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**GALLOS. CABALLOS. GENTE Y PAISAJES**

**Exhibition Paper**

**By**

**ROSENDO SANDOVAL**

**Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Texas-Pan American  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

**MASTER OF FINE ARTS**

**December 2001**

**Major Subject: Art**

GALLOS. CABALLOS. GENTE Y PAISAJES

Exhibition Paper  
By  
ROSENDO SANDOVAL

Approved as to style and content by:

  
Dr. Nancy Moyer

Chair of Committee

  
Mr. Philip Field

Committee Member

  
Mr. Richard Hyslin

Committee Member

December 2001

## ABSTRACT

Sandoval, Rosendo. Gallos, Caballos, Gente y Paisajes. Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.). December, 2001. 26pp., 19 illustrations.

To begin with, this paper will focus on my life, the source of inspiration for my work, and the body of work for my M.F.A., series.

First, I will give the reader a brief but detailed biography. It covers the period of time from my birth all the way to my college graduation. This section gives the reader an idea about my beginnings as an artist, and about the hardships that I have endured during my lifetime.

Second, this paper talks about the work, and my main sources of inspiration. In it I explain to the reader what have been my sources of inspiration from childhood all the way to the present time. One of my first sources of inspiration were the old Mexican movies that I saw when I was a child. We had the opportunity to see these movies once a week when the traveling movie theater came to our village. I lived in the hacienda El Granjenal which is located in the outskirts of General Teran a small town southeast of Monterrey, Mexico. I was five or six years old at the time, and these movies made a great impression on me. Most of these movies portrayed the charro or the Mexican cowboy in a romantic way. These films were shown on a Saturday night. After the movie I would go home, and I would have a hard time going to sleep. I would get so excited about the characters that I had seen in the movies that I couldn't wait until the next day to start drawing their pictures. The charro movies were my first source of

inspiration. Another thing that inspired me to create artwork were the landscapes of Northern Mexico. Everywhere I looked, I saw the vast landscapes, people riding on horseback or going about their daily chores. My work portrays the customs of the people in the state of Nuevo Leon, Mexico as well as those of the people who live in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. The last, but not the least when it comes to sources of inspiration, are my cultural surroundings: which will include both northern Mexico and The Rio Grande Valley. I always seem to find something interesting to paint every time I focus on my culture. It provides me with a wide variety of themes that I can choose from. Some of these themes could include the breaking of a piñata, a cockfight, a backyard dance: the list could go on and on.

The last section of my paper focuses on my M.F.A., series. In this section I give the reader a brief description of each one of the artworks in that body of work. Most of the works in this series are representations of childhood memories and experiences. The rest of the work includes daily life scenes at the present time.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper to my wife Luz Maria, and our children Celeste, Rosendo Jr., Elizabeth, Alejandro, and to my grandson Tristan for having the patience to put up with me during my graduate studies and for putting up with the neglect that I had to show towards them in order for me to be able to concentrate on my studies. To my mom Sara E. Arpe, my brothers and sisters Rafael, Amanda, Flor and Rigo for understanding that I was too busy working on my graduate studies that I didn't have the time to visit or call as often as I did before. To my co-workers who helped me to proof-read my papers. Mrs. Lorenzana, Mr. Banda, Mrs. Rhodes, Mr. Perez, and finally I want to dedicate this paper to my father Rosalio Sandoval for being able to motivate me to succeed in life. Dad, even though you died a long time ago when I was still a child, I still look up to you for strength and guidance. Thank you dad, this is for you.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT .....	iii
DEDICATION .....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	vi
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS .....	vii
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Why I Became an Artist .....	1
Artist's subject, techniques and influences .....	2
CHAPTER II. MY OWN PERSONAL HISTORY .....	5
How I Developed as an Artist .....	6
What Influenced me to Become an Artist .....	7
Formative Upbringing and Surroundings .....	7
CHAPTER III. THE CONTENT OF THE ARTWORK .....	9
What the Artwork is About .....	9
The Story Behind the Artwork .....	9
CHAPTER IV. CONCLUSION .....	25
WORKS CITED .....	39
COPYRIGHT PAGE .....	40
VITA .....	41

