

■ GALLERY WATCH

Two artists throw curves at sexuality, women's issues

BY KENDRA McCOWN

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Sexuality can speak in any language; it's as close to us as our male and female identities. "Por Culpa de las Mujeres" ("Blame It on the Women"), the current exhibit at Gallery 414, explores these ideas and titillates its audience with all the entertainment value of sex, violence, animals, nudity and spirituality.

The artist couple, Steve Cruz and Rosemary Meza, bring their collection together with vibrance and culture. Willing to push the envelope and take a theme to its limits, the artists explore pop culture, religion and male-female sexuality. The artists also add the richness of their Latino culture to each work, giving the show an added expressionistic push.

Meza draws detailed female figures in graphite, oil pastel, charcoal and carefully placed human hair. Her women are sad and strong.

En Su Cuerpo Nacio Mi Dolor interprets the archetypal theme of Jesus' crucifixion, but Meza twists the images by substituting women for men. With strong bodies, large breasts and curvaceous hips, the artist creates feminine forms. Meza painstakingly weaves hair throughout the picture with a cross-stitch effect.

In *Maleriada*, Meza depicts the Garden of Eden story with even more dramatic imagery than the original tale, with a phallic-looking snake winding itself around the neck of a woman and an uneaten apple beside her, fallen to the ground. The woven human hair adds texture and depth to the picture.

In the back of the gallery, Meza creates a room of larger-than-life drawings in charcoal and oil pastels. The figures are drawn on the wall, raising provocative questions about installing them elsewhere. A guide explains that the wall drawings can be re-created on site. These drawings include daunting, frivolous and fascinating scenes such as a woman with large, rough hands juggling male genitalia. In another scene, acrobatic figures turn flips with their deformed bodies.

Steve Cruz paints cartoonish, animalized characters. He uses bright colors, tiny neon pompom balls and childlike simplicity to get across his messages. His female figures are voluptuous, graphically so.

Modern Art is Cruz's comment on the hypocrisy



Gallery 414

Rosemary Meza's *Lucretia* incorporates oil, acrylic and pastel crayon.

of the art world. The picture depicts a man paying a woman as she flashes him. A grouping of tiny neon dots creates pubic hair, adding a garish, yet whimsical touch to the scene.

Women on the Verge is a narrative piece with nine panels and a repeating pattern. Female cyclops monsters point various weapons at men who stand in fear. In the center row, two gleaming silver, voluptuous female figures (the ones from truck mud flaps) decorate the painting. In this show, even a kind of mechanical sexuality can radiate from the oft-seen mud guard figures.

"Por Culpa De Las Mujeres," runs through April 8 at Gallery 414, 414 Templeton Drive. Because of sexuality and adult themes, this show is for mature audiences only.

For more information, call (817) 336-6595.