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FEB 02

Portrait of the Artist: Sergio Gomez and 33 Collective Gallery

Bridgeport

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The imagery in Sergio Gomez's new mixed-media works—figures both concentrated and expanded in form—mirrors the artist's own multifaceted roles. He's a graphic designer, faculty at South Suburban College, and gallery administrator at 33 Collective Gallery, part of the 80,000 square-foot Zhou B. Art Center.

2009 is the fifth anniversary of 33 Collective. Could you describe the collective's inception and your initial involvement?

Javier Chavira, Carla Carr, Kimberly Harmon and I met in college. Our desire to collaborate resulted in the creation of 33 Collective, originally a studio and gallery space. We became familiar with the Zhou B. Art Center in Bridgeport and were among its first tenants.

Have your goals changed since then?

Our goal has remained the same since our humble beginnings: to display and promote emerging artists and organize group exhibitions. In March, 2008, we expanded our membership to other artists. Our members are very "hands-on"—they help organize and promote exhibitions, install shows and help with the financial costs of running the gallery.

You're also the director of [VisualArtToday.com](#), a Web site that provides "the opportunity for curatorial international exchange and collaboration." What happens on the site?



This is a new venture for me (as if I had nothing else to do, right?). I get upset when I'm bombarded by ads when browsing online art shows. I wanted to build an online exhibition space that would be simple, reliable, ad-free and permanent. That's all.

Why create permanent online exhibitions?

By permanently displaying the exhibitions I maximize the visibility of the page. My goal is to create opportunities for contemporary artists and curators around the globe to share and collaborate through online exhibitions. The Web site opened last fall with an exhibition by Elmhurst-based artist Lynn Hill, and there are two more Chicago artist exhibitions coming up in the next few weeks. There's no cost to artists or curators, as I support the site with my own funding.

You create art and support it through your many roles. Do you feel you're first and foremost an artist, or that all your positions equally define you?

A very good question. I'm a creative individual; that's my primary role. My creativity translates into all the things I choose to be involved with. I feel that my art-making process is enriched by all my roles—one thing I've learned is to manage my time in order to keep producing quality work! (Patrice Connelly)

Sergio Gomez shows at 33 Collective, Zhou B. Center, Suite 101, 1029 W. 35th St., through February 13.

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