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MFA Artist Eddy Miramontes Awarded David Antin Prize at UC San Diego

Department of Visual Arts graduate uses performance to blur boundaries in art practice

The UC San Diego Department of Visual Arts awarded artist Eddy Miramontes the David Antin Endowed Prize for Excellence in MFA Visual Arts. Having graduated June 2019, Miramontes is the second recipient.

Named after poet, artist and founding member of the department, the prize is given to a graduating MFA student who not only shows originality and creativity in art practice or criticism, but who reflects Antin's focus of interdisciplinary work and the use of multiple mediums.



Artist Eddy Miramontes in his UC San Diego studio. (Photo by Farshid Bazmandegan)

While studying at UC San Diego, Miramontes created multiple projects in his art practice, ranging from graphic- or print-based work to video, sound and performance. The Antin Prize was announced privately at the department's Open Studios event on March 2, where Miramontes presented "MemorybabeNo17: The Wrestling Project."

"Eddy's epic performance-installation organized for the annual Open Studios — where he merged a three-act, live wrestling match with political narrative, projection, live music and poetry — truly resonates the interdisciplinary, multi-media work of David Antin," said Visual Arts professor Teddy Cruz, who is also Miramontes' faculty advisor.

"I have been inspired by Eddy's capacity to infiltrate urban vernaculars, every day social and familial relations, and community dynamics as sites of artistic intervention," Cruz said. "Eddy's work uniquely blurs disciplinary boundaries, often becoming an interlocutor of knowledge-exchange processes through narrative and visualization, where collective action becomes the engine for the production of art."

As a recent graduate, Miramontes said he feels empowered to pursue a career in art, dismissing the “uncertain” and “uncontrollable” variables in a life dedicated to creative work.

“The Antin Prize is crucially important in my future development, simply for the fact that it acknowledges my efforts in creating challenging and experimental art,” he said. “But it is also the validation that told me what I was doing was the right thing, even when I had become certain that I had gone the wrong way.

“It is a blessing, and I will continue to pay it forward by pushing myself to create work that not only challenges viewers but equally challenges me in creating it.”

Miramontes is a San Diego-based artist who earned his BFA at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Miramontes is active in the San Diego-Tijuana growing art scene, and produced multiple projects that were originally influenced by DIY punk culture. Crucial to the core of his art, he said, was a relational aspect, inviting the viewer to be an active participant in contemporary social commentary.

“Memorybabe No. 17: The Wrestling Project” is one part of an ongoing study for Miramontes that “explores subjectivity through memory,” he wrote in his final thesis. “[It] illustrates the major creative underpinnings of this investigation through art’s capacity to create the conditions for intervention, resistance, and transformation.”

Working with print, music and video, Miramontes said these mass-produced art forms have been an important influence in how he sees and develops art. For “The Wrestling Project,” Miramontes connects wrestling to performance, evoking “a strong emotional response from its spectators through methods highly informed by earlier conventional forms of theatre, such as characters, costuming, staging, and conflict/action narration,” he wrote.

“These forms offer a way of communication that were intended to get into as many hands as possible,” he said, “and although I do not wish to produce art for mass consumption, I am influenced by these mediums’ capacity to reach people, particular those individuals who could benefit from the discourses that contemporary art produces.”

The David Antin Prize was established by an endowment following the death of Emeritus Professor David Antin, an internationally renowned artist, poet and art critic who helped shape the UC San Diego Department of Visual Arts from its inception and spent more than a quarter-century as a faculty member, including multiple terms as department chair. Antin is known as

one of the most experimental, original and provocative artists, critics and poets of his era, and his influence on artists and writers continues with his work recently re-published in the United States and Europe.

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