

EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

Contemporary Arts
Museum Houston

ANGEL OTERO EVERY- THING AND NOTHING

For Teachers

On view
12.10.2016–
03.19.2017

- Angel Otero was born in Santurce, Puerto Rico but currently lives in New York.
- The exhibition *Angel Otero: Everything and Nothing* is the artist's first survey exhibition and chronicles work from 2009–2015.
- Otero experiments with the medium of painting and pushes the field to new territory including his work with oilskins and transfers.
- Otero is influenced by art history masters and often uses their work as a starting point in his own paintings. While paying homage to the masters, Otero questions his own place in the canon.
- The title of the exhibition is borrowed from a parable by Jorge Luis Borges.
- Otero's work, while abstract, is embedded with deeply personal narratives.
- At the age of 12, Otero found an art class through an advertisement that offered, "Do you want to learn how to paint like Bob Ross? We give official classes." Otero was the youngest of his classmates, all of whom were over the age of 60. Eventually Otero visited the Museo de Arte de Ponce and saw the paintings of fellow Puerto Rican Arnaldo Roche. Otero's main interest is in the process of how something is made. He strives to create a painting that is a solid chunk of something.
- Otero's early paintings were still lifes, infused with memories of his grandmother's dining room table at various times of day, playing on the drama of light and the complexities of composition.
- Otero is most well-known for his "skin paintings." They begin with Otero painstakingly recreating iconic masterpieces in oil on large sheets of Plexiglas; the "skins" are scraped off and affixed to canvas. The surface is then imprinted with pieces of wrought-iron fence or distorted with razors, brooms or other tools.
- In 2010, Otero began making his "transfers," which are made by projecting a digitized photograph onto canvas to create a template, outlining parts of the image in silicone, applying loose graphite pigment to the silicone, and compressing the surface with Plexiglas. This series deals with more personal narratives that connect to familial memories and representations of Puerto Rico.
- In 2012, Otero shifted away from painting and started experimenting with sculpture. The sculptures start as broken pieces of porcelain and masses of unfired clay that are placed in large fragments of wrought-iron gates Otero found in antique stores or on the streets.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Who writes history and how do we come to know about the past?
2. How do contemporary artists fit into the art historical canon?
3. How do contemporary artists reference, pay homage to, and question art by historical masters?
4. How can memories be translated into visual form?
5. What are different objects that trigger memories for you?
6. What are some examples of artistic experimentation that lead to new ideas and methods?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

ART HISTORY Research the history of painting. Imagine a future art history class. What contemporary artists would you include that students need to learn about?

VISUAL ART How do personal memories influence artists? Can you create a work of art using an old photograph in a new way? Can you create a work of art that uses an object that is part of your personal narrative?

LANGUAGE ART Angel Otero is very influenced by literature in his work. What other visual artists are influenced by literature? Write a poem or short story inspired by a work of visual art. Can you create a piece of visual art inspired by a poem or short story?

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