

“Return to the Roots: Fredy Frisancho”

2014-2016, Mixed media, 33.5” w x 19.5” h

David Feinberg, Beth Andrews, and storyteller Fredy Frisancho, with contributions from artists Kimchi Hoang, Michelle Englund, and Paula Pergament, and students Kristin Anton, Olivia Novotny, Tessa Loeffler, Emma Dunn, and Rachel Lindholm.

Fredy is from the Southern Region of Peru, where he is an actor and director in Grupo Laboratorio de Teatro AUDACES in Peru. He was filled with anticipation as the moment of telling his story approached. He was directed to the last of three painted canvases, as the other two brightly colored canvases had been chosen by other participants. No one else had wanted the darker black and blue palate of the remaining canvas. Fredy reluctantly felt this was a metaphor of his life. He explained as he looked at the dark colors, “this is my life! All of my life I have faced tough choices, and these are tough colors.”

The small areas of white between the black and blue gave him a feeling of hopefulness and expressed the Peruvian concept of Yin and Yang, the two forces of light and dark, black and white, opposing one another. Fredy thought he was alone, the only one, surviving the horrors of his country. He wondered: why him?

In his mind he always carried the vision of his house, and the big tree in front of his house. He thought of the tree’s deep roots and yearned to seek the roots of his ancestors, to be able to remember them. “A man must return to the roots, to ancestors, to the poverty and difficulties in order to seek the possibilities,” said Fredy.

“As I search, un-climbable stairs fall, doors close as I look for the right way out... I am under seize... I am learning to survive... I think and feel all alone. And then I found out... I am not alone! So many others have faced dark and trying times. Many others faced similar challenges and have made it through and up to see the surface.”

At the top of Fredy’s painting he has placed a linear face, the face of Jesus, thoughtfully shaped like a heart with a crown of thorns. He painted two question marks that are shedding tears... asking his unanswerable question, “Why have I been chosen to survive?” He feels like Don Quixote, the man from La Mancha, fighting giant wind mills, Fredy feels like he has come to clean “the dish of this world.”

David Feinberg asked if Fredy thought this canvas no one else wanted was meant for him. Without hesitation, Fredy answered, “yes, there is always a reason that things happen.” He doesn’t believe in random chance. Fredy believes he will uncover a fleeting memory, just beyond his grasp, and when that happens he will find a measure of peace.

The following participants made a separate series of random sketches based on word association. They were asked which one of their images would fit into Fredy's painting. These are the images that were added to Fredy's artwork:

- Gary Christenson, Chief Medical Officer at Boynton Health Center UMN.
Bomb and Child shadow: In war the child does not chose this challenge, no one else should choose this for them. This relates to Fredy's question: "Why have I lived when so many innocents have died?"
- Luis Ramos-Garcia, Professor in Spanish & Portuguese Studies, focusing on human rights across the disciplines: theater, art, political science and literature.
Ferris Wheel/Sundial: Represents the circle of life, round and round, choosing to go up or stay down.
- Ernesto Silva, Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies and Spanish at Kennesaw State University in Georgia.
Cave: Plato's cave, emerging from a hiding place into the light, a place to hide, to see the light.
- Demetrio Anzaldo González, Professor of Spanish at the University of Missouri-Columbia.
Swirling circle: A reoccurring symbol of Demetrio's, represents everything is in movement and everything in life is connected.