

Our Featured Artist: Daniel Martín Díaz

We first saw Daniel Martín Díaz's work when he was featured on a local public television program before the opening of an exhibit. The cultural complexities of his paintings are fascinating. Daniel studied music at Northern Arizona University and came to an artistic avocation some time later. He practices his art outside of the mainstream of the arts community in Tucson, a distance he consciously maintains, using his kitchen as his workspace. We caught up with him at his latest show at the Tucson Museum of Art.

Arizona Journal

What is it about European, Christian and Byzantine iconic, religious and symbolic images that interests you, a young man from Tucson, Arizona?

Díaz

The images are so beautiful and spiritual that they touch my heart, more than any other type of art. They evoke a certain sense of mystery and depth that intrigues me. The symbols call out from a simpler time, a time of intense passion, a passion that strips away the layers and reveals the soul.

Arizona Journal

What does this imagery have to say about us here and now, in a secular, modern society?

Díaz

The images are foreign and archaic in a modern world, but are essential to the future existence of humanity. We must examine the beliefs of the past in order to grow as a people.

Arizona Journal

How did you become an artist?



Díaz

I didn't set out to become an artist, art has chosen me.

Arizona Journal

Which artists have influenced you—either personally or as a painter?

Díaz

I speak to and read about creative people and learn from their experiences and techniques. I have an appreciation for all art.

Arizona Journal

Is there a community of supportive artists and gallery owners in Tucson?

Díaz

Yes, there is. There are a lot of great artists in Tucson and the galleries are very supportive.

Arizona Journal

Is there such a thing as Chicano art? Can you define it?

Díaz

Yes, there is such a thing. To me Chicano art is the expression of two cultures colliding. It is a way for Chicanos to discover their own identity in this country.

Arizona Journal

Do you accept being called a Chicano artist?

Díaz

My paintings have more to do with humanity as a whole than with any particular race. That is why I use Latin in my work, it is the language from which most languages are derived.

Arizona Journal

Do you think about who will be looking at your work—your audience—when you paint, or do you just focus on the end product?

Díaz

When an idea comes to me it is something I can't explain. I don't think about who will see it until the work is done.

Arizona Journal

What are your plans for the immediate future? Are you thinking about attempting anything new?

Díaz

At the present time I am only thinking about exhibiting in museums. I feel like my work will have a broader audience without the pressure of having to sell.

Arizona Journal

What kind of message are you trying to convey with your art?

Díaz

I want to create an environment for people to reflect on their own spirituality.