

2009/10 Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships

School of Visual Arts Honorable Mention



LATANIA ALVAREZ
Fine arts
Graduate student
Claremont Graduate University

My Hispanic heritage has influenced the experiences involving my family, our economic status and the art I create. I am very proud to be a Hispanic, and although at times, my culture has somewhat burdened me, I am stronger for it. My background has always influenced my academic and personal goals, and will continue to do so in the future. In terms of how I was raised, our household was under strict patriarchal rule. In the Hispanic culture, males are very concerned with traditional gender roles socially appropriate for one's specific sex.

My mother was confined to the home, and expected to cater to my dad's every wish. I was frequently reminded how my gender automatically ranked me lower than a man, without the slightest sympathy—for this is what God intended, as my father would frequently say. I have come to realize that my father was trying to control at home what he could not control elsewhere. It took me awhile to rebuild self-worth due to years of emotional abuse, and set out to realizing my dreams, which is the opportunity for an education and a better life. Even in college, though I still had to deal with the turmoil of my parents' violent separation, their substance abuse



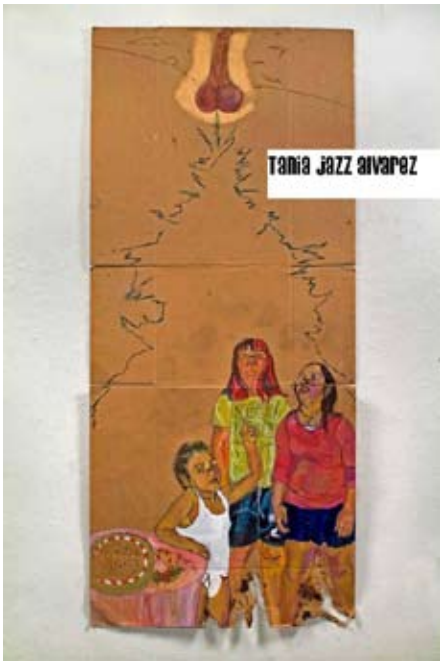
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LATANIA ALVAREZ

Fine Arts



problems, and playing a mother figure to my siblings, often causing more economic hardships, but I am the eternal optimist, and as a fine arts major, I will continue to delve deep into my personal life, as well as the racial injustices in the world.

As a creator, I have discovered a healthy outlet that fuses my Hispanic culture with my educational, community and career goals. I paint in a very loose and expressive style and am more liberated now than I have ever been; I could not be prouder of my culture and how I was brought up. From what I paint on, to what I paint with, to my subject matter, hopefully my art conveys that sense of liberation and pride. I also enjoy working with found-object pieces, which are unique, economical and a great challenge to work with. Whenever I hear of an art opportunity that involves helping out the community in any way, I take it. I grew up with modest means, so helping others is very important to me.



Last November, I was in a MEChA art auction at Cal State Fullerton displaying art work from local artists to expand equal opportunity for all students. I have also curated many art exhibits at the Mountain Bar in Los Angeles to promote women's rights, often raising money by auctioning art so that 100 percent of proceeds can fund charities like Amnesty International, a charity supporting human rights globally. I have also raised money for the Jenesse Center, one of the many women's shelters in Los Angeles aimed at liberating families from domestic abuse. Once a year I also donate toys and feminine products to shelters to aid this difficult transition. I admire tremendously the organizations fighting against issues as diverse and significant as poverty, abuse, hate crimes, war and the environment on a grassroots level. I encourage others to vote, sign petitions and join rallies to help fight the causes dear to them. I wish to continue working with various charities and using my talent as an artist to convey a message of awareness and inspiration, by exhibiting my work as much as possible, and ultimately teaching at the professional level once I obtain my master's degree.

