MOMENTOS EN TIEMPO
Moments in Time
BY JOE LOPEZ EL GALLISTA DE SAN ANTONIO

M-F 8AM - 5PM; SAT. 8AM-3PM
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La Peña presents

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**BY JOE LOPEZ EL GALLISTA DE SAN ANTONIO**

**Dedicated to Mary Frances for her Love and Support.**

**EL BARRIO ESCONDIDO**

Joe Lopez' paintings capture a unique place in time where a border "barrio" culture embraced the history and traditions of two countries. Lopez spent his early life in a South Texas barrio hidden near the posh neighborhood of Alamo Heights in San Antonio, Texas. Most locals are unaware that such a place existed near an area where wealth was plentiful. "El Barrio Escondido" (The Hidden Barrio) created a vivid cultural backdrop of family ties, religion and social influences that are evident in Lopez' work.

Lopez has become a significant leader of the Chicano Art Movement, known nationally as an artist who paints real life, and as a man who stands up for his family, his culture, and his rights, even in the greatest adversity. He has persevered throughout his life, first to be "normal" even though he was born with only one hand; to learn the skills of an artist with virtually no resources for art school or lessons; to open his own studio and art gallery where he shows the work of "undiscovered" artists as well as his own work; and to fight and win a legal battle against a major U.S. company that not only attacked the title of one of his best-known paintings, but the very culture he strives to portray in his artwork.

Lopez' introduction to art came from his Uncle Basilio, a part-time artist who made wooden folk art carvings. A student at St. Anthony Shrine School, Joe's talent was first noticed by a nun who arranged a small scholarship at the local Witte Museum Art School. He studied art in high school and attended the La Villita School of Art and the San Antonio School of Art while working as a part-time gardener for a wealthy couple who helped him acquire a scholarship to attend several sessions at the prestigious McNay in San Antonio. Lopez gained business and artistic experience as a stock boy at Scrivner's Inc. department store, in the advertising art department of Dillard's stores and Centeno's Supermarket, and in the graphics department at Fort Sam Houston where he worked for 22 years until his retirement in 2007.

Lopez later trained under the nationally recognized watercolor artist Warren Hunter, and other well-known Texas artists, such as John Squire Adams, Finis Collins and Jesus "Chista" Cantu. Nationally acclaimed artist Jesse Trevino was an inspiration to Lopez because of his ability to paint with one hand.

Joe Lopez paints people he can identify with: people who have struggled through life. Street vendors and common laborers are a strong theme in his paintings. As a young boy Lopez sold newspapers, his cousins worked as shoe shine boys and his uncle sold ice cream in the neighborhood after work. Lopez' paintings show the beautiful dignity and pride of "los vendedores" who sell street dolls, nopalitos, fruit, cascarones, knowing that it will bring money that will help support their families.
ESTOS GALLOS NO CORREN!

The artist's signature works are found in his Gallo Series. The gallo (rooster) has long been a symbol of strength with a "stand and fight" attitude in Mexican culture. Lopez, fascinated with its symbolism and the regal look of the rooster, created a painting entitled "Puro Gallo" (a popular slang term meaning "pure blood") which eventually led to a lawsuit being filed against him by the Ernest and Julio Gallo Winery over the use of the Spanish word gallo. Thousands of people supported and rallied to his cause, and was represented by attorney Filemon Vela from Corpus Christi. The suit was settled, and Lopez has the right to use the word gallo in his business. A true victory for the man who was willing to "stand and fight." As Lopez states, "We didn't tuck our tail and run, a true gallo doesn't do that...estos gallos no corren."

THE SCENIC ROUTE

"I always say, I took the scenic route." It has been a long and adventurous journey with many interesting stops along the way.

In addition to the events and exhibits in his own gallery, Joe Lopez' work has been displayed in numerous art museums and cultural centers including: The Martinez Center in Corpus Christi; Laguna Gloria Art Museum in Austin; Narciso Martinez Cultural Center in San Benito, Texas; and the Texas A & M University Memorial Student Center. He designed the official poster for Pope John Paul II's visit to San Antonio, and his artwork has appeared on posters for the San Fernando Cathedral's 250th Anniversary Celebration, and La Feria de San Fernando. His painting "Taquachito Night" is the cover art of a CD produced by the Smithsonian Folkways Institute, entitled "Taquachito Nights." His story has been told on National Public Radio (NPR), KWEX TV, CNBC (in Spanish), Hispanic Magazine, the Houston Chronicle's "Texas Magazine," San Antonio Express News, La Prensa in Toledo and San Antonio, and more.

