



COURTESY OF GALLERY HÓZHO AT HOTEL CHACO

"Tewa Tales of Suspense" August 16-20, Jason Garcia (Okuu Pin) and Vicente Telles, natural pigments on wood, 2021.

DYNAMIC DUO

Native, Hispanic artists combine forces to tell the shared story of New Mexico

FROM THE STUDIO



Kathleen Roberts

Editor's note: The Journal continues the once-a-month series "From the Studio" with Assistant Arts Editor Kathleen Roberts, as she takes an up-close look at an artist.

For Vicente Telles and Jason Garcia, cultural bridges begin with art. Open at Gallery Hózhó at Albuquerque's Hotel Chaco, "Duet" reveals those connections between the pair in a new group of retablos or devotional paintings. The Albuquerque-based Telles is known for painting traditional retablos, while Santa Clara Pueblo's Garcia is known for graphic novel-inspired imagery on ceramic tiles.

Gallery curator Suzanne Fricke says the show marks the first time in her 30 years of working as an art historian that she has seen a collaboration between a Hispanic and a Native artist in New Mexico. Based on the Danza de Matachines, the series captures

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IF YOU GO

WHAT: "Duet" New Collaboration by Jason Garcia and Vicente Telles

WHEN: Through Jan. 18

WHERE: Gallery Hózhó at Hotel Chaco, 2000 Bellamah Ave. NW

CONTACT: 505-246-9989, galleryhohoho.com

Combining forces to tell NM's story

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imagery from the traditional movements performed by sword dancers. Cultural and historic figures, including Montezuma and his generals, the abuelas and abuelos (grandmothers and grandfathers) and El Toro, a symbolically-killed malevolent figure, lead the stepwork. In Native cultures, he often wears buffalo robes.

Telles carved the retablo frames, three of which Garcia painted, while Telles painted four.

The results merge their distinctive styles, creating a visual dialogue exploring the dance as a battle of good versus evil.

The show marks the pair's second collaboration. They met at a Santa Fe concert.

"We just stayed in contact and became friends," Telles said. (Garcia) "is not afraid to let the truth be shown."

The two first joined forces last year at Santa Fe's Hecho a Mano Gallery. But few people saw the exhibit because of the pandemic closings, Telles said. Gallery Hózhó curator Fricke asked them to collaborate again.

"I carved the retablo boards and gessoed," Telles said. "(Garcia) did three of the main images and I did the boards. Then we switched. It was kind of like taking off each other."

Garcia is known for his tile paintings such as "Tewa Tales of Suspense," commenting on the 1680 Pueblo Revolt against the Spanish. He also creates contrasting scenes of pueblo members in traditional dress using cell phones with satellite discs sprouting above the pueblo.

Los Matachines tells the story of Montezuma, the emperor of the Aztecs, Telles said. Both Hispanic and Native American cultures have adapted the dances at Santa Clara Pueblo and at Santuario de San Lorenzo in Bernalillo. The dances emerged in 17th century Spain.

Telles also carved an interactive corner altarpiece topped with three retablos featuring imagery on both sides. It shows Native dancers on one side, Hispanic on the other.

The tablets flip to show Telles' version of La Malinche, a key figure in the conquest of the Aztecs. His painting shows a woman in a white lace dress. Garcia's interpretation of the



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Jason Garcia (Okuu Pin) and Vicente Telles.



"La Malinche y Los Matchicos," Jason Garcia (Okuu Pin) and Vicente Telles, natural pigments on wood, 2020.



"La Malinche de KhaPo Owingeh," Jason Garcia (Okuu Pin) and Vicente Telles, natural pigments on wood, 2021.



"Santa Clara de Assisi," Jason Garcia (Okuu Pin) and Vicente Telles, natural pigments on wood, 2021.

same figure reveals a woman in full native regalia, complete with headdress and manta. Both figures hold the red cloth of a bullfighter.

"We're trying to tell the story of New Mexico and show how similar we can be," Telles said. "It's bridging the idea of this separation."

Both artists use mineral

pigments in their work.

"We geek out on natural pigments," Telles said with a laugh.

"It's a COVID celebration," Fricke said. "Jason's palette is very bright, but the more earthy tones of Vicente makes it grounded. They blend together beautifully."