

# Alfred J. Quiroz

## Artist with a social conscious

by Deborah H. Perlman

No matter how many times Alfred J. Quiroz is asked what is behind all the pandemonium in his massive-scale, three-dimensional paintings, he always answers with the same kind of conviction and fervor that is so predominant in his work.

Listening to Quiroz is like listening to the most exciting audio-taped version of world history imaginable. He is as literate verbally as his work is visually—all conveying a message about the truths and fallacies of history, and particularly, war.

President John F. Kennedy's 1963 inaugural speech affected Quiroz in such a patriotic way that he joined the United States Navy. However, his peacetime service turned into two

tours of duty in Vietnam.

In speaking of his Vietnam experience, Quiroz explains, "I had never questioned authority until I was (in the Navy) what was equivalent to a sergeant in the army."

It was this questioning of authority that initiated Quiroz' passion for researching and representing historical events.

Left with a memory full of war's inhumanity, his art became the vehicle to express his freedom of speech. He continued to pursue his art career by training at the San Francisco Art Institute where he received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in painting in 1971. He later earned a Master of Arts in teaching at the Rhode Island School of Design in 1974 and a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Arizona in 1984.

The common thread that has remained in his work throughout his service in Vietnam, his uni-

versity training and which remains today is his zealous fight against oppression and the murderous acts of war.

When asked what is most misunderstood about his paintings, Quiroz states, "Some viewers, particularly political conservatives, think that I'm un-American, but I have always considered myself a patriot."

Quiroz further explains he is raising a consciousness about the repulsive violence that occurs in war. He elaborates, "We are all human beings, and we tend to forget that we are all the same people. We all have the same internal organs. We must stop the genocide."

In addition to Quiroz' life experiences as an American and Vietnam veteran, he is also a historian and professor and is currently teaching at the University of Arizona in Tucson.



## Artist doesn't paint the pretty picture

by Dionne Drabek

Venture into the Donna Beam Fine Art Gallery from now until September 20, and you will find yourself amidst larger-than-life comic book-like images—Mad magazine style.

At first glance, the mixed media used by artist Alfred J. Quiroz takes on an almost-whimsical, humorous air; but, look again, his underlying messages are anything but funny. Quiroz's content deals with the subjects of war and religion, challenging and distorting common beliefs and understandings to reveal true historical distortions.

Quiroz's art grabs the attention of the viewer with bold colors and surprisingly strange and unconventional media including glitter, rubber chickens à la real feathers, plastic googly eyes, astro turf, beach sand and miscellaneous 3-dimensional props.

Quiroz's contemporary narrative paintings represent the harsh, often ugly, realities of America's discovery, warfare and foreign policy.

His series of paintings, "Medal of Honor" portray recipients of this prestigious medal. One particularly clutching piece is "Da Willie Peter Burned Red's Skin Lak Fraud Chik-In...." The circle-shaped canvas represents the Eastern philosophical circle of life. Red, a WWII hero, who sacrificed his life by protecting his fellow soldiers from the so-called Willie Peter or white phosphorous bomb, dances the life-dance of the oriental Shiva (leader) as his flesh burns away.

Another work in this series, "A Slip-Up Slows Da Search Fo' Sandino-1932" tells the story of Mary-Can-Oil, an enormous monster — actually, "American Oil," the puppeteer who controls Uncle Sam as well as "the enemy." Amongst these vivid images and colors is a wire flinging out from a handless arm hit by an explosion—attached to this wire is a rubber finger and spurts of blood. These seemingly gruesome concepts do more than point a finger at the greedy intent and result of warfare; they reveal the senselessness of American



The two above photos of Quiroz's paintings can be seen in the Donna Beam Fine Art Gallery until September 20.

and enemy casualties lost in innocent patriotism.

Quiroz's "Happy Quincentenary Series," is not meant to be a celebration of happiness. This series satirically acknowledges the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America.

Quiroz questions how something already in ex-

istence could be discovered.

Each work in this series deals with the Eurocentric philosophies and desires such as greed, subservience and the dissolution of one form of religion for another. Again, he illustrates these revelations with pungent colors and media.

Quiroz's paintings toss aside the pretty picture presented to us by American propaganda for a sharp look at the truth no matter how disturbing the facts behind the "myths" may be.

His satirical depictions are substantial proof of the ol' American standby — no guts, no glory. Quiroz definitely possesses both!