Written by Steve Banks
Wednesday, 19 September 2007 02:59

Rarely does paint - the actual physical stuff laden with pigment - have as enthusiastic a friend as it does with Felix Morelo. The artist often lavishes his surfaces with thick and lustrous textured passages in blood reds, dirty aqua greens, or caustic oranges. In other areas, he stingily scrubs in the most minimal hints of browns or soiled denim blues.

Regardless of much paint rests on the surface, Morelo's underlying passion for image-making is transmitted through his pieces. His paintings are like a surfer tenuously riding a powerful wave: Sometimes Morelo rides the wave to the shore, and other times he loses control and falls overboard. Either way, it's enjoyable to watch.

Seldom do his color combinations interact with an academic sense of visual harmony. Yet his "outsider" approach to color theory yields some unexpectedly potent and startlingly fresh color interactions. It is these "unsanctioned" triumphs that make this show such a treat.

My 2 Cents showcases Morelo's recent oil and acrylic paintings, drawings, suspended painted constructions, and intricate mixed-media boxes, all completed within the past few years. At well over 200 pieces, the exhibit is a robust exploration of one of this area's more prolific image-makers. It fills a 3,000-square-foot fourth-floor riverview loft condo inside the Bucktown Center for the Arts. (The unnocupied former warehouse space is owned by *River Cities' Reader* founders Todd McGreevy and Kathleen McCarthy.)

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