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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT BY TODD MCFLIKER

Eclectic Artist

Designer, photographer, Fort Lauderdale entrepreneur has many talents



Artist Niki Lopez works with acrylic, oils and watercolors

NIKI LOPEZ IS MORE than just an eclectic business owner. She's an innovative graphic designer, creative photographer, and a mixed media artist, working with acrylic, oils and watercolors, as well as a mother.

The multitalented craftswoman will soon have some of her art work shown in "The Myth of Power" visual art exhibition at Fort Lauderdale's Sailboat Bend Artist Community, home to three floors of gallery space. The public is invited to The Myth of Power's opening reception on Saturday, Oct. 16, from 7 to 11 p.m. The free exhibit will take



place until Nov. 12. It will feature artists' open interpretations to the theme; prospective artists may explore individual conceptions of "power." Viewers will see power in regard to social doctrine, hierarchy, gender and racial inequity, along with influence and domination. Artists are encouraged to demonstrate or explore imagery of physical strength, heroism, idols, sovereigns and icons.

Being a hardworking entrepreneur, Lopez manages several Web sites and

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exhibits her work regularly throughout the tri-county area. She hosts free shows on the third Saturday of every month at the 1310 Gallery inside of the Sailboat Bend Artist Community. Painters, photographers, sculptors and sketch artists have a new home to present their craft visions and connect to the South Florida community. All of her eye candy is for sale, with prices starting at \$250.



PHOTO: TODD MCFLIKER

"I like to bring together different groups of people that normally wouldn't integrate," Lopez said. "I also love all of the diverse work that everybody gets to disclose at the Sailboat Bend Artist Community. I put a lot of time and effort into the Sailboat Bend Artist Community, promoting the space and the events. I truly believe in the vision. You don't have to travel to Miami to experience top-notch art and culture—its right in our own back yard."

Lopez and the Sailboat Bend Artist Community host a handful of film screenings, networking events, workshops and free lectures, such as "Digital Media Marketing," at the studio.

"Besides introducing local virtuosos, I like to give back to the community," Lopez said. "Upon occasion, I use my studio to raise money for the needy in the area and to support our troops in the Gulf. Other times I have held visual exhibitions as fundraisers to assist homeless earthquake victims from an orphanage in Haiti with food, clothes and toiletries. I connect with Haiti, not only because my son lost his grandmother during the earthquake, but there is so much damage, and so much we all can do to help. I think we as craftsmen have a responsibility to bridge the connection with humanity and the soul, so we aren't totally lost to the coldness of technology."

"As an entrepreneur, I am always building my networks for graphic design and photography. I love all types of groundbreaking endeavors. As an artist, I want to keep creating and sharing with individuals. I consider myself a humanitarian with an altruistic nature that wants to help rid the world of racism, stereotypes, abuse, sexism, or anything that divides people."

Growing up in Queens, N.Y., Lopez always showed an interest in the arts, and studied at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. Since moving to the Sunshine State in 2003, she earned her bachelor's from the Art Institute in Fort Lauderdale. She and her man, up and coming DJ OneStar (Patrick Aboua) live with their 1-year-old son, Marley, named after the legendary Bob. Thinking outside of the box, the proud parent now explores conceptual theories in her craft, telling obscure stories or asking unusual questions. The young lady's various talents have been seen in a wide variety of newspapers, magazines, Web pages, local clubs, restaurants and television. Using non-restrictive lines and patterns, mixed with bold and vibrant colors, she uses a unique spiritual perspective to depict parts of herself, as well as the world in which we live. She finds abstract angles to photograph bodies and explores a variety of religions in her paintings.

At the same time, Lopez often seeks understanding about life forms from other worlds. One of Lopez's latest pieces is "Mona Lisa," a modern version of Leonardo Da Vinci's oil painting. Only her portrait of the mysterious figure is of an extra-terrestrial.

"It is arrogant for us to believe that out of all the universes and different planets within them, that man on earth is the only intelligent being," she said. "When I depict Mona Lisa coming from an alien world, it's not scary. Every person can view it as something new. There is no right or wrong interpretation."

"In the very near future, I would love to occupy a space in Fort Lauderdale to showcase my true self-expression. After all, I simply love hosting events where I get to express myself as an artist to the rest of the world." Her smile warmed up the room as she continued, "I just want to keep doing what I love."

Niki Lopez is available for commissioned artwork and photograph studio sessions, as well as graphic web design. She can be reached at 305-975-6262, or via e-mail at nikilopez@gmail.com.