



On View | Fragments / Wasted Days and Wasted Nights

By Robyn Norton • May 10, 2015

Two solo exhibitions will be featured side-by-side in the James Watrous Gallery on the 3rd floor of the Overture Center beginning May 22. An opening reception that day is free and the public is welcome, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Both artists—Craig Clifford, lecturer and head of the ceramics program at UW-Oshkosh, and Rafael Francisco Salas, associate professor of art at Ripon College—will give informal gallery talks at 6:30 p.m.

Both exhibits run through July 5.

Craig Clifford: Fragments — Inspired by the French Factory Porcelain that complemented ornate interior decoration schemes for royalty and the very wealthy, Clifford's works are colorful, brilliantly glazed ceramic 3-D collages. Using hundreds of slip cast kitsch or low art memorabilia found in commercially produced molds made for hobby crafters, he is often attracted to molds that are trite or sentimental, clichéd or simply a crass novelty item.

Clifford combines these kitschy items with teapots, cups and other traditional ceramic forms and transforms objects from mundane to brilliant artwork that confuses the eye and detracts from the original intended use of the individual objects. In the process of creating, he investigates how context, expectation and gaze affect our encounters of everyday objects and images that perhaps go disregarded and yet surround us throughout the day.

Rafael Francisco Salas: Wasted Days and Wasted Nights

— Tejano superstar and musician Freddy Fender is one of the central figures in Salas' exhibit of several large-scale drawings and two larger-than-life mixed media sculptures that evoke objects of devotion, but also figuratively portray Mexican-American culture in Wisconsin. Another central figure is the image of the sacred lamb from Jan and Hubert Van Eyck's 15th century "Ghent Altarpiece."



Salas' artwork describes vast rural landscapes and reflects upon identity and tension played out as a Mexican-American growing up in small towns of Wisconsin. Along with his landscape imagery, he utilizes narrative and symbolic elements. Country music is the appropriate soundtrack for this exhibit.

The James Watrous Gallery is a program of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, a non-profit organization to explore, explain and sustain Wisconsin thought and culture. The art showcased in the gallery is exclusively created by Wisconsin artists. Some artwork may be available for purchase.