

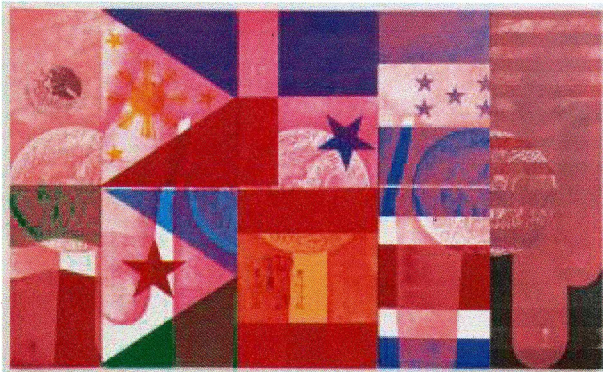
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Rauschenberg Gallery shows Arturo Vega retrospective



A piece from Arturo Vega's "Empire" retrospective COURTESY IMAGE

Florida SouthWestern State College will offer "Empire: An Arturo Vega Retrospective" at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery, located on FSW's Lee County campus.

Opening with a public reception from 6-8 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 4 this ambitious survey runs through Dec. 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.

A collaboration with the Arturo Vega Foundation in New York City, "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 2000s.

Escaping the repressive violence of an authoritarian regime under Mexico's "perfect dictatorship" in the late 1960s, Arturo Vega made his way to New York City to study English, philosophy and photography at the New School for Social Research in the early 1970s. 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, Mr. Vega understood the revolutionary and transformative power of music, theater/performance and art. While working on his first painting series of supermarket signs, he befriended members of The Ramones, a rock and roll band that would soon play its first show (and would decades later be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame). Designing the Ramones' ubiquitous logo based on the Great Seal of the United States, painting backdrops for its stage and creating a lighting scheme loosely adapted from Albert Speer's "Lichtdom" to enhance the effect, Mr. 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 1970s, Mr. 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 Howl! Happening in New York City in 2015 and 2016.

As Mr. 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 the 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."

The Bob Rauschenberg Gallery was founded as the Gallery of Fine Art in 1979 on the Lee County campus of Florida SouthWestern State College/FSW (then Edison Community College). On June 4, 2004, the Gallery of Fine Art was renamed the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery to honor and commemorate the longtime association and friendship with the artist. Over more than three decades until his death, the gallery worked closely with Mr. Rauschenberg to present world premiere exhibitions, including multiple installations of the ¼ Mile or Two Furlong Piece. The artist insisted on naming the space the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery (versus the "Robert Rauschenberg Gallery") as it was consistent with the intimate, informal relationship he maintained with both local Southwest Florida community and FSW.

These events are open to the public, free of charge.

Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday and 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday. |

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