

BRAD OVERTON

Ways of Moving

Brad Overton paints well-loved toys, and he paints faces in the calavera makeup of Día de los Muertos. He remarks that toys “were designed to inspire and bring joy to the child who owned them. And yet, beyond mere sentimentality, I want to inspire viewers by simply looking closely at the many beautiful aspects of these toys and paint them, larger than life, to relate my joy in life, in art.”

A series of fortunate events brought him to an appreciation of the skull manifestations for the Day of the Dead. When he was visiting Mexico, a model in a friend’s studio arrived in full calavera makeup. The end of his visit coincided with the Day of the Dead itself.

The experience gave him a “notion of the

way santeros work in New Mexico, creating sacred works of art by being spiritually involved themselves in what they’re doing.” Invoking the Aztec deities in his work, he discovered that “they’re pulling me in rather than my invoking them. Once you get into a certain stream of consciousness they take you away.”

Overton’s latest paintings will be shown in the exhibition *Ways of Moving: New Portrait and Still Life Paintings* at Blue Rain Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico, from June 29 to July 14.

A 50-inch square portrait, *Xochi*, invokes the Aztec/Nahuatl word for flower “Xochitl” often incorporated in the name of Aztec gods and goddesses. Xochiquetzal was

the goddess of flowers, love and fertility. It also brings to mind the story of the Day of the Dead flower cempasuchil, or Mexican marigold, that came about through the love of a young woman, Xochitl and her warrior lover, Huitzilin. In Overton’s portrait she resembles the Roman goddess Flora, with her head surrounded in flowers and berries.

In a more playful mood, he places an Aztec sculpture atop a toy VW Bus in *Midnight Ride*. He says it’s “a reverent kind of mixing and matching different aspects of cultures that I find beautiful.” ●

Blue Rain Gallery 544 S. Guadalupe Street • Santa Fe, NM 87501 • (505) 954-9902 • www.blueraingallery.com



- 1 *Estrella Primera*, oil on canvas, 60 x 60"
- 2 *Xochi*, oil on panel, 50 x 50"
- 3 *Midnight Ride*, oil on canvas, 24 x 20"
- 4 *Coyo*, oil on canvas, 48 x 60"



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