Lopez' paintings portray a sturdy confidence forged in the triumphs and tragedies of a barrio childhood. Joe Lopez is a mentor and advocate for children from the barrio. In May 2000, he completed an 11ft x 50ft outdoor mural commissioned by the Roosevelt Park Neighborhood Association in San Antonio, working with student apprentices from the nearby "Second Chance High School" at Blessed Sacrament Academy. The colorful mural scene, "El Barrio On My Mind," can be found on the side of a local convenience store in the historic "Mission District" of the city.
Frances and I love dancing. Many weekends we go to different venues to go dancing. We don’t dance very much anymore but we still enjoy going wherever there is conjunto music. I like to listen and watch young and old couples dancing the night away en El Chancleo.

As a young artist I was influenced by Raul Gutierrez a wild life artist. His wild turkey paintings had such detail, they looked so real. I believe that is why I enjoy painting the “Gallo” and other creatures. My Gallo paintings are like portraits I love to show the rough textures of the face, crown and waddle. In this painting I also show the crude chicken coop, made with whatever is available, old bent nails, rusty wire, and old rusty corrugated tin.

This painting is not so much about the pig or the rooster and the chickens but about how people use whatever they have to make things work. Yes, it was crudely put together with old boards, recycled nails, rusty wire and even an old pallet for a gate. But it served its purpose. The pig sticking his head out of the pen wishing he could join the Gallo and Gallinas in eating some watermelon scraps.
I have always had a connection to the mechanical horse ride. When we were kids and our parents would go downtown I would see a mechanical ride of some kind, usually a horse. Back then it was a big thrill to ride one of these creatures. A quarter, sometimes less, not much, but back then it was. Walking around at a Flea Market I saw this big girl showing off to her younger siblings on top of a mechanical horse. Reminded me of the good old days.

La Trenza
The Braid - 2022
Oil on canvas (gallery wrap)
When I was young boy I remember seeing my Tias braiding each others hair. They both had beautiful long black hair down to their waist. Maybe thats why I have this fascination with braids. There are all kinds of braid styles and I find that very intriguing. When I met my wife Mary Frances she had braids.
I have always been impressed with the skill of the Masonry worker. They are artists. In this painting I attempted to show the tools of his trade. The beat-up old scaffle, the pencil on his ear, the trowel, levels, and the sweat on his back. At a distance a red bird (his mentor) watching him to see if he learned his trade well. It is said that when you see a red bird “it is someone from your pass that has come to visit you.”

One day I saw a kind of chubby senior man sitting on the tailgate of his truck, he had a folding table with jars of honey for sale. The box he used to carry the honey jars was tucked under the truck. He was selling honey I guess to make ends meet or just to make some extra cash. I respect people that work and don’t ask for handouts.

On one of our trips to visit France’s sister. I saw Benito my brother-in-law putting water in the radiator of his pick up. I thought how many times have I seen this done by my dad, myself and others from my barrio. Sometimes we carried a jug of water along to make sure the engine wouldn’t overheat.
Down the street from my studio was a small Mom and Pop Mexican restaurant, that’s where I went for lunch almost every day. I became good friends with the owners. They worked hard and struggled to keep the place going.

Juan, the owner did it all, he was the cook, dishwasher, etc. His wife was the waitress and cashier.

This is Juan making flour tortillas from scratch.

**Las Mañanitas**

2020
Oil on canvas (gallery wrap) 30”x40”x 1.5”

In this painting instead of a traditional mariachi group I choose a conjunto group. I love the sound of the accordion and Bajo Sexto its has more of the Mexican-American Chicano sound. It was during the begining of Covid so I left the masks on them. Las Mañanitas are traditionally sung in the early morning when the rooster crows to bring in a new day. I included the Gallo in the painting as if he was singing along with the conjunto.