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	Page
<u>Landscape with Figures</u> .....	27
<u>Charro with Horses</u> .....	27
<u>Horses and Dog</u> .....	28
<u>Landscape with Red Barn</u> .....	28
<u>La Virgen de Guadalupe</u> .....	29
<u>El Gallero</u> .....	30
<u>El Cuidavacas</u> .....	30
<u>El Senor de los Gallos</u> .....	31
<u>Pelea de Gallos</u> .....	31
<u>La Pinata</u> .....	32
<u>Ninos con Gallos</u> .....	32
<u>Buscando la Huella</u> .....	33
<u>Camino al Rancho</u> .....	33
<u>Duelo a Machetasos</u> .....	34
<u>El Retorno del Ganado</u> .....	35
<u>The Bullfight</u> .....	36
<u>Cockfighter on Horseback</u> .....	37
<u>The Cockfight</u> .....	37
<u>El Jinete</u> .....	38



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

From the beginning, when I was a young child, I felt the need to express myself in a pictorial way. I became almost obsessed with the idea of drawing pictures of the things that fascinated me. These things included a variety of themes such as horses and riders, animals, landscapes, and characters and scenes from old Mexican movies. Some of my favorite movie stars included Emilio "El Indio" Fernandez, Jorge Negrete, Pedro Infante and Antonio Aguilar. The movies that I remember the most include El Rapto, La Bandida, La Cucaracha, Gabino Barrera, El Ojo de Vidrio, Dos Tipos de Cuidado, Los Tres Alegres Compadres and La Barranca de la Muerte (internet-web pages). It was all these themes that provided the inspiration that got me started as an artist. I see it as the spark that started the fire. In this paper I write about how my childhood memories have influenced my artwork even to the present time. Most of my paintings are a representation of the way of life that I lived as a child. My work reflects the things that I saw, and experienced in the past and in the present. My artwork also reflects the great influence that culture had on me, primarily the Mexican culture, and to some extent the Mexican-American culture. My paintings relate some of my childhood episodes. They also narrate the way of life of people in Mexico as well as the United States. I had almost no exposure to artists, or to art, during my childhood. The main exposure to art that I had at the time were the illustrations in the textbooks that I used at school, and

seeing some paintings through a window of an artist's studio during a school field trip to General Teran, the nearest town from the place where I lived. In 1971 I came to the U.S. with my family and for the first time I was introduced to a public library. It was at the library where I first saw art books with reproductions of artists' works. It was also there where I saw my first art exhibit. As one may perceive, my surroundings were not at all favorable for my development as an artist. I grew up in El Granjenal, a hacienda on the outskirts of General Teran, which is a small town in the state of Nuevo Leon, far away from public libraries, museums and galleries. Isolated from the rest of the world. It was in this type of environment that I developed my drawing skills without anyone to guide me or to help me develop those artistic skills.

My subject matter consists of a wide variety of themes. These themes are derived from landscapes, people and animals. My landscapes serve as backgrounds for my subject matter. The people that I paint are ordinary people; there's only one exception, and that's the Virgen de Guadalupe. Everyone else represented in my paintings is a character in the Mexican culture. That character can be a bullfighter, a Mexican vaquero, a cockfighter, or children showing off their favorite animals. They may also be participating in traditional events such as piñatas or barbeque parties. Adults are also shown participating in these events. The animals that I keep on painting, repeatedly, are horses and fighting cocks because of the admiration that I have for these animals. Another theme that is constantly reflected in my work is the daily life of the Mexican vaquero.

My artistic influences are a combination of old and new. Da Vinci, Brueghel, and Rubens influenced my painting technique. These three masters painted in a traditional

manner. Leonardo used an underpainting, which was usually reddish-brown in color (Wallace 135). He then proceeded to do the overpainting on top of the monochromatic underpainting. I admired Leonardo's use of chiaroscuro and sfumato along with his mastery of both linear and atmospheric perspective (Wallace 134-135). Brueghel validated my use of everyday life scenes as subject matter and I admired his painting technique (Foote 176-183). Rubens fascinated me with his painting technique, the simplicity of his underpainting method, and the speed in which he painted his pictures (White 177). Another artist who influenced me tremendously was Jose Maria Velasco, a nineteenth century Mexican landscape painter who painted the valley of Mexico (Burke 73). Other artists who influenced my work were some of the Mexican mural painters such as Siqueiros, Orozco, Rivera and Camarena. Some of the things that I liked about their work were their semi-abstract shapes, their use of bright colors, their loose brush work, and the monumental size of their murals (Del Conde 80-200). They used the underpainting technique, and the golden section from the Renaissance and adopted it to their subject matter. My painting technique is part traditional and part contemporary. Traditional in the sense that I still use an underpainting or an imprimatura in the same manner as the old masters. Like Raphael during the Renaissance, I also use the golden section, mathematics and geometry to compose my pictures. I start by dividing the panel or canvas into sections. I use these divisions to find the golden section or focal points of the picture plane. My compositions are based on geometry. I use the same things that were used by the Renaissance artists to portray the charro, and the Mexican and Mexican- American cultures. My overpainting is more contemporary in the sense that my painting style has become more linear, impressionistic and calligraphic. It has some resemblance to the style used by some of the Mexican mural painters such as Siqueiros

