



The Local Voice - Lancaster

Shining a Light On Issues Through Documentary Photography + Journalism

Ana Quintino Juarez

‘Let Details Emerge’

Ana Quintino Juarez Tells Her Story Through Art

by Eric Dusenbery

The longer one looks at the painting, the more details begin to emerge. A heart is at the center and all growth flows from it — a metaphor from nature. Some of the leaves are green and vibrant and growing. Others are brown and decaying — the life narrative of past issues, perhaps. Look again and the silhouetted outline of a human figure holding the heart emerges. Roots are exposed, along with hands and a body.

The painting, “Hurting Growth,” is the work of Ana Quintino Juarez.

“That piece was my way of expressing how sometimes we are hurting but growing at the same time. Our hearts being precious jewels that, at times, feel like darkness growing. Still, we might seem beautiful from the outside.”

Quintino Juarez’s studio and work area is also her personal living space. Paintings are suspended from the ceiling and hung on walls. Terrariums are arranged on a table and a cube organizer system holds paints and the tools of whatever she is creatively pursuing at the moment. Quintino Juarez calls her art materials and pieces “doodads.”





A hanging egg chair reveals more creative flair — silk flowers and greenery are woven through the wicker material and a faux fur cushion covers the seat.

Creativity and art are important to Quintino Juarez, but are not the only things that define her. “I’m a DACA recipient,” she said. “My dad worked at a dairy farm growing up so his job was a big part of how we ended up in Lancaster County. The job actually provided housing, so I think that was a really big selling point for my dad. For an undocumented person to get housing is an issue.”

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is a program that temporarily protects undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as children from deportation. The Obama Administration announced the program in

June 2012, and it allows immigrants between the ages of 15 - 41 to apply for work authorization and a two-year period of deferred action, which can be renewed. Individuals must also undergo background checks.

Quintino Juarez’s family is from Guanajuato, Mexico. She arrived in the United States at the age of two, so she doesn’t remember much about the move.

But, she does remember families being a little unsure about DACA because they had to give out all of their information.

“There was a lot of worry because you’re living completely in the shadows for so long and then you feel like you’re completely exposing yourself.”

Growing up, Quintino Juarez was excited about applying for DACA because it would open doors. And, for a 15-year old, knowing that she could apply for a driver’s permit, and then a driver’s license, would be a game changer.

Quintino Juarez was very excited when she finally received her DACA recognition. But, that also meant processing unexpected emotions and, admittedly, she didn’t handle the life changes and experience very well. She struggled in school and it wasn’t until later that she realized what her life would be without it.

“It definitely opened the world up in ways I never thought would be possible.”

And, art changed things.

“I was always creative and I think art was a way of disassociating myself from reality. It allowed me to focus on something that felt good at the moment. I think I used it as a coping mechanism — when you’re in the creative moment, reality is off to the side.”

Quintino Juarez artistry is self-taught. She describes it as just doodling and doing what feels right. She has a tendency to try everything and thinks that is not necessarily bad. She would rather be mediocre at many things than really good at one thing.

Pointing to some of her paintings, she discusses their significance. They are bold and vibrant, and some reflect her Latin and Mexican culture and heritage. Others have a more graffiti-inspired theme.

Gesturing toward a painting on the wall, she explained that the painting represents many different Latin cultures — including flags for different countries. An owl is depicted as an *alebrije* — a whimsical, brightly colored piece of folk art of Mexican culture to represent creativity with the spiritual world. There are also two *vejigantes*, which are folkloric characters that originated in Puerto Rico.

“The painting was inspired by a Puerto Rican artist named Bad Bunny. In one of his songs he states, ‘Now everyone wants to be Latino,’ which is written on the bottom right of the painting. It resonated with me because I grew up feeling like I was looked down on by certain groups of people for being Mexican, an immigrant, a Latina. Recently, our cultures are now seen as ‘cool,’”

Working primarily with acrylic paint, her art has been exhibited at various venues in Lancaster County, including the Welcome City Gallery’s first Hispanic art show celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month. Although she has no expectations or goals for her art, Quintino Juarez is grateful that people want to include her at exhibitions and events.



While nearly 40 percent of Lancaster’s population is Hispanic, the Mexican community is actually quite small, which makes it hard for Quintino Juarez to connect with her heritage apart from her immediate family.

“Apart from food, television and music, I still have a lot to re-learn when it comes to my Mexican culture. I dream of the day I can go back to Mexico and experience it for myself.”

Currently, she wants to experience a lot of different things from traveling to exploring nature.

“I just want to be myself. At the of the day I’m Ana and Ana can mean a lot of many things — she makes art, she really loves to dance, and is also really good at this and really good at that.”