

VISUAL ARTS

# Miami Artist Pepe Mar premieres first solo exhibit Magic Vessel in Syracuse at the Everson

The exhibit will be on display at the Everson Museum of Art through Dec. 31.

by Yolanda Stewart - October 4, 2023



Artist Pepe Mar, photographed with assemblage Border Crosser at the Everson Museum of Art. Yolanda Stewart | Central Current.

Artist Pepe Mar's work, now featured at the Everson Museum of Art, showcases his exploration of identity and culture through art.

The Miami-based artist premiered on Thursday night his solo exhibition, *Magic Vessel*.

Mar's exhibition will be on display from Sept. 30 through Dec. 31 in Galleries A and B.

"This is a great introduction to my work because there's so many different things that I do that you're going to discover," Mar said. "I think after you see this show you're going to get a really good idea of everything that I do."

The Everson acquired Mar's piece *Border Crosser*, which will be featured in the museum's permanent collection. *Border Crosser* is part of Mar's *Magic Vessel* exhibit, one of his largest exhibitions to date, he said.

Mar created the exhibit by using repurposed items he finds in second hand stores.

"I like to bring these personal artifacts that are loaded with history into the work to mix it in with other objects that I find in the thrift stores," Mar said. "I like collecting a lot of different things in my personal life, but I also like to do it in my work."

Mar includes elements of surrealism in his work like ceramics, fabrics, shoes, mannequin parts, and other items he acquires during his journeys to different places.

In his most recent visit to The Syracuse Antiques Exchange, Mar found ceramic pieces. Some are featured in his *Magic Vessel* exhibition. The memorabilia adds to his ongoing art collection and storytelling.

"It's nice, every time you go somewhere you put a little bit of something," Mar said.

Much of *Magic Vessel* focuses on Paprika, Mar's alter ego. Many of Mar's works are assemblages that include Mar's life experiences, ephemera, thrifted items and keepsakes. Paprika is an embodiment of different personal influences and obsessions from Mar's life including the queer community, art, life, fashion, and science fiction.

One room of the exhibit includes five pieces created by Mar under his Paprika alter ego: Blue Jeans, Fired Up, Eye Portal, The Darkness and The Host.

“I feel like the character itself is a vessel, so the character itself is kind of like a safe space to be,” Mar said.

He applies ceramics and other randomized items as body parts like the eyes, mouth and arms. Some of the items displayed on Paprika include a ceramic ostrich egg, leather, jeans, mannequin parts, and other materials.

The contrasting hard and soft materials, like leathers, jeans, and ceramics, add an element of fluidity to his work, Mar said.

Mar sees the character as a method for his artistic self-expression and ongoing self-discovery. Paprika serves as a learning tool in his life.

In Gallery B, guests are immersed into the *Clay Garden*, a room filled with fabric wallpaper of collage-patterns created by Mar. The exhibit’s vibrant hues of green, orange, yellow, red and blue are reminiscent of both Miami and Mexico. Mar has called both places home at different points in his life.

*Clay Garden* includes a sculpture garden of ceramics from the Everson’s vault collection of archived artwork, designed by other artists. Mar hand selected the ceramics to showcase in the exhibition along with his personally designed ceramic sculptures.

“Putting the permanent collection in this set, we’re highlighting the collection, (and) we’re also giving a new way of looking at this collection” Mar said. “This is almost like giving them this extra attention.”