and Camarena. Camarena was an artist who was active from the 1950's to the 1980's. The artworks created by Da Vinci, Brueghel and Rubens also gave me ideas for the themes of my own work. Paintings by Brueghel in which he shows groups of common people having a feast, wedding or dance, give significance to the culture of the common man. In these paintings people are shown eating, drinking, dancing and having a good time (Foote 134-137). Rubens' work also gave me ideas for my own paintings. Particularly the type of work that shows peasants having some kind of celebration (White 266). In my work I also show groups of common people participating in similar activities. The new art masters who have influenced my work to a certain degree are Velasco, Siqueiros, Orozco, Rivera and Camarena. The majority of these artists attended the Academy of San Carlos, a fine arts school in Mexico City. From these artists I learned to use different things such as using landscapes as backgrounds for my paintings. These landscapes often resemble views of the valley of Mexico. Two other things that I use in my work, and that I learned from them are color and contrast. I try to use saturated bright colors, and strong contrasts between dark and light areas in the same way as they did. I also use a grid as part of my underpainting. This grid allows me to divide the picture plane into sections to find the golden section as I mentioned before. This grid also allows me to keep colors and composition in shape (Leonard 47-48). This is similar to building a structure on top of a strong foundation. One of my long term goals is to some day be able to use these two elements in the same manner as the Mexican mural painters.

The materials that I use help me support my ideas because the wooden panels, and the oil paints help me achieve that luminosity, and brightness of color that I want my work to show. The color schemes that are attained by these color combinations,

(primaries, secondaries, tints, shades, and gray tones that are made by mixing complementary colors). provide the brightness of color that I need to paint a Mexican culture that is so rich in color.

## CHAPTER II

### MY OWN PERSONAL HISTORY

I was born in the state of Tamaulipas on March 1, 1957. My birthplace is known as rancho "El Consuelo," a privately owned working ranch in the outskirts of the city of Valle Hermoso, Tamaulipas. At the time when I was born, my mother could not breast feed me due to some breast surgery that she had to undergo prior to my birth. Instead, she fed me a baby formula that eventually made me sick and almost caused my death. The illness caused by the baby formula lasted almost two years. During those two years I was in very poor health, and my mother had to constantly take me to the doctor. These trips to the doctor's office proved to be of no help. The doctors that my mother took me to could not figure out how to cure me, and my health kept on deteriorating. Frustrated with the doctors my mother decided to try out home remedies instead of the medication that I was given. I was able to survive my illness due to the kindness, and generosity of two ladies that my mother knew. One of them prescribed the home remedy that saved my life, and the other one volunteered to breast-feed me. At this point my stomach would not accept anything else that was not breast milk. At the age of two, I was able to overcome my illness, and that enabled me to start walking (Arpe-personal interview).

Due to the harsh living conditions in the state of Tamaulipas my parents decided to go back to the state of Nuevo Leon where they came from. Once they arrived in Nuevo Leon, they settled in the outskirts of the town of General Teran. The name of the

hacienda where we moved to was "El Granjenal." This migration took place in 1959. It was in "El Granjenal" where I lived until the age of fourteen. It was also in this place that I went to school up to the sixth grade. I was unable to continue my education due to my family's lack of funds to pay for tuition and books, therefore, I could not attend junior high school. My time there was spent helping my family. I would tend cattle, work in the fields off and on, go fishing and hunting in my spare time and drawing. Drawing played a very important role in my life. I would spend a great amount of time drawing anything, and everything that my imagination would allow me to. My favorite themes at the time was folk characters that were made popular by the radio or the film industry. These folk characters included "El Rayo de Plata," "El Charro Negro" and Porfirio Cadena "El Ojo de Vidrio." The first two were charro super heroes who fought for the rights of the poor and the weak, just as a knight would do. The third one was a legendary Mexican outlaw who would rob the rich to give to the poor.