**El Cocinero**

2021
Oil on canvas (gallery wrap) 18”x24”x 1.5”

Down the street from my studio was a small Mom and Pop Mexican restaurant, that’s where I went for lunch almost every day. I became good friends with the owners. They worked hard and struggled to keep the place going.

Juan, the owner did it all, he was the cook, dishwasher, etc. His wife was the waitress and cashier.

This is Juan making flour tortillas from scratch.
Los Golden Years
2023
Oil on canvas (gallery wrap)

At an outside dance I saw this older couple on the dance floor. Boy they were really swinging! It was heart warming to see them dancing the night away. Their snow white hair made me think of that saying “there may be snow on the roof but there is fire inside.” Ah those Golden Years!

JJJ Mail Box
2023
Oil on canvas (gallery wrap)

This painting is a small tribute to my cousin Johnny Joe Jasso. He called him self El JJJ. He was quite a character, an only child and very spoiled. Johnny's health deteriorate as he got older. My wife and I took care of him for many years. When he passed, to our surprise he left his house to us. His house is now my studio. The Red bird is him coming back to visit us.
As a young boy I wanted to become a portrait painter. I used to sketch my friends and relatives and they would always tell me “that doesn’t look like me” I guess thats why I enjoy painting people. The people I paint are character studies. Like this lady with a baby in her arms wearing a "chongo" on her head.

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**El Amor de una Madre**

2020

Oil on canvas (gallery wrap)

40"x30"x1.5"

There is nothing more beautiful to see than a mother’s love for her first born. To the mother, the child is the king/queen of the whole world. At a small get together I saw this lady lift her child up to the sky as if to say "tu eres el Rey/Reina de todo El Mundo"
Serenading the Artist  
2021
Oil on canvas (gallery wrap)  
36“x48“x 1.5”

For several years I created a painting for “La Feria de San Fernando” poster, and a couple of other paintings for some other occasions. I was commissioned by Father Virgil Elizondo pastor of San Fernando Cathedral. They usually had a reception for the unveiling of the poster. At one of the receptions they had the Mexican choir serenade the artist, me. It was very humbling.

Two Girls During Covid  
2021
Oil on canvas (gallery wrap)  
30“x40“x 1.5”

It was outside our parish church that I saw these two young girls dressed real spiffy in their Sunday best. They were real fashion conscious and it looked like they were comparing each other outfits. It was during Covid and they were wearing masks, nonetheless they seemed to be having a great conversation and they were very proud of their fashion styles. Covid or no Covid life goes on.

Niños de la Calle  
2022
Oil on canvas (gallery wrap)  
These are kids that I saw on the side walks of Progresso playing accordion toys. It touched my heart to see them sitting on sidewalks hoping someone will drop some coins in their cup. We take life for granted and don’t realize how good we have it. ¡Qué triste!
El Valiente  
2022  
Oil on canvas (gallery wrap)

No, I am not a Gallero I do not fight Gallos. They tell me that these Gallos will fight until their death. - I wonder if they really want to fight.  
As a young man I got into many fights, sad but true. I really never wanted to fight but sometimes I had to. Like the fighting Gallo you have to show that you are not afraid and will stand up and fight, like this beautiful creature...El Valiente.

Girl with a Fancy Hair Bow  
2023  
Oil on canvas (gallery wrap)

When I saw this pretty young girl, she brought a smile to my face. She looked so grown up with that big bow on her head and her long black hair with a small braid. Her colored striped dress matched the bow. The only thing that didn’t match was the medical mask... It was the time of Covid.
In Memoriam of El Maestro
JOSE ESQUIVEL
Artist • Historian • Philosopher

I first met Jose at an outdoor art show, he was the lone Chicano artist in the whole place. His art was unique, it centered around life in the Barrio and La Raza. He explained in detail what his art was about, each piece had a story. He spoke and I listened, It seemed like we spoke for hours, as people would stop and glance at his artwork.

A week later I visited him at his studio. It was eye opening! He invited me to an exhibit at Trinity University featuring the Con Safo Art group, he was one of the original founding members. Jose was a man of wisdom, a good friend and mentor. "Chiquito pero Picos".

Puro Gallo y Que Viva La Raza!

Visit the gallery
Monday through Friday 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Saturday 8:00 AM – 3:00 PM.

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