



Cecilia Paredes,
Blue Paradise,
2009, photo
performance
with body paint,
Lambda print on
paper mounted
onto aluminum,
15 x 21.5 inches



Mary Aslin,
Roses Be Glad,
2010, pastel on
archival board,
18 x 24 inches

Once a Mapmaker

Mary Aslin, now an accomplished artist, recalls how, when she was a young newlywed, she wanted to be a fine artist; but she became a mapmaker until her triplets were born. When the children were 10 months old, she took her first oil painting class. Once they were in bed, she would paint, often until 1 a.m., or when her schedule allowed. Moving from portraits to commissioned work, Aslin applied artistic theories to her work as she became more professional and her reputation grew. She made sure “to always keep her brush wet,” even when the demands of being a homemaker, wife and mother allowed her only a spoonful of time for her art, often including the children in art projects, which enriched family time.

Now that the triplets are grown, Aslin spends up to 12 hours a day drawing and painting. Currently, she works mainly in soft pastels, striving for a realistic, classic look based on an abstract foundation, thumbnail sketches and rigorously planned compositions. She develops the understructure, light and shadows, and internal rhythms of colors, shapes and textures, creating art that seems to transcend time. It is created by a contemporary woman with a profound and dedicated vision, who focuses her life on family and art – and excels in both.

PANORAMAS

BY ROBERTA CARASSO

Cecilia Paredes, Cinthya Soto and Ana Mercedes Hoyos are Latin American mothers (and in one case, a grandmother) ranging in age from 40s to 70s. They are also internationally known artists whose work often exposes long-standing social controversies – particularly the reality of being female in Latin America. In the photographic exhibition Panoramas, the three artists tackle the hard issues head on.

Paredes was raised in a Peruvian macho culture where females were seen as weaker and less important. To show the power of women, she creates poetic metaphors that depict the essential strength and loveliness of women. First, Paredes paints herself into a large overall pattern of flowers, leaves and branches. She wears a robe of the same pattern as the painting, as if she could dissolve into it. Then she photographs the results, juxtaposing the art of painting with photography. Even in this perfect composition, her body and matching floral robe cannot fully become one with either the background or foreground. It cannot be flattened or fade into the image. Rather than scolding society for not valuing women, she fearlessly portrays her womanliness, showing that it can no longer be subordinated, but must blossom and thrive.

While Soto's multi-media technical

accomplishments are highly impressive, in this series she steps back to reveal her artistic powers with more subtlety. Amateur street art customarily enlivens poor Latin neighborhoods. Soto comes upon these street treasures without staging them, and turns them into a photographic work of art. *Bicycle* is an image of a real bike parked outside a window painted with a scene of a tropical paradise – boats, the sea and palm trees gracefully swaying. Ironically, the window has bars on it and so it might be said that the bicycle owner pulls up to sunny Paradise, but ironically, Paradise is unattainable.

Where much of Latin America is known for male supremacy, Hoyos portrays

Colombia's Palenque, the only matriarchal society in Latin America. In the 17th century, The Free People of Palenque took an unusual opportunity when the Spanish Crown not only granted freedom to a group of runaway slaves, but allowed them to chart their own government. This act made Palenque the first free territory in the Americas. The colony is based on female principles that emphasize nurturing and fairness, with little discrimination based on gender or race. Hoyos creates superb sculptures, drawings and, in this exhibition, photographs of women conducting business in the marketplace, dressing up in celebration and holding their heads high in complete freedom.

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■ **MARY ASLIN** :: At Joseph Wise Gallery, 1550 S. Coast Hwy. Ste. 103, Laguna Beach; and Chemers Gallery, 17300 17th St. Ste. G, Tustin

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