

**Curatorial Statement by Joyce Owens Anderson**  
***Through the Labyrinth: Judithe Hernandez and Sergio Gomez***

November 2009

Judithe Hernandez<sup>1</sup> is known as a member of Los Four<sup>2</sup>, credited for founding the Chicano Art Movement in East Los Angeles during the 1960's and 1970's. Hernandez<sup>3</sup> is Mexican American, born and raised in California. Sergio Gomez<sup>4</sup> was born in Mexico. He is the director and co-owner of 33 Collective, a thriving gallery that is part of the internationally acclaimed Zhou Brothers' art complex on the south side of Chicago.

Bringing Judithe Hernandez and Sergio Gomez to the President's Gallery at Chicago State for September's Hispanic/Latino Heritage Month, and during October for Chicago Artists Month, a citywide homage to Chicago-based artists, was an easy choice for me. I had seen both artists' work in their studios and elsewhere and read about them in current articles and archives<sup>5</sup>. I had met the artists separately, found them charming, interesting and invested in visual arts, and exceptional artists. The value these two artists would bring to our students, and the CSU community, included exposure to aspects of the artists' particular art practice, first person anecdotes about artist activism, American history, and the psychological impact art works can impart. Viewers engaging in the works and the history of the artists learn more about human migrations and about Latino culture and politics.

The artists' diligence in creating and maintaining successful art careers sets a standard for all artists. Viewing the artists' mediums, pastels, charcoal, acrylic on paper and canvas, at close proximity teaches appreciation of their techniques.

Judithe Hernandez' masterful drawing skills are demonstrated through her medium of choice, pastels on paper. The colored chalk is applied to a dark ground; she usually starts with black paper and applies layer upon layer in abstract gestures that combine to form solid figurative structures. On top of that her figures protest tyranny, fraud, and injustice. Some are taken aback by the strength of her imagery. An example is *Barrio Trilogy*, 2009, pastel on paper, 12"x16" each, that shows the backs of gang members expressing Hernandez's grief over girls wasting themselves; "turn your back on gangs", I imagine Hernandez is saying. She protests loudly against the debacle surrounding the women of Juarez, Mexico who are disappearing in *Ni Una Mas*, (*Not One More*) 2009, pastel, mixed media on paper, 30"x20". With some help visitors understand Hernandez's floating demon, *Pingo Pecador*, 2008, pastel on paper, 22"x30", pierced by arrows wearing a patriotic Uncle Sam top hat represents a political, not a religious commentary. Some can embrace this art and are soothed. Many nod sadly when they understand Sergio Gomez's silhouettes in his charcoal drawing are child immigrants under that hovering helicopter and spotlight normally used to find wanted criminals. Some think Sergio Gomez's painting *Dead of Paradise*, an acrylic on paper over canvas, 72" x 82", 2008, an angel, perhaps, and winged, with a black halo looks "dark" (and disturbing), and another claims it is beautiful and her favorite piece by him, loving the paint quality and the life affirming message perceived partly because of the emerging butterfly, a symbol of renewed life. Some love and others are frightened by Gomez's large paintings on paper applied to canvas depicting a personal inner life, figures nearly anonymous but clearly expressive male forms.

It is NOT a middle-of-the-road exhibition, everyone takes sides! It is definitely a great opportunity to further educate our CSU community, including students, faculty and staff. Creating a little discomfort towards the goal of enlightenment is something I can live with.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://jhnartestudio.com/current\\_work\\_2.aspx](http://jhnartestudio.com/current_work_2.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> [http://wapedia.mobi/en/Los\\_Four](http://wapedia.mobi/en/Los_Four)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.otis.edu/alumni/outstanding\\_alumni/judithe\\_hernandez.html](http://www.otis.edu/alumni/outstanding_alumni/judithe_hernandez.html)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.virtualartist.com/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/collection/hernan98.htm>

