Adding Color to the Capital City Gallery Presents World Famous Illustrator

By LANCE ARMSTRONG Sacramento Union Writer Lance@SacUnion.com

One of the capital city's longtime art galleries, La Raza Galeria Posada, is looking a lot more colorful these days, as it is presenting the art of Felipe Davalos.

Featuring 33 showpieces and 60 loose pieces, the current exhibit and the gallery's last show of the year, "Tiempo de Ninos" ("Time for Children"), displays the work of this award-winning master illustrator. Davalos is known internationally for his colorful artwork, which has appeared in various publications, including several popular children's books.

For Davalos, a Mexico City native and current Sacramento resident, the La Raza Galeria Posada show represents the first time he has presented his illustrations in a local gallery.

And having the opportunity to be the city's first gallery to offer Davalos' illustrations is something that the gallery's director, Marie Acosta, recognizes as a very special moment for La Raza Galeria Posada, located at 1022-1024 22nd St.

"Felipe Davalos is an internationally renowned artist whose work is known outside of Sacramento more than it is known here, but if you go to anywhere else in the world, Rome, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Mexico City, the name Felipe Davalos and his work is acknowledged with great profusion," Acosta said. "We are so honored to have him at our gallery and present him to the people of Sacramento, so that they can relish his work and see his incredible detail, technique and skill."

In regard to the children's book illustrations theme of the exhibit, Acosta's assistant, Gabi Gutierrez, said that she is impressed by the great detail of Davalos' illustrations.

"You would assume that drawings for children's books would be much simpler than [Davalos'], but his drawings are very elaborate and vibrant and true works of art," Gutierrez said.

The Art and the Artist

For Davalos, simplicity is no word that he considers when creating his artwork.

"My work is always of the highest quality and full of detail," Davalos said. "I don't do cheap [quality] stuff and I don't do cheap stuff just for one reason, because I use my life to do every single stroke of brush and pencil. It's all work, so I have to do it seriously; so everything I do, I do it very

seriously."

It is with such passion and dedication to his work that Davalos has built a career filled with many artistic accomplishments and recognition.

Davalos, who grew up in one of the most center parts of Mexico City in the very folkloric center of Mexican culture, was surrounded by various visual images, including the artwork of one of his influences, painter and illustrator Jesus Helguera.

"[Helguera] was a strong influence in my decision to dedicate myself to paint images," Davalos said.

Furthermore, Davalos gained artistic influence, as well as experience, through his family, which Davalos describes as "craftsmen people," who were involved in such fields as silversmithing and pottery making.

This early artistic experience included working with his brother and sister and other workers in the large silversmith shop of his father, Vicente Davalos.

"We used to work since we were little children working with acids and different things," Davalos said. "It was part of our lives' naturally activities. We made all types of objects, so I am an object maker guy. I just love to create things. I was working artistically, subconsciously; I was not thinking about that."

As a child, Davalos also spent many hours creating chalk drawings on streets and floors.

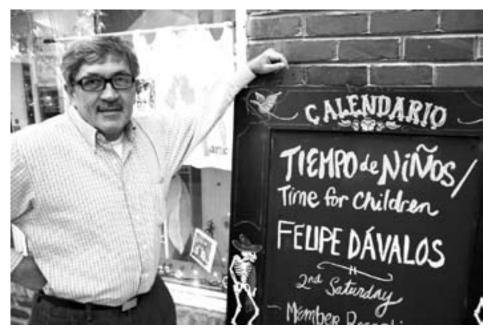
"We used to make huge [chalk] drawings and people used to enjoy watching us make drawings on the floor, but nobody talked about art or anything, because it was just an activity," Davalos said.

Becoming Davalos

Considering Davalos' early artistic influences, it should be no surprise that in his young adult years, he eventually left his engineering studies to pursue a career as a painter.

After graduating from the Institute of Fine Arts in Mexico with degrees in design and fine arts and becoming a master in copper, pottery and textiles, Davalos was invited to work at a newspaper in Mexico as an illustrator

Through this work, Davalos in 1967 met the world-famous archaeologist, Michael D. Coe, who was impressed with Davalos' artistic works and invited him to work on projects in South American jungles making drawings and stories of historic monuments.



The artistic works of internationally-recognized illustrator Felipe Davalos are featured in a special holiday exhibit at the La Raza Galeria Posada through Jan. 25. (Sacramento Union Photo/Lance Armstrong)

For about 30 years, Davalos spent the majority of his time using his artistic abilities in the fields of archaeology and history.

"The experiences in the jungles with real natives still trying to protect their traditions and roots were richer than any gallery," Davalos said.

Through Coe, Davalos also worked at Yale University doing pottery research and pottery drawings.

His other artistic endeavors included creating illustrations for magazines, including his work for *National Geographic*, in which he documented pre-conquest sites, including Teotihuacan, as well as the Aztec, Mayan and Zapotec civilizations in Mexico.

During his 10 years living in Sacramento, Davalos, who has won several awards for his arts, including the Pura Belpre Illustrator Honor Award and the Ezra Jack Keats Award, has created illustrations for nine books.

Painting the City Rojo

Included in the exhibit are original illustrations by Davalos for the children's book, "La Lagartija y El Sol" ("The Lizard and the Sun") by the world-famous Cuban writer, Alma Flor Ada.

The book is a tale about the disappearance of the sun, which was eventually discovered hiding inside a crack in a large rock. The emergence of the sun through

the assistance of the lizard and Aztec emperors resulted in a large celebration.

Davalos said that the story has great historical significance, noting that "in pre-Columbian culture, everything was related to the [daily] death and rebirth of the sun."

Other children's book art by Davalos in the exhibit includes illustrations for author Vicky Nizri's "Un Asalto Mayusculo" ("An Enormous Assault"), a children's book that Davalos describes as a conflict about which is better, words or numbers.

With a following in many places around the world, Davalos, who has a wife named Analilia and two adult children, said that his current exhibit is providing a major step toward becoming better known in his current hometown.

"Since I'm going to be living here [in Sacramento] for awhile, I'm beginning to try to mingle with people and do more shows or whatever, just get involved," Davalos said.

The exhibit, which also includes several non-children's book illustrations and other artworks by Davalos, continues through Jan. 25. Gallery hours are 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Wednesdays-Saturdays and 1-5 p.m. Sundays.

For additional information regarding this exhibit, call (916) 446-5133 or visit the Web site www.larazagaleriaposada.org.