

ARTS

"De La Tierra"

The group exhibition, curated by Michael Anthony García, refreshes the migrant Latino narrative

REVIEWED BY CAITLIN GREENWOOD, FRI., OCT. 2, 2015





COURTESY OF MICHAEL ANTHONY GARCÍA

Texas State University's fall exhibition "De la Tierra" navigates around the themes in Bobcat alumnus Tomás Rivera's *Y No Se Lo Tragó la Tierra (And the Earth Did Not Devour Him)*. The Chicano novel exposes the harsh existence of migrant workers and the toll this transient, rural lifestyle has on the families who are inextricably beholden to it.

While the group exhibition hinges on the experience of migrant work, it can more largely be considered a look into the lives of contemporary Latinos. Curated by artist Michael Anthony García, "De la Tierra" houses some local favorites, Federico Archuleta and Gerardo Arellano among them. The show incorporates installation work, sculpture, video, and more, and this variety in medium shows García's curatorial comfort in moving among art forms but also provides audiences the opportunity to embrace this modern-day representation of Latino culture through diversified perspectives. A chicken coop transforms into a sacred space while a reconstructed children's toy pinpoints the systemic poverty inherent in migrant communities. Never do these messages feel redundant, even if the symbolism (a large spray-painted portrait of the Virgen de Guadalupe, for example) is well-worn territory.

García truly attempts to dissect the many facets of identifying as Latino in a modern-day setting while leaning on author Rivera to anchor the exhibition's overall thesis. Using literature to inspire another creative work is nothing new, but it's refreshing to see two exhibitions – the other being the Contemporary Austin's "Strange Pilgrims" – bring celebrated Latino writers into the larger public spotlight instead of being cloistered in the communities that first championed them.

"De la Tierra" feels like a new incarnation of the Latino narrative, and García's curatorial style brings together work that feels raw and understated. Fans of Rivera's writing will be excited to find art that directly complements his novel while audiences lacking the literary context still have a comprehensive exhibition to

unpack.

"De La Tierra"

Texas State Gallery I, Joan Cole Mitte Building, San Marcos

www.txstgalleries.org

Through Oct. 7

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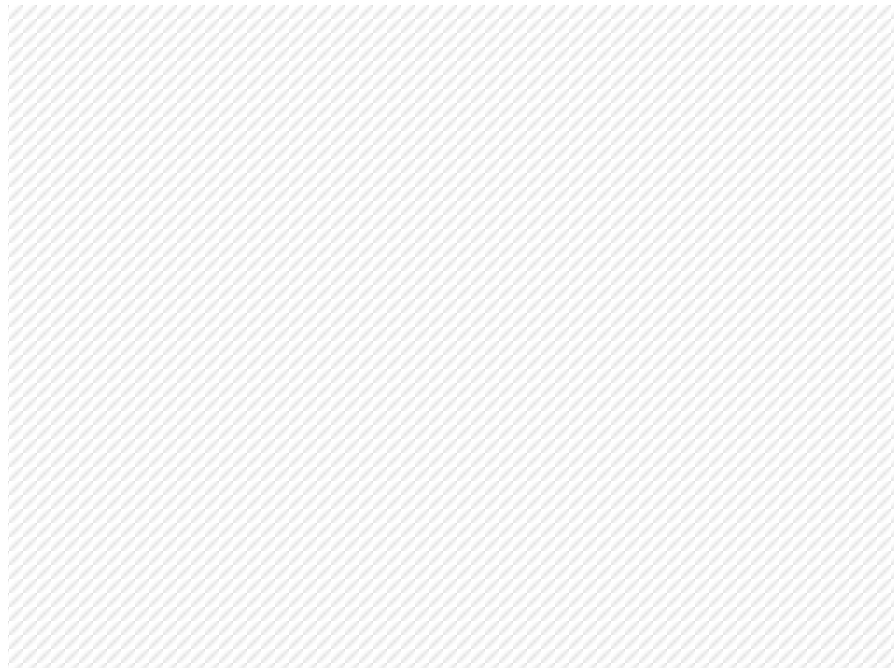
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