



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
DEPARTMENT OF
ARTS & CULTURE

February 20, 2020

Dear San Antonio Arts Commission and Committee Members,

I find it important to address a current issue regarding the Department of Arts & Culture's Centro de Artes gallery and one of the current exhibits in the space, *XicanX: New Visions*.

The exhibition, curated by Suzy González and Michael Menchaca of Dos Mestizx, focuses on the XicanX Art Movement that consists of artists from a variety of regions, genders and backgrounds. *XicanX: New Visions* features the work of 34 artists in this movement, especially highlighting the women, queer, immigrant, indigenous and activist artists who are at the forefront of this movement.

This exhibit and the diversity of artists included aligns with Centro de Artes' mission of telling the story of the Latino experience, with a focus on South Texas through local and regional art, history, and culture. This mission, established through a strategic planning process with the community and overseen by the San Antonio Arts Commission's Centro de Artes Committee, also has a focus on showcasing the work of San Antonio and South Texas Latino/a artists.

We are proud of Centro de Artes' strong arts program that allows public access to many forms of art, some of which is avant garde or provocative. Centro de Artes is a public facility owned and operated by the City, located in Historic Market Square, one of the most visited cultural venues in Texas. Centro de Artes is at the center of a cultural and historical crossroads, accessible and free of charge to residents and visitors of all ages. We welcomed more than 15,000 visitors to the gallery in Fiscal Year 2019 and the current exhibit promises to be one of the most visited yet, with approximately 400 attendees for the opening last Thursday.

The afternoon before the exhibition opening, the *XicanX: New Visions* curators submitted the *Spictacle II: La Tortillera (2014)* video by California based artist Xandra Ibarra. After reviewing the content, we determined that this video – which includes graphic simulation of a sex act – was not appropriate for display at Centro de Artes.

The curators, not agreeing with this decision, are claiming censorship by the City of San Antonio. You may have received their statement on this topic as it was emailed to many in the arts community and posted on Dos Mestizx social media. As is true of all exhibitions in this public facility, the Department of Arts & Culture has the contractual and legal right to determine what is displayed in this publicly funded space. These decisions are always difficult and we understand the artist community's concern with works not being displayed. However, we need to consider our mission of community access to a broad range of art within the context of our community's standards.

The exhibit as a whole has incredible value to our community and beyond, addressing substantive issues that face the Latino/a community and artists – especially relating to the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ artists in a field that has historically comprised of cisgender straight males. We do not want the decision to not show this video to detract from the work of the 33 artists that continue to be shown at the space, all of which bring new, important and provoking perspectives to the traditional ideas tied to Chicanx or Latinx identities and socio-political issues.

We understand the importance of this discussion as we continue to move forward in our mission to tell the story of the Latino experience at Centro de Artes. The Centro de Artes Committee will host a special meeting on this topic on Tuesday, February 25 at 10:00 a.m. in the 2nd floor of the Centro de Artes Gallery 101 S. Santa Rosa.

Debbie Racca-Sittre

Director

Department of Arts & Culture, City of San Antonio