

What is barrioPOP by Cande Aguiar? Text by artist/writer Noe Hinojosa

What is barrioPOP by Cande Aguilar? In the United States, when you place the word "barrio" in front of anything, it acts as a filter. It filters whatever words follow through a Mexican American context down to a common denominator: the neighborhood. If I say I can play barrio tennis, it means I may not have the fancy equipment or clothes, and my strokes may not be refined, but I do know the rules, and I can play. I might have to jump a fence to get to some tennis courts, but that just reinforces the point that "barrio" anything is being of, or pertaining to, the common folk of the barrio where people are accustomed to less access of all kinds for basic socio-economic reasons.

barrioPOP therefore can be understood as pop art through a particular south Texas, Mexican American lens that takes us on a ride that might not be posh, but it will get us there, and in this case, with its own unique style. Cande's work is rooted in a Rio Grande Valley, "pull yourself up from your bootstraps and make do with what you have", kind of feel the translates well through his use of found objects in this series of mixed media art installations. Traditional art, after all, has been done and it all looks the same no matter where in the world it originates. What people want is something new and different. What people need from art are statements that move them either emotionally, or intellectually, and preferably both within some relevant context. This is what Aguilar achieves in his art with regional flavor and genuine authenticity. After all, if there is one thing the "barrio" (and Mexican culture in general) is known for, it is: sabor (flavor).

In barrioPOP, we see Cande's abstract expressionist's painterly experience with bright color fields and forms extruded through the Play-dough press of his 1970s and 80s popular culture upbringing. barrioPOP is an interconnected series of mixed media art installations, which represent various border town settings associated with a certain era and place, and it's filled with opportunity for nostalgia. Any shared history or appreciation for the unique cultural amalgamation of post 1960s Americana will find much to enjoy in this particularly modern pop art view cast from the southern tip of Texas.

Cande Aguilar was raised American and proud of it just like all the other Valley kids in the public schools in the 70s and 80s, but he and all the other kids were also fully immersed in their Mexican heritage. Growing up in the Rio Grande Valley and being surrounded by Mexican culture colored all aspects of life including the flavor of the general cultural ideas being dolled out generically across America on television and in movies. Cande's unique perspective helped form the building blocks of his barrioPOP art. His hybridization of ideas is the catalyst and the contextual components for his creations.