

Artist of the world Dzine comes to Oakland University



Carlos Rolón/Dzine is a Chicago-based artist whose works are on display at the Oakland University Art Gallery through April 3. Courtesy ArtNet

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The Oakland University Art Gallery has a new tenant. His name is Carlos Rolón/Dzine.

The Chicago-based artist has spoken to OU art students in the past, and now brings “Commonwealth” to the art gallery inside Wilson Hall.

The exhibition features a variety of media, including a wall design installation painted with stencils, sculptures, a reimagined barber shop and more.

“He is different, because he covers a range of areas,” says Dick Goody, curator of the gallery and associate professor of art at the university.

Rolón is a first-generation immigrant of Puerto Rican descent. His interest in art started at a young age.

“My first introduction into the art world was the passing of a poster every day in elementary school of Gustave Caillebotte’s ‘Paris Street: Rainy Day,’” Rolón says in an email exchange.

Rolón, also known as Dzine, attended Columbia College in Chicago with a concentration in painting and drawing. His work showcases how the macho can be fragile and how the elaborate can be basic.

His creations comprise on-site installation art, large-scale paintings and sculptures using various materials. There are three sculptures in the exhibition that are inspired by decorative liquor bottles and vases his parents collected.

“I feel the message is in the medium,” Rolón says. “Thus, even though my studio is multifaceted, creatively all of my work seamlessly and cohesively work together to express a common theme and show a common lineage.”

Although his list of media is long, his list of inspirations is longer.

“Influences for my works stem from my childhood and items that were of the norm growing up to my travels, introductions to different cultures, and the diaspora of my cultural heritage,” Rolón says.

“Also, I’m inspired by the common, everyday objects or items that people pass by every day, but refuse to see the beauty in.”

One of the focal points of the exhibition is a room constructed and designed to resemble a barber shop from the 1970s. There is a TV on three of the walls with synchronized videos playing segments of professional barbers at work — an homage to the culture he grew up in.

Some students were lucky enough to get haircuts from barbers hired by Rolón when the exhibition first opened in January.

“He made them part of the art,” Goody says.

In another room, one can see an actual merchant cart from the streets of Chicago, featuring tourist items representing the culture, such as T-shirts, necklaces, and even yo-yos — another tribute to Rolón’s upbringing.

“He has earned his success,” Goody says when talking about things setting Rolón apart from other artists.

Rolón enjoys speaking to young artists. During one of his visits to OU, Rolón asked the students what they believe it takes to be successful. He has some advice to give.

“Never be afraid to ask,” Rolón says. “Work hard, and take your craft serious, but don’t take yourself too serious.”

“Share when you can and allow the Universe to work as it should.

The exhibition will be featured in the art gallery until Sunday, April 3. Visit ouartgallery.org, or carlosrolondzine.com/.