

PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT: TERRY JENOURE, DIRECTOR

Augusta Savage Gallery

Fine Arts Center

University of Massachusetts Amherst

413-545-5177

Augusta Savage Gallery at the University of Massachusetts Amherst is pleased to announce an **art exhibition** entitled **“PETRI DISHES AND ARTHRAX.”** This exhibition features work by local artist **Edgar Sabogal**. The show will run from **September 20 through October 18, 2005** with an **Opening Reception on September 20, 5-7pm.**

Local Amherst artist Edgar Sabogal was born in Colombia, South America, where he lived for twenty-nine years. Then, he moved to the United States 19 years ago and received his BFA from the University of Massachusetts in 1992. Sabogal was a visiting artist in Medellin, Colombia in 2004 as part of Augusta Savage Gallery’s new Art International Residency Program (AIR). This Program sends selected artists to international sites, where they live and work with gallery partners for one month. Upon return, these artists begin working on an exhibit that will tell a story about their experience.

While in Medellin last year, Sabogal reflected on politics and “the sarcastic reality of recent plastic and duct tape scare tactics.” The upcoming exhibit is his reaction to the recent anthrax scares. *“Be a good boy or El COCO (boogey man) is coming through the window to get you.”* This was a warning used by parents in order to get control over children, remembers Sabogal, as he reflects on his childhood in Medellin and its connection to current Homeland Security policies.

His Arthrax Petri Dishes are hand-painted clear, plastic covered dishes that are 4 inches in diameter. Each one is an original and unique piece. Stained glass paints are used to represent the culture growing in the Petri dish, whether it be scientific or political.

Sabogal says, “In this Arthrax work, I am looking for the ability of the observer to break through the fear of the object and go into the analytical observation of the concept. This artwork is as sarcastic as the concept of Homeland Security protecting us from any biological attack using a plastic bag over our heads and sealing it to our neck with duck tape. Arthrax is the classroom

window to my political reality. The petri dishes are biological organisms of human manipulation. My forms are an integration of both reality and symbolic language; two dissonant languages which I juxtapose in order to create a more vibrant form of expression, similar to how Paul Klee combined both naive and sophisticated intellectual elements and in my case, speculative political struggle.”

Edgar Sabogal Biography

I was born in Bogota, Colombia and grew up between the city and my grandparents’ countryside farm. During my elementary school years, I used to walk on the narrow streets of one of the oldest neighborhoods of the city. Then, during my school vacations, I walked the open fields of the mountains in my bare feet. The claustrophobic city and the organic land under my feet have been the soil from which has grown my visual artwork.

My third grade teacher at Catholic school used to put me in front of the blackboard and make the rest of my classmates to draw whatever I drew on the blackboard. That blackboard may have been just 4" x 6", but to me it was a huge canvas. Just the right size for a mural! That was my first experience being an artist. I loved my teacher until I saw her with her husband across the street through the class room window.

During high school, my friends and I used to draw on the walls of the streets, but at that time we worked at night to make sure nobody saw us. It was a political experience; a rebellious collaboration. Later, in the university, I was part of an older group. We painted murals on the streets without the worry of having to work at night.

When I was nineteen, I was commissioned to reproduce Dali’s “Last Supper” in a church. It was a three-dimensional reproduction on the altar; each figure was scaled to human size. Working in an empty church was a mystical experience.

The outside reality of the streets, the inside spiritual experience and the organic feeling of the earth under my feet, are the mixed struggle of my artwork. Politics, religion and my bare feet are three different things, but they exist in one reality.

Going to the National University of Colombia, during one of the most political and economical struggle times of the university, I was introduced to the study of pre-Colombian Art. The outer reality of the city, the inner political struggle of the university, the spiritual comfort of religion, the organic feeling of the earth under my feet, and now the knowledge of Pre-Colombian cultures gave me more identity to my art.

I am a mestizo (Native South American and Spanish) who spent 29 years living in my country and now 19 years in the USA. I got my BFA in 1992 at the University of Massachusetts. A new environment, new family, new life, new changes, new cultural identity new political reality, and different needs put my artistic life on hold for years. Then, in 2004, I returned to my home

country.

After the trip to Colombia in 2004, I realized how political and social connections exist in the art work of Colombian artists. I am still as Colombian, even though I am a US citizen.

For more information: 413-545-5177
All events are free to the general public

