

The Art of the Community arrives at RUM

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Translated by Tia Gilson

“The Romans considered the art of making mosaics so exquisite that it was thought that only muses, or those favored by them, were able to create them.”

Ralph Rivera Zayas

The University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez (UPRM) recently presented the *Mosaiprismatica Artesanal* exhibit, in the Manual M. Sama y Auger room of UPRM’s main library, with the idea of preserving a one thousand year old tradition. The exhibit is composed of mosaics-an artistic technique that uses pieces of rock, tile or glass to form drawings- a collaborative effort by artists from every town in Puerto Rico.

The librarian and professor, Ralph Rivera Zayas explained the reason for showing this exhibit is to send the message that Puerto Rican historical and cultural knowledge is closely related to books and the appreciation of popular art. Likewise, he noted that artists of special communities are also reflections of history.

Rivera Zayas added that the intention of UPRM’s library is to make the community aware of the space that is available to the community, at the University, for popular art. “*Mosaiprismatica* is an example of the institutions desire to make ties with the community.”

On the other hand, Manuel Hidalgo, of the Office for Socio –Economic Financing and Self-management of Puerto Rico, explained that the exhibit is the result of the hard work that was done by the Office of Special Communities of Puerto Rico (OCEPR, by its Spanish acronym) to promote the mechanisms that contribute to the physical, economic, social and cultural betterment of the communities.

“*Mosaiprismatica* was composed by more than 50 artists between the ages of ten and 76 years old, all of whom are residents of our special communities,” explained Hidalgo.

He added that OCEPR trains the residents of special communities and accompanies them in their certification process as artists. OCEPR also helps them to create small businesses and promote their art using different means, like this exhibit.

Hidalgo emphasized the importance of presenting this collection at UPRM. “We have organized a tour, in Puerto Rico, of the exhibit, with the purpose of promoting the organizations primary function.”

Rivera Zayas agreed to the importance of opening academic spaces for popular artistic expressions. “Libraries are also a forum for community art and we would like to make a beautiful transition between the skillful art of lamps, by Noel Sánchez, and the mosaic popular art done by special community artists.”

“*Mosaiprismatica* will be on exhibition until October 31, 2008 at the UPRM’s main library. All those interested may visit the exhibit during normal library hours.

Creaciones Tierra Mía

Protect the environment, recycle and decorate! That is Noel Sanchez Dominguez’s motto. He displayed his work *Creaciones Tierra Mía* last month at UPRM’s main library with an exhibit of lamps, made of recycled materials such as glass bottles.

According to the artist, this concern originates from the vast amount of contamination from glass in Puerto Rico, and her desire to contribute to the environment

in a positive way. “This way instead of the bottle going to the trash it is converted into a lamp that can be put in a dark corner of a house, veranda or library,” said Sánchez.

He collected empty glass bottles that different restaurants and businesses throw in the trash. Later he washed and dried them using different tools to construct the lamps’ basic materials.

“To make the hole where the electric cable would pass through, he used various drill bits that were specially designed to penetrate glass,” explained Sánchez.

According to the artist, to reuse is to give the material a different function than it had originally; therefore, it is more beneficent than recycling because the materials do not have to pass through chemical conversion processes.

“The exhibit was made so that students can appreciate the different forms of expression reusable materials can provide,” said Sánchez.