lisa Choinacky, Operations Manager
Debe Bentley, Gallery Shop Manager

Known for its pioneering spirit, embrace of artistic innovation, and commitment to Texas audiences and artists, Women & Their Work is now celebrating its 34th anniversary. Presenting over 50 events a year in visual art, dance, theater, music, literature, and film, the gallery features on-going exhibitions of Texas women artists and brings artists of national stature to Texas audiences. Since its founding, Women & Their Work has presented 1,864 artists in 276 visual art exhibitions, 119 music, dance and theater events, 14 film festivals, 23 literary readings and 479 workshops in programming that reflects the broad diversity of this region. Nationally recognized, Women & Their Work has been featured in Art in America, ArtForum and on National Public Radio and was the first organization in Texas to receive a grant in visual art from

the National Endowment for the Arts. Women & Their Work reaches over 950 school children and teachers each year through gallery tours, gallery talks with exhibiting artists, participatory workshops, in-school performances, dance master classes, and teacher workshops.



women and
their work

1710 Lavaca St.
 Austin, Texas 78701
 (512) 477-1064
info@womenandtheirwork.org
www.womenandtheirwork.org
 Mon. - Fri. 10-6 & Sat. 12-5



This publication is supported in part by the Andy Warhol Foundation.
 Special thanks to BAH! Design.