

Wolfryd's 'New Jersey-Aztec' Bridges The Gap

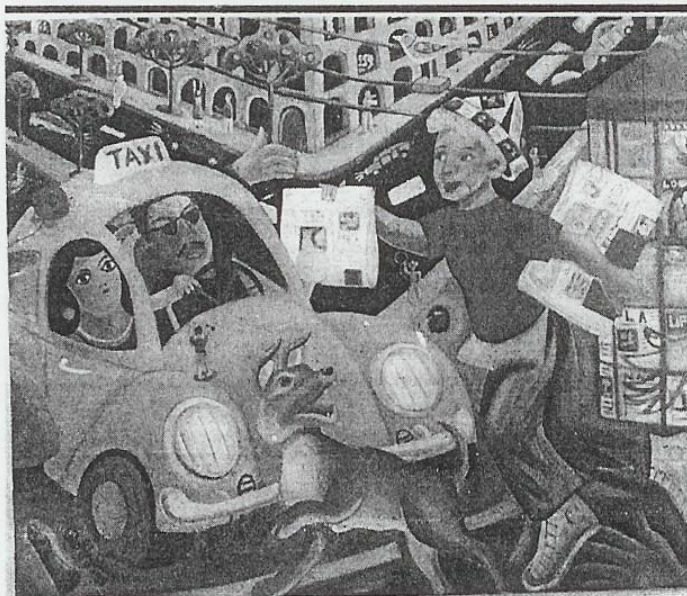
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The News Staff Reporter

Visitors to Barry Wolfryd's studio in Mexico City are immediately struck by the large canvas resting on the easel. There, against a dark and ominous background is the familiar scene of a carnival shooting gallery with its moving ducks, bulls, camels, etc. But upon closer investigation the viewer notices that interspersed among the figures are the unlikely images of children, so well integrated that at first you hardly perceive them, holding bull's eye targets at waist level.

This recent series, "Baby Limbo," is the Los Angeles born painter's response to a growing social problem throughout the world.

"This is my focusing in on a situation that is on the increase. The problem of child abuse and abandonment."

Wolfryd denies that he is on a personal crusade to solve the problem of the victimization of children, but rather as an artist he is responsible for doing his part



'A Young Boy's Dream.'

NEW JERSEY-AZTEC STUDIO PHOTOS

while at the same time carrying a clear message.

On some level, more than visual metaphors, Wolfryd's allegorical style seems a fluid communication of something internalized by the painter. Adapting the hot florid colors and a naive manner often used in Mexican painting, Wolfryd's images often stand as stark, alienated creatures, that are in some ways divorced from "the life" around them. Cultural icons such as Pedro Infante or Elvis Presley become haunting, sometimes even vacuous centers, for the dizzying movement of which they form the axis. With these works one has but no choice but to dwell on the individual as symbol. The score of blonde woman that seem to be swirling around Infante's head not only succeed in getting across what is most obvious by way of visual interpretation, but set up an unsettling semantic having to do with interpretation itself. In this way Wolfryd's handling of cultural iconography, both tender and callous, attaches itself to collective and individualistic society, but even more so, to that mysterious and unfathomable breach between the two — a unique terrain that belongs to Wolfryd alone.

Upcoming exhibitions of Wolfryd's work include: University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) gallery in Sept. and The Gallery Art & Design, Mexico City, in January.



'Barbie Table Dancer.'

and can make people more conscious of the complex problem as well as raise money through his work to benefit an organization that works with indigent children.

The series consists of some very austere images of hairless dolls. In one painting we find the image of a child hanging, suspended almost, from a cactus. In another work entitled "Between The Margins," a series of eight small canvases hang side-by-side, the first image is of a child depicted with horns and the last, a halo.

abroad. Probably the work that most characterizes what Wolfryd does could be considered a hybrid blend of the effect American culture has on Mexico and vice-versa. In the words of Mexican painter and critic Jose Manuel Springer: "People who have the capacity to assimilate into different cultures can cherish their origin while enjoying and absorbing the essence of another culture. For this reason, Barry's art occupies a special place in what is now being created in Mexico."

Paintings like "The Eagle Has Landed," with its cross-cultural codification well illustrate Springer's point. The iconographic vocabulary includes an astronaut

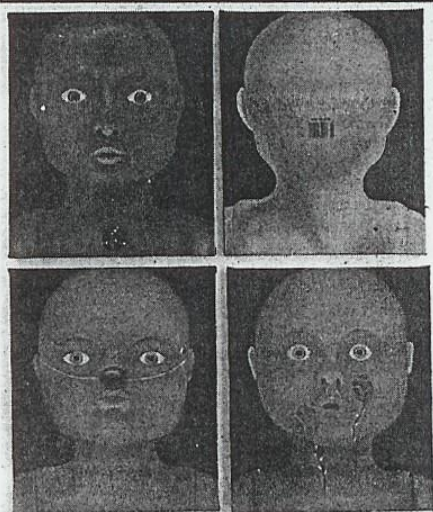
planting an American flag, a sanctified Liza Minnelli breaking from the clouds in one corner of the painting, an eagle perched on a cactus and a colonial church. Running diagonally across the canvas is a super highway cut horizontally by a barbed-wire fence,

which obviously illustrates a view from both sides of the border.

This particular style, a conglomeration of two cultures both clashing and coexisting has been dubbed by Wolfryd as "New Jersey-Aztec."

"It's about the encounter of two cultures," said Wolfryd in explaining the term. "I started using toys from both sides of the border and that later developed into the use of icons and symbols that people would recognize."

Humour is one of the key elements of Wolfryd's canvases. The paintings, with their literal style, often handle somewhat unsettling themes with a touch of the comic so as to make them more palpable. Wolfryd believes that it's not necessary for people to have to feel tormented in order to understand the impact of a reality that may not be altogether pleasant. He likens this approach to telling a good story or joke, where you can handle serious subject matter in a manner that is agreeable



'States Of Valor,' forms part of the 'Baby Limbo' series.

