

MIXED MEDIA ARTIST GABE BARCIA-COLOMBO PREPARES FOR HIS NEON MUSEUM RESIDENCY

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September 16, 2021



Artist Gabe Barcia-Colombo preserves his friends in glass jars. Their vibrant and brightly illuminated personas will live forever in video form in “Animalia Chordata,” a video sculpture exemplary of the art

Barcia-Colombo will display at the Neon Museum next year as its 2021 Artist in Residence.

The mixed media artist and associate professor at New York University Tisch School of the Arts specializes in video sculpture, a medium first inspired by the rise of early social media platforms. He has studied filmmaking at the University of Southern California and also has an interest in how technology can immortalize memories, he explains.

“I’m just someone who’s sort of obsessed with memorialization and memory, capturing memories, so growing up at a time where we also have these devices that can capture memories and replay them, it just hits for me,” Barcia-Colombo says. “There’s a narrative element to my work that is somewhere between a sculpture and a film.”

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Now in its sixth year, the Neon Museum's artist-in-residence program welcomes artists to the Las Vegas area for approximately eight weeks, during which time they're housed and given a studio space inside the Juhl Downtown. They also receive a \$2,500 stipend, an \$800 travel allowance and up to \$3,000 in other materials. The program is funded by the Nevada Arts Council and the Cosmopolitan.

Barcia-Colombo's residency begins in December and ends in February 2022. Like previous artists in residence, Barcia-Colombo will use the museum's collection—which includes the Neon Boneyard and more than 200 unrestored signs—as a touchstone for his own exhibit.

Jo Russ, programs manager at the museum, was involved in Barcia-Colombo's selection process, during which a jury panel chose him among 100 applicants. Russ said that because the only prompt is to create an exhibit based on the Neon Museum's collection, each of the artists in residence has created something individualistic.

"The adults really have worked in quite different ways," she says. "[Gabe] working in the digital way is a new area for our residences."

Though specifics for his artwork were undetermined at press time, Barcia-Colombo says he feels compelled to explore Sin City's saintly figures through Mexican nicho boxes. He says those items have sparked his interest because his mother's family is from Chihuahua, Mexico.

"They're like diagrams that have figures in them, and I was looking at doing some research on them and realizing ... a lot of the work that I create kind of has the same form," he says. "I'm really thinking about updating these and creating neon nicho boxes."

Barcia-Colombo says using his experience as a teacher will also be essential to his residence. He'll aim to oversee hands-on community workshops about video mapping or augmented reality, two aspects prominent in his artwork. Typically, artists in residence at the museum carry out workshops and conduct artist talks and studio open houses.

"I work with a lot of artists that are, I wouldn't say classical, but people that ... never really worked with digital techniques or technologies, and that's really fun," he says.

Aaron Berger, executive director of the Neon Museum, says he's looking forward to the public engaging with Barcia-Colombo's work. "When we talk about this workshopping or public engagement opportunity, [by] being able to show the work and let the conversation begin, I think it will take its own life at that point and run forward," Berger said. "It'll be exciting."

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