



# Staten Island Advance

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## 'Hispanic Staten Island' explores Latin culture through paintings, photographs, music

By MICHAEL J. FRESSOLA

Switching from the New York Public Library's "Latino" terminology to the Wagner College Library's alternative term, "Hispanic," the tiny Spotlight Gallery on campus is presenting a multi-disciplinary exhibit called "Hispanic Staten Island: Culture & Identity" through May 5.

Some of the participants, like playwright Linda Nieves Powell, will be familiar. Her 2000 show, "Yo Soy Latina," toured the city, nearby colleges and other venues for several years.

Similarly, photographer Irma Borhorquez-Geisler's series depicting the burgeoning Mexican community and Arlette Cepeda's inventive and thoughtful take on contemporary art, popular culture and identity have had local exposure too.

Of course, there are more local Hispanic/Latino artists than there is space to show in the 250-square foot gallery. Young designer Gustavo Galvan isn't represented; neither is Venezuelan-born painter Alfredo Arcia.

Galvan was a Snug Harbor Artist Residency Program (SHARP) fellow last year. Arcia burst onto the local scene in 1990 — he paints Old Master-style — with a big show at the Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art in 1990.

Still, "Hispanic Staten Island" may be giving some participants their first local showcase.

Painter Homero Herrera Chez works in a distinctly complex, completely mesmerizing fashion. His semi-transparent canvases are full of light, but dense with information and drama: Creatures, hybrids, a little whimsy, the sea, atmosphere, a boat, myth-making.

And behind it all, is that a whiff of Goya and a little El Greco? Just two paintings are in the show and it's hard to take your eyes off them.

NewYorican Olga Ayala's recalls the Las Tres Reyes (The Three Kings) in her Afro-Caribbean Magi effigies, but heads to other cultural terrain for her small and very well-made Dia de Los Muertos diorama.

Called "What You Don't See Won't Hurt You," the dominant figure is Death, a leering skeleton, done up for the occasion like Frieda Kahlo, the Mexican painter. Elaborately dressed and jeweled, Death is relaxing in a rocking chair. Minuscule reproductions of famous Kahlos adorn the walls. A vase of calla lilies, favorites of Frieda's, sit nearby.

Two other participants, Elaine Mendez, who loaned a handmade wedding gown and quilt, and musician Jose Ocasio are represented. Christopher Mule and Lori Weintrob curated.

The library, on the campus at 1 Campus Rd. in Grymes Hill, is open daily until midnight. Call 718-390-3401 for more information.