



Cande Aguilar & Jesse Amado: "Dos Manos Dos Toques" at Cothren Contemporary, Houston

by Carris Adams | April 1, 2022



TOSS:

At first glance, the artist pairing in *Dos Manos Dos Toques* at Cothren Contemporary feels like a stretch, because of their formal differences. Instead, we can think of Cande Aguilar and Jesse Amado as two artists on different sides of the same coin. Both are Mexican American, working in the southern region of Texas, with opposite approaches, different touches, and therefore, the works have contrasting feels. Let's be honest: we live in a society that does not like to think or investigate beyond basic elements. Bodies with bodies. Blue with blue. AbEx paintings with AbEx paintings. But why not pair opposites?

Throughout the show, you get a sense of the artists' influences and visual interests, ranging from art history to the vernacular of pop culture to our personal, cultural, and collective histories. And it was refreshing, as a viewer, to work for the *why* and *how* of the show.

While one artist is whispering, the other is shouting.

Flip 1: HEADS:

Aguilar's mixed media paintings on canvas and panel explore mark-making, narrative, and color. The seamless layering of additive and subtractive processes will make every painter a little jealous. Clearly influenced by mom and pop hand-painted store signage, graffiti, and music works such as *Cometa Dulce*, the piece have a rhythm that transports you to a place and a time. Whether that time is coming or going is up to the viewer.

For *Cometa Dulce* (2021), Aguilar assembled a number of panels from different works to create the 60 x 98-inch painting. The push and pull between texture and mark-making is reminiscent of dilapidated signage or chipped stucco. The sanding and scraping between layers of paint and transfers reveal another secret layer of illegibility. Language is a medium and the letters are a mark, which suggest a word and yet deny the viewer the reward for solving the puzzle. The fuzzy lines of spray paint remove and create space simultaneously.



Cage Match Project, Round 21: collective by Ariel Wood





Cometa Dulce, there are more marks, more textures, and elements of drawing that help sew the panels together.



Cande Aguilar, "Cometa Dulce," 2021, mixed media and paint on canvas



Cande Aguilar, "Bobby Loco," 2021, detail, mixed media and paint on canvas

Bobby Loco (2021) is of a similar vein. This 60 x 48-inch canvas hangs vertically and calls to the viewer with a single, large painted red-eye, and a head-like silhouette carved out the center of the picture plane. Again, there is a push and pull between opposing marks and surfaces, yet instead of spray paint to eliminate and build space, there is a beautiful checkered pattern that you can find as the design of plastic woven storage bags in most mom-and-pop grocery stores. If you know, you know — and this goes for the bag and the title.



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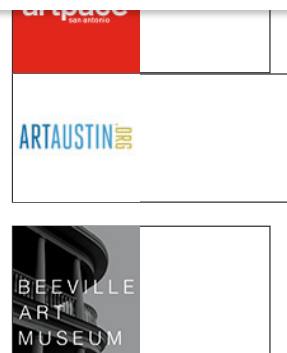
Cande Aguilar, "Bobby Loco," 2021, mixed media and paint on canvas.

As Aguilar's work demands space and time for investigation, Amado's work quietly draws you over.

Flip 2: TAILS:

Jesse Amado is the OG in the room. All of Amado's pieces have a finish to them that I talk about with friends constantly. I mostly ask, "how is this possible?," especially with his range of materials. From 100% virgin wool felt to acrylic works on canvas and panel to ink on paper, and even a chicharron, all of Amado's work is crisp. Pun intended. Each piece is minimal, endowed with cultural and emotional inquiries into art, beauty, and politics. Due to his minimal aesthetic, the works are inevitably coded, thus the titles and the viewer do the rest of the work to mine meaning and connect form to concept.

Most of Amado's works in *Dos Manos Dos Toques* are hanging felt sculptures. Some are boldly colored, draping elegantly, while others remain neutral and are tightly wound into a shape. Pieces such as *Surveillance No. 3* (2020) and *Surveillance* (2021) are examples of intersections in Amado's work, meeting as 16- and 24-inch circular hanging sculptures. The swirls, bends, and folds of the off-white felt forced into this tight shape become the mirrors, wires, cameras, and eyes that watch people of color on a daily basis. This, with their titles and dates, will lead any viewer to the height of the pandemic, the tension that is our political landscape, and power. Who gets to watch whom? Who gets to call the police? Who gets to point the finger and walk away? Who gets to go on with their day unscathed?



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Jesse Amado, "Surveillance," 2021, 100% virgin wool felt, pins, 24 inches in diameter



Jesse Amado, "Surveillance No. 3," 2020, 100% virgin wool felt, acrylic on wood, 16 x 16 inches

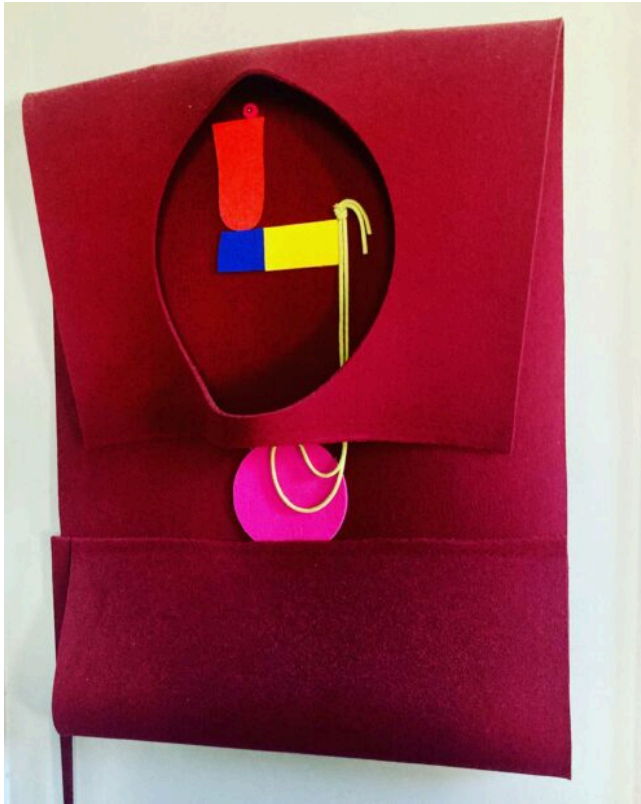
Not too far away hangs *House with a Face of Pretty Drugs* (2017). The brightly colored diptych is the opposite of the *Surveillance* series in structure. The Fuschia-maroon felt is folded, creating an interior space that is only visible through the circular "window" cut from the center. The window reveals other brightly colored pill-like shapes that the "house" or "body" is consuming. In



to see the power. Who gets to point the finger and walk away? Who gets to go on with their day unscathed?

Flip 3: CALL:

I highly recommend seeing this show in person. If not for the push and pull of Aguilar's textures and mark-making, then for the quiet beauty of Amado's work. Together, through their textures, their playfulness, and their over-the-top subtleness, the works push conversations of legibility, memory and power.



Jesse Amado, "House With A Face Of Pretty Drugs," 2016, 100 % virgin wool felt and pins, 36 x 30 inches

Dos Manos Dos Toques is on view at [Cothren Contemporary](#) in Houston by appointment through April 23, 2022.

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Love the weight and gravity in Amado's felt piece! Super fresh writing style too



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