

A feliz little art exhibit: *Emergencia Artística*

Nestled behind a line of sycamores in Seattle Center lies the Art/Not Terminal gallery, where some twenty-five pieces making up the non-juried *Emergencia Artística* exhibit showcase through September “Mexican-American binationality and the myriad of ways artists represent and explore identity,” as the takeaway pamphlet instructs.

Solicited by the nearby Mexican consulate (according to an attendant), the artworks, created by locals, have become part of our southern neighbor’s bid to strengthen ties with the United States through the month-long MEXAM Northwest cultural festival, also sponsored by human rights-violating corporations such as Microsoft and Amazon. If happy binational art makes Seattleites and tourists smile when they hear of México, happy binational art there shall be, for more than half a trillion dollars in goods and services trade crossed the border last year, and big money wants those big rigs to keep rolling, not stop on account of xenophobia.



Forget whatever challenges, life will thrive: that’s what many of these works convey. Most, including Mario Sixto’s righteously named papier-mâché *Alegria* (Joy) pictured above, burst out with loud and riotous Mexican colors. Others correctly glorify the continuum of life. See below Amaranta Ibarra-Sandys’ watercolor *Seeds of Possibilities*, featuring a Seattle skyline-hatted goddess sowing plants, and Jake Prendez’s oil on canvas *7 Generations of Genetic Memory*, depicting the wisdom of ancestors behind a flower-cupping youth. Can NAFTA 18-wheelers really defeat this vivaciousness?





As much as the three pieces above please, conspicuously absent from the exhibit is anything tarnishing Mexico's brand — or ours — by exposing the violence and death in the two countries' relationship. No anguished subject matter reveals the iron river of weapons we ship south, arming cartels, or the billions of dollars in Mérida Initiative and other funds we send to the narcostate's security forces, probably including those who attacked the Ayotzinapa missing students. These complicities of ours are the real story, not just the tirades of the orange boy-king ranting about his wall. Only when the traumas are addressed will ties truly strengthen across the border.

The soft shushing of the close by fountain, the laughter of children playing on the pavilion, these Seattle Center sounds, if it's a nice day, might make the turmoil on our southern doorstep seem far off as we inspect these enjoyable paintings. We point no fingers at local artists and staff volunteers providing, excellently and free of charge, a peaceful respite from exhausting wage-slavery, including with a reception this Wednesday at 7 p.m. But we need to grasp the full story of an exhibit — including what's omitted — to do better. Then maybe we won't have some unchangeable identity to hawk, but we'll always grow, we'll always change . . . traveling and connecting without bad barriers, without wrong walls . . .