In 1968 my father died, and left my mother a widow with five kids to care for and support. My mother struggled for two or three years after my father's death. She earned a living washing and ironing clothes for other people. After two or three years of hardships, she came to the United States. She worked as a maid for one of her cousins. By 1971 she was able to put all the paper work together to get us to emigrate and join her in the U.S.

Life in the United States was not easy. By this time my mother was no longer a maid; she had found a job working in the fields. After school we would go join her in the fields to help her out. It was in junior high school where I discovered that there was an art class. I was blessed to have a wonderful art teacher who influenced me with her work, and encouraged me to pursue my dream of becoming a painter. Her name was

Virginia Pierce Lehman. A very kind lady who always took the time to help me out whenever I needed help.

In 1977 after graduating from Weslaco high school in Weslaco, Texas, I enrolled at "Pan American University" now "UTPA," and became an art major. After a year in college, I dropped out of school to marry my high school sweetheart. I spent one year out of college trying to earn a living in the state of Florida. The time that I was there was spent working in a nursery. I took care of plants, loaded and unloaded trucks, and worked outdoors irrigating and fumigating plants. After that year went by, I decided to come back to Texas to finish with my degree. In 1982 I received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from "Pan American University," and became an art teacher for the Mercedes Independent school district in Mercedes, Texas where I have been teaching ever since. In 1986 I received a Master of Science degree in art from "Texas A&I University" Kingsville, Texas.

One of the things that influenced me to become an artist was the desire that I had to draw representational pictures of everything that interested me. Another thing was the need that I had to express myself as an artist. Also my upbringing and surroundings played a major part in my becoming an artist. As I mentioned before, I grew up in a rural village isolated from civilization. We had no television, and books other than textbooks were non-existent. I spent my free time drawing. It was either hanging out with kids my age or drawing, and most of the time I preferred drawing. Other influences included my relatives. My grandfather who showed some talent for woodcarving and drawing. My father who would draw pictures for me to copy when I was a young child, and my mother who was very good at handicrafts. As mentioned before, I was also influenced by some of the old masters, and by some of the Mexican painters particularly the mural painters.



The most important influences that I had in my development as an artist were by Mrs. Virginia Pierce Lehman and by her introducing me to the work of Mr. Frederic Taubes. Mr. Taubes was a leading authority on the technique of oil painting. He was also a college art professor who taught and lectured in many universities in the United States and England. In addition to that, he wrote many books on painting techniques. He also formulated his own Copal painting media and varnishes which according to Mr. Taubes have the same properties of the media used by the early Flemish masters (Taubes 7-31). Mrs. Lehman was my junior high art teacher and a devotee of Mr. Taubes. Her artwork was greatly inspired by this man. She studied painting with him for approximately twenty years. Through her instruction I learned how to prepare a canvas, how to do an underpainting, and how to use transparent and semi-transparent glazes for the overpainting. She had learned this painting technique from Mr. Taubes during painting workshops that she attended on weekends or during the summer. I greatly admired her work, and it influenced my painting style for many years. When it comes to my artistic education, Mr. Taubes finished what Mrs. Lehman started. As time went by, I became more and more interested in his painting technique. I started reading some of his books on painting. The Mastery of Alla Prima Painting is a book that I still use as a reference whenever there is a need. This book was first printed in 1980. From it, I learned about imprimaturas, glazes, scumbles and impastos: these are the techniques that I use when I create a painting. Almost every one of my paintings starts with an imprimatura, and the rest of the painting is done with transparent and semi-transparent glazes with the occasional use of scumbles and impastos. What influenced me most about Mr. Taubes were his knowledge of the oil painting technique and the simplicity of his work. The alla prima painting technique is my favorite because it was used by some

of the old masters. such as Bosch. Brueghel and Rubens to name a few. This is the painting technique that I prefer to use most of the time due to its quickness and spontaneity.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CONTENT OF THE ARTWORK

My paintings are a reflection of my culture. In my paintings I record events, and traditions that might disappear in the future. I try to portray people and animals in action, and also show a good use of composition, color and contrast. In addition to that, my paintings narrate a story or event. To me, narrative painting is very important because it helps the viewer understand the content of the artwork. For this section of the paper, my artwork has been divided into content groups such as landscapes, religious painting, portraits, family portraits, movies, charros on horseback, other themes and sculpture.

