

gulf coast times

ARTS

EXHIBIT

Empire

An Arturo Vega Retrospective



Empire 1989 by Arturo Vega

Florida SouthWestern State College is delighted to announce *Empire: An Arturo Vega Retrospective* at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery.

Opening with a public reception on Friday, November 4 from 6 – 8 pm, this ambitious survey runs through December 17 and will include guest lectures, performances and a panel discussion exploring Arturo Vega's broader impact on popular culture and contextualizing his work as a visual artist. In collaboration with The Arturo Vega Foundation in NYC, *Empire: An Arturo Vega Retrospective* is the late Mexican-born artist's first solo U.S. museum retrospective and features photography, collage and a number of iconic canvases from the artist's *Supermarket* and *Silver Dollar* series (begun in the 1970s); his *Flags* and so-called "word paintings" from *Insults* and other series produced during the 1980s, '90s and aughts.

Escaping the repressive violence of an authoritarian regime under Mexico's "perfect dictatorship" in the late '60s, Vega made his way to New York City to study English, philosophy and photography at the New School for Social Research in the early 1970's. Having discovered Elvis as a child and later co-directing a touring production of The Who's "Tommy" at the National University in Mexico City, Vega understood the revolutionary and transformative power of music, theatre/performance and art. While working on his first painting series of supermarket signs, he befriended members of The Ramones, a rock & roll band that would soon play their first show (and would decades later be inducted into the Rock n' Roll Hall of Fame). Designing the Ramones'

ubiquitous logo based on the Great Seal of the United States, painting backdrops for their stage and creating a lighting scheme loosely adapted from Albert Speer's *Lichtdom* to enhance their effect, Vega created visual imagery that defined the transgressive aesthetic of punk rock by co-opting and questioning symbols of power.

In numerous group shows since the 1970's, Vega's work has more recently been the subject of one-person exhibitions at CB's 313 Gallery/New York City (1992), Raleigh Studios/Miami Beach (Curated by Sandra Schulman in 1994), Galería OMR/México, D.F. (2011), Casa Redonda, Chihuahua/Mexico (2012) and at How! Happening in NYC in 2015 and 2016. As Vega once said: "Art connects to the eternal – demanding fast changes and a reckless appetite for truth, justice and a better way of life."

Empire: An Arturo Vega Retrospective at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery will draw parallels and explore interests shared by Arturo Vega and our gallery namesake. For Rauschenberg, "(Art was) a means to function thoroughly and passionately in a world that has a lot more to it than paint."

A panel discussion with special guests Carlo McCormick, Legs McNeil, Anthony Haden-Guest, and Adam Lehrer will take place on Saturday, November 5 at 1 pm.

- Empire: An Arturo Vega Retrospective will be on display from November 4 – December 17 at The Bob Rauschenberg Gallery, located in Florida SouthWestern State College, 8099 College Parkway in Fort Myers, FL. For more information, visit www.rauschenberggallery.com.