

Related Public Programs:

The METAMORPHOSIS of Gabriel Villa Artist Talk

June 6, 3-4pm

Join artist Gabriel Villa for a virtual exhibition walkthrough and conversation with cultural promoter, transgender activist, writer and designer, Franky Piña about Villa's exhibition, *The METAMORPHOSIS of Gabriel Villa*. For more information and to join the conversation visit: www.hydeparkart.org/events

About the Artist:



Studio and public artist **Gabriel Villa** was born and raised in El Paso, Texas, a region that shares a border with Ciudad Juarez. Villa has been a resident of Chicago's South Side for over twenty years. His work has been shown in Chicago at the National Museum of Mexican Art, Co Prosperity Sphere, Sullivan Galleries, and the Zhou B. Art Center. Nationally, his work has been shown at El Paso Museum of Art and Centro De Artes, San Antonio, TX. Villa received his MFA from the University of Delaware, and a BFA from Corpus Christi State University, Texas A&M. Villa was a 2018-19 Jackman

Goldwasser Artist in Residence at Hyde Park Art Center.

Many of the artworks on view are available for purchase through the Hyde Park Art Center. Pricelists are available at the front desk. If interested, contact exhibitions@hydeparkart.org.

Hyde Park **ARTCENTER**

5020 South Cornell Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60615 773.324.5520 www.hydeparkart.org. Hyde Park Art Center is a unique resource that advances contemporary visual art in Chicago by connecting artists and communities in unexpected ways. The Art Center is funded in part by the: Alphawood Foundation; Andy Warhol Foundation for Visual Arts; a City Arts III grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events; Field Foundation of Illinois; Harpo Foundation; Harper Court Arts Council; Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; The Irving Harris Foundation; The Joyce Foundation; Leo S. Guthman Fund; Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; Polk Bros. Foundation; Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust; and the generosity of people like you.

The METAMORPHOSIS of Gabriel Villa

Gallery 2 and Cleve Carney Gallery
April 26 - July 18, 2021



Gabriel Villa, *El Luchador* (detail), 2020, acrylic on museum board, 96 x 96 inches.

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Gabriel Villa, *Oil and Cotton*, 2019, Oil paint on stretched canvas, 48 x 144 inches.

Bringing together Villa's new body of work in ceramic with the large-scale paintings and drawings that the artist is known for, *The METAMORPHOSIS of Gabriel Villa* is the most comprehensive exhibition of the artist's practice to date. Villa's improvisational approach to two-dimensional work translates seamlessly into his latest ceramic works, which like his paintings create psychologically charged narratives featuring expressive otherworldly creatures. Villa's new experiments with ceramics, created over the last two and a half years, started during his Jackman Goldwasser Residency at Hyde Park Art Center. According to the artist, the residency "served as a reminder of the importance of how place, process, materials and stream of consciousness plays in [his] studio practice."

The works in the exhibition are packed with symbols like surveilling eyes, boxing gloves, and crosses that speak to issues of over-policing, surveillance, and the psychological and physical effects that those practices have on residents of Chicago's South West Side, Villa's home for over twenty years. *El Luchador* (2020) depicts a street vendor in Villa's Pilsen neighborhood who the artist encounters often. The painting's title translates roughly to 'the hustler' but most literally to 'the fighter' and speaks to the street vendor's hardworking attitude despite his precarious labor conditions. In the painting, Villa replaced the street vendor's product (cotton candy) with boxing gloves, a

recurring symbol found in several works in the exhibition like in *Candy Gloves* (2021) and *Oil and Cotton* (2019). In this context, the boxing gloves serve to give aesthetic shape to violent attitudes towards immigrant laborers.

The ceramic works on view in the exhibition started as visual studies of form, but have become an important aspect of Villa's practice, having a transformative effect in the way he thinks of his chosen materials and content. The title of the exhibition also speaks to the impact that the Jackman Goldwasser Residency and free access to the Oakman Clinton School classes at the Art Center had on the artist. Under the instruction of Art Center Teaching Artists, Villa was able to master clay to realize the new body of work in the exhibition. He said, "Working with clay affected the way in which I apply and think about painting. Clay provided a key into an untapped creative well, a gateway into figurative abstraction, fluidity and simplicity."

Although, Villa's murals are not included in this exhibition, it is important to highlight the significant role that his public art practice plays in his practice overall. As seen in the image on the right, Villa uses his voice as a public muralist to reflect on urgent issues that are relevant to the context in which he paints.



Mariela Acuña
Exhibitions and Residency
Coordinator

Located at Blue Door Neighborhood Center: *Arbol De La Vida/Tree of Life*, 2021, 6 x 5 ft. acrylic on wood panel. Made possible by Chicago Public Arts Group, Funded by Blue Cross Blue Shield, Chicago. South Lawndale Branch.