

# “Tía Norica y Batillo”

*2014-2016, Mixed media, Dimensions 42.5” w x 42.5” h.*

***David Feinberg, Beth Andrews, and storyteller Pepe Bable, with contributions from artists Michelle Englund and Kimchi Hoang and students Olivia Novotny and Kristin Anton.***

Growing up in Spain, Pepe Bable was born in a family rooted in theater. At four years old, his father put him to work on a stage. He was an actor until he was 21 years old, and after that he realized that his true call was directing, which he does now as well as other jobs in the theater. Currently Pepe is an actor, an author and the stage director of La Tía Norica puppet theater in Spain. This theater follows in a tradition of puppetry dating back to 1790. He is also the owner of the largest puppet museum in Spain. Pepe utilizes this traditional art form in a way that makes contemporary social commentary.

Pepe said that the social is ever present in his work, for he does not understand art without social commitment. He believes the art should be a reflection of what’s going on in a given society, acting as a poetic mirror of what is developing. Also, questioning the actions and circumstances of human beings.

The puppet imagery shown in the piece are two characters Pepe often uses in his plays on social comment. The old woman, Tía Norica, is the knowledgeable worldly aunt of the boy spirited and mischievous boy Batillo. He is Tía Norica’s counterpart.

Pepe describes himself as “a man of light, of warmth, of the sun.” He was initially attracted to the bright colors in his piece. He looked at the piece geographically, seeing the blue tones from a geographical perspective as parts of the world. To him, it represented the middle of Spain.

One of the symbols in the piece is the eye on top, which Pepe describes as the all powerful, all-seeing eye. He said it is the eye of the catholic god, or possibly any other god. In the middle of the piece there is another eye, the eye he describes as human. He said it was “less significant, with all of its doubts and with all of its preoccupations.”

This was the first time ever Pepe has used a paintbrush, and he exclaimed his nervousness although excited with the opportunity. He said the message of the piece was that “If the gods existed, they would allow the man and women to be just people.”