



The Dallas Morning News: Carol T. Powers

LOOKING AT LOVE: Rosemary Meza, whose work focuses on sexuality and relationships, is "kind of fascinated with people who are so in love."

ROSEMARY MEZA

A poet and painter makes provocative use of unsettling and often brazen images

The displaced body parts in Rosemary Meza's paintings make for strange bedfellows. Full of anthropomorphic symbolism, the works are designed to unsettle, to provoke.

When the painter reads her poetry, the dreamily crafted prose leaps out at her listeners, challenging their assumptions about the nature of sexuality.

One thing is certain: No one will ever call Ms. Meza a prude. She deals with private issues publicly, presenting them in a way that is at once beautiful, brazen and oddly humorous. She confronts the taboos of sexual displacement and alienation through composite figures — a man with breasts whose missing hand dangles from his mouth; a totemic tangle of mismatched members; a penis that crawls on insect legs across a chaotic landscape.

Her poems are the paintings' verbal equivalents. Placed together, as they occasionally are, the works are a multilayered study in gender politics that are as blatantly psycho-analytical as they are absurd. (No doubt, Ms. Meza would find fans in Freud and Duchamps.)

But the symbolism in her work is often unpremeditated.

"There are things I do in my work that I don't really know why I do," says the artist, a woman in her late 20s who presides over the Latino arts group ARTE.

As discomfiting as some people might find it, her work allures. Poems such as *The*

Importance of Being an Organ and *Mary Tyler Moore Wasn't Mexican* are witty and jolting, hilarious and poignant.

"My work focuses on sexuality and gender and relationships — how we deal with relationships and how we treat people in relationships," she says. "I'm always kind of fascinated with people who are so in love. Then they fall out of love and they do really horrible things to each other. . . . I wonder how you can do that. It's like we lose all sense of humanity."

Thus the displaced body parts, the metamorphoses that pervade her paintings, she says.

A former student of abstract painter Grace Hartigan, Ms. Meza began showing in Dallas after receiving her master's in fine art from the Maryland Institute, College of Art. In the two years since she returned to her hometown, she has shown at D-Art Visual Art Center, Justine's Milam Gallery, 500-X Gallery, the South Dallas Cultural Center, Stout-McCourt and the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center in San Antonio. In the past year, she has performed her poetry at places like Chumley's, Sweet Endings, Justine's and Barnes and Noble.

This Sunday Ms. Meza will collaborate with performance artist John Held during the Arts Revolution at Chumley's. Her paintings can be seen at the Jesus Chairez Gallery at 1431½ Bennett.

— Shermakaye Bass

The Arts