



Perdido
acrylics on canvas
36 x 60 in.

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Pastel Society of North Carolina

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tween The Pastel Society of North Carolina (PSNC), The Appalachian Pastel Society, and the Piedmont Pastel Society. According to PSNC president, Daphne Boder, the goal of the statewide competition is to collaborate with the other regional societies in promoting the beauty of the soft pastel medium. Artwork on display will showcase the talents of these member artists some of whom have earned “master” status both nationally and internationally. Winners are awarded cash and art prizes sponsored by North Carolina merchants and member groups.

Soft pastel is a loved medium used by many modern artists such as Zaria Foreman and Deborah Stewart and classical greats including Vermeer, Degas and Renoir. Prized for its brilliant color, pastel was first used in the sixteenth century, notably by Leonardo da Vinci. It flourished in the eighteenth century, again in the late nineteenth century, and remains popular today.

For further information check our NC Institutional Gallery listings, visit (www.orangecountyarts.org) or (<https://www.pastelsocietyofnc.com/>).

Craven Allen Gallery in Durham, NC, Offers Works by Renzo Ortega

Craven Allen Gallery in Durham, NC, is presenting *Renzo Ortega: Acts of Serenity*, on view through July 13, 2024.

Renzo Ortega is a contemporary painter who is also a performer, musician (of techno cumbia and punk rock) and an installation artist. Best known for his fantastical compositions which incorporate elements of mythology and popular culture, Ortega takes an entirely different approach for *Acts of Serenity*, turning the tradition of still life painting into a meditative practice.

Ortega begins by carefully arranging and lighting the objects on a specially constructed set in his studio. He paints in silence, integrating his breath and posture with the act of applying pigment on linen. With their subtle color gradations and painterly qualities the still-lives showcase the mastery and immediacy of his technique, and reference inspirations both historic and contemporary. In *Nirvana*, an old pair of Converse sneakers and a guitar pedal become a monument to Kurt Cobain, while a hat and tulip in another honor Van Gogh's Spirit.

Ortega is well known for his engaging and insightful artist talks. The public is invited to *The Power of Painting: Renzo Ortega in conversation with painter James Keul*, at the gallery, on June 22, at 4pm.

Born in Peru and based in Carrboro, NC, Ortega received a BFA in painting from the *Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes del Peru* (1999), studied at the Art Students League of New York (2000-04) and received his MFA in painting from Hunter College (2014). He has shown widely at galleries and museums, including the recent show at the Nasher showcasing major artists working in North Carolina. He was Artist-in-Residence at the Rubenstein Arts Center at Duke University, and was the inaugural artist of the New Wave Art artist-in-residence program in West Palm Beach. Ortega is also a devoted painting and drawing teacher and has been a Visiting Lecturer at UNC Chapel Hill and a Brock Family Visiting Studio Arts Instructor at Duke University.

Ortega offered the following statement about this exhibition, “My new body of work, a collection of still-lives made especially for this exhibition, arises from the stimulation of ideas through observa-



Work by Renzo Ortega

tion and introspection. To achieve multidimensionality using the formal tradition of easel painting with oils, I create a set in my art studio to display the objects. I paint in silence, focus on my breathing, and with an awareness of my body posture concerning the object I paint, forming a unit with the canvas and the easel. Painting is a physical experience; my process helps to create an environment where I can materialize the intangible, capturing the essence of what I see and experience.”

“Painting is not just creating pictures, it is more—it is the whole art object, from the stretcher to the canvas to the paint to the brushstroke marks. I made most of these works on linen instead of cotton canvas, since linen adds a particular resonance - I like to call it a sound - to the paintings, helping to create multidimensional atmospheric spaces,” adds Ortega. After a couple of decades of painting from intuition, fantasy, and symbolic narrative, this body of work follows a different path, going hand in hand with the conventions of classical painting. That change gives me freedom, allowing me to open new doors in my work. The paintings are an invitation to an alternative world, a better world, in which I seek to receive and embrace the viewer.”

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“I think of art as a human essence, from one’s inner being, linked to the development of thought and the spiritual. Since the beginning, painters have forged painting from the mystical path, achieving pictorial developments with discipline and mastery of the craft. A continuous mantric repetition of a physical-mental exercise, such as painting, is what I seek to embody in *Acts of Serenity*.”

Renzo Ortega (Lima, Peru 1974) is a painter based in Carrboro, NC. He received a BFA in painting from the *Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes del Peru* (1999), studied at the Art Students League of New York (2000-04) and has his MFA in painting from Hunter College (2014). His artwork has been exhibited in solo and group shows in the United States and Peru, and has been commissioned to create public art projects and community murals. He partook in the Visiting Artist Residency at the Rubenstein Arts Center at Duke University in 2019, and in 2020, he was the inaugural artist of the New Wave Art artist-in-residence program in West Palm Beach.

Ortega is also a devoted painting and drawing teacher and has been a Visiting Lecturer at UNC Chapel Hill and a Brock Family Visiting Studio Arts Instructor at Duke University. Renzo’s artwork has been exhibited in museums such as the Cameron Museum of Art in Wilmington, the Nasher Museum of Art, Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art SECCA (Winston-Salem), the Weatherspoon Art Museum in Greensboro, in the S- Files Biennial at El Museo del Barrio in New York and the Queens International Biennial at the



Work by Renzo Ortega

Queens Museum. He is a recipient of a North Carolina Arts Council Artist Fellowship Award, an Ella Fountain Pratt Emerging Artists Grant Durham Arts Council, an Orange County Arts Commission Artist Project Grant and a Queens Council on the Arts New Work Award. In 2013, as a Kosak Travel Grant recipient, Renzo traveled to Berlin to study German Expressionism, and in 2015 traveled to Honduras as a part of the U.S. Department of Cultural Affairs Cultural Envoy Program.

For further information check our NC Commercial Gallery listings, call the gallery at 919/286-4837 or visit (www.cravenallengallery.com).

Hillsborough Gallery of Arts in Hillsborough, NC, Offers New Exhibit

The Hillsborough Gallery of Arts in Hillsborough, NC, will present *Creating with Color and Form*, featuring works by Nell Chandler, Ellie Reinhold, and Evelyn Ward, on view from June 25 through July 24, 2024.

“When we throw around titles for our featured artists’ shows we try to suggest titles all three of us are familiar with and challenged by,” says jeweler Nell Chandler. The title *Color and Form* got her thinking of how she regularly uses all sorts of mixed media to embellish her jewelry creations with color. “For weeks I have been forming rings around ring mandrels and forming cuffs around cuff mandrels and incorporating gemstones for my color: purple amethysts, pink tourmalines, green peridots, sky-blue topazes, yellow citrines, red garnets, and blue aquamarines to create a clean, polished look. I love the way a united title can send me in an inspiring new direction.”

“I would say that I’m staying within my recent purview of little structures” explains painter Ellie Reinhold, “but running with the title (*Color and Form*) in trying to shake it up a little bit with both a different approach to color and new venues for it. We’ll see if I manage it!”

“Color, form, function. Not necessarily in that order,” says potter Evelyn Ward. “Balancing the shape of a pot (or its form), how it will look on the surface and how it will be used are basically the job requirements of



Work by Evelyn Ward

being a potter. The great thing is that this is an endless pursuit, an endless endeavor.” Ensuring that the pots she makes perform their function while being a pleasure to use, is her primary focus. “Take a vase for example, I’ve found a wide base and somewhat narrow neck allows the stems of the flowers to fan out and therefore the blooms do, too, making flower arranging effortless. But then I also want the vase to be enjoyable on its own when not in use and that’s

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