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Innocence and Ignorance, the true Blessing

It is amazing how one can be touched and influenced just by going to a museum and observing different artworks by random artists and their perspective of the world and their perspective of life itself. I decided to visit the San Jose Museum of Art on the 11th of July, which was a Friday afternoon with the desire to be enlightened by art being that I have never visited an Art museum before. The name of the exhibit that fascinated me the most and that I decided to write about is Tino Rodriguez's "The Darkening Garden: Tino Rodriguez" also known as "El Jardín al Anochecer". Tino was born and raised in Guadalajara, Mexico where the art of the Catholic Churches captivated his attention forever. The particular piece that I will be writing about is called "Erase una Vez (Once Upon a Time)" and was painted in 1997 by Tino Rodriguez. The approximate size of this specific piece of art is 6 x 6 inches with oil and rhinestones on wood.

I chose to talk about Tino Rodriguez's "Erase una Vez" for a number of reasons. As I walked into Tino Rodriguez's gallery I was first mystified by that particular painting and as to why a grown man would wear a veil on top of his head (curiosity is a curse!!!). This in return attracted me to it and I had to examine it and also find an answer to it. I first came up with numerous theories as to what Tino was trying to say with the painting but none of it really made sense until I noticed two particular things.

First, I was unaware that Tino Rodriguez was a gay man and that it must have been a real struggle to grow up in a Mexican family of six boys and three girls and truly express his thoughts and feelings towards the society. This, to me signified that Tino Rodriguez is not ashamed but rather proud and that this particular painting, including many of his other pieces of art, were all strong, self-reflection papers with Tino's imagination and experiences acting upon it hand in hand.

Second, I noticed the name and the short description of the painting. It was “Once upon a time”. This struck me extremely hard and I was captivated by it automatically. I came to a conclusion about the painting and I put it in a sentence that I had to write down as I was observing the piece of art. I wrote down the following; the innocence and ignorance of the past is a gift, a blessing that one loses over time. This applies to Tino’s painting in a great way and I will try and explain in the following paragraph.

Tino as a kid did not have to deal with society as he does today. Everything around him did not have an impact on him; rather it sort of passed him by without affecting him as it does the majority of young kids throughout the world. This painting was speaking to me and giving me all sorts of miscellaneous ideas. I asked myself if having knowledge is a blessing or a curse. The same idea I think applies to Tino when he was painting “Erase una Vez”. He portrayed himself as an innocent boy, without knowledge of the wild, mysterious world, thinking to himself that being who you are is good, when in reality, it can be quiet bad.

Besides the fact that this painting spoke to me in a way that no other painting really has, another great strength of it is Tino’s fanciful imagination and colors that he uses throughout his paintings. “Erase una Vez” is simple, yet filled with dreams and real issues that have to do with human sexuality and the sexual suffering that he went through. He states that “I am fascinated by the complexity of human sexuality, transformation, longing and transgression” which in return tells me that being ignorant is being innocent and that being innocent is a blessing.

The smooth strokes of his paintings and the way he brings out certain parts of himself by darkening some of the portions of his self-portrait such as the cheeks, the forehead, the neck and the background is truly a gift and also a reason as to why I was fascinated by “Erase una Vez”. The way that his colors re-act with his self-portraits are absolutely amazing and by this I mean that it does not matter if there is sadness, suffering, pain, happiness, bliss or anything of that extent, Tino continues to use brilliant and extreme color in his paintings to show the inner beauty of it all. His strength is the mystification and it is protected by his use of colors. The way that he painted his self-

portrait is amazing because as I looked at it, the eyes captivated me and I could see the sorrow because of the rejection. It's as if he was really looking at me and telling me his story of pain and suffering.

Another reason why Tino's art in general attracts me is because he combines the dream world and the illusion with the reality and the suffering from within. Most of his paintings, exactly like "Erase una Vez" are painted in a way where they do not scare the observer, but rather softly present the cold fact of reality, sort of a watered-down version of a reality check. Needless to say, the cold facts of the world and reality in general are interpreted by Tino and painted in an imaginary world asking "what if or why not"? "Erase una Vez" means "Once Upon a Time" which can only mean that Tino is depressed about the fact that the world is not how he expected it to be. It is cruel and disturbing but the peace can be found when fighting fears with imagination and/or dreams. Only his eyes can tell the suffering and the pain that he had to grow up with; the rejection, the humiliation, and the fears that he had to conquer.

I came to a few conclusions regarding the interpretation of Tino Rodriguez's "Erase una Vez" and about his style in general. The portrait of himself in a veil symbolizes the innocence of a kid. There is no guilt, no shame, and no jealousy, absolutely nothing is bothering a young heart or mind. This painting truly struck a soft spot with me because if one really thinks about the point that Tino is trying to make about a child's perspective of the world and the cruel intentions of the society and the adult that has to live and interact within it, one is truly cursed for eternity. Tino is simply using his imagination to portray a world of innocence in his dream world. This in return brings me to a sentence that I thought of as I was observing this innocent painting, in a low lit room that has no significance in a world full of other fatal attractions. I thought to myself, being ignorant is being innocent and being innocent is a being blessed. But then I asked myself, what is being blessed? Is it to be enlightened or just to be plain happy? Does it really even matter in a world full of pain and suffering? The answer lies in the beginning of it all, the only true blessing that one ever owns, the past.