First I will start with the landscapes, the first painting that I did for my M.F.A., series Landscape with Figures, shows a group of trees and two figures walking on a country road. This painting started as a quick sketch that I did with oil pastels. One day I looked out of my classroom window, and I saw a cluster of dark green trees. This group of trees immediately caught my interest. The preliminary sketch was done part from observation, and part from imagination. All the landscape was done from observation. The figures in the landscape are imaginary. When the sketch was developed into an oil painting, I added some other imaginary things such as the road and the lake. I used this painting as an experiment on which to try a painting medium that was formulated by Mr. Taubes. According to him, this medium is close when it comes to properties to the one used by

the early Flemish masters (Taubes 31). My purpose for using this medium was to be able to emulate the painting techniques of the old masters. The painting was a success although it took me time to complete it due to the small size of the panel. Sometimes, a small painting takes longer to finish than a large painting, this is due to the time consuming minute detail that is involved in the creation of this type of paintings.

The subject for the next painting is a charro. This particular subject is of great interest to me because the charro is a continuation of the Renaissance hero. A character who has the same ideals as a knight. The next painting, Charro with Horses, is an imaginary landscape. This painting is about a charro performing one of his daily chores. Charro is one of two names used to describe a Mexican cowboy. Charros are found in different parts of Mexico, but they are more abundant in the southern Mexican states. In this painting, this person is taking his horses for a drink of water. This picture was inspired by my childhood memories. This chore was usually done at the end of the day. I was fascinated with the reflections on the water. In addition to the main characters which are the man and the horses, this picture shows trees in the background, some mountains, and in the sky there's a couple of clouds that are dropping a shower in the distance. This painting suggests the valley of Mexico or an ideal Mexico.

In the painting titled Horses and Dog, there's a confrontation going on between the main horse and a dog. There are two other horses in the picture, one is a young black horse who stands next to the main horse. The other horse is the white horse that feeds on the green grass a few feet away from the others. This horse is unaware of what's going to happen? The middle ground shows some unusual dark trees, white birds taking off like if they were scared away by the man who is coming out from behind the trees. He is holding a rope like if he is planning to sneak up from behind to capture his run-away

horses. This painting has the element of mystery, and that is reinforced by the mysterious dark figure who is coming out from behind the trees.

The next painting, Landscape with Red Barn, shows a farm scene. This picture depicts the daily life of farm people and their animals. This work was commissioned by one of my wife's relatives. She requested a landscape with a red barn in it. The foreground of this picture shows a tall tree with some rocks at the bottom. This tree casts a shadow on the ground. The shadow points to some of the figures in the picture. It also shows a couple of horses feeding on the green grass, and a couple of roosters fighting over some chickens who are searching the ground for food. The middle ground shows a man coming out of a red barn and heading towards the road. At the same time, there's a girl and two boys walking on the road very close to where the man is. It is unclear if they are going to visit the man at the red barn or if they are just following the road on their way home. The rest of the picture shows some trees, white birds, mountains, sky and clouds. The road was painted in the shape of the letter "S" for composition purposes. The white birds were painted against dark areas for contrast purposes.

The next painting that I am going to describe is one of my religious paintings which is La Virgen de Guadalupe. This painting was first thought of when my kids broke an old mirror that we had at home. I ended up with the mirror's frame, and the hardboard that served as the backing for the mirror. At first, what caught my eye were the frame and the shape of it. It was shaped like a renaissance panel. A long rectangle with a semi-circle on top of it. The shape of the board and frame were ideal for a religious painting. The next thing that came to mind was what religious painting? Then I remembered my mother's small statue of La Virgen de Guadalupe. My mother always keeps an area in the house where she keeps her religious pictures and statues. Growing up surrounded by

these religious icons had somewhat of an influence on me. This influence is sometimes reflected in my work. In the past, I have done some drawings and paintings of religious figures. I decided to go to my mother's house to make a sketch of the statue that she has. I made the sketch with my oil color pencils on an orange colored paper. After the sketch was done, I started working on the painting. In this picture, I try to portray the religious figure who is worshiped by millions of Mexican Catholics. I painted this picture in the traditional manner. The pose is slightly changed to make it different from all the other pictures of La Virgen de Guadalupe. She is standing on the moon, and there's an angel at her feet holding her robes. The angel is coming out from the clouds. La Virgen is dressed in her traditional pink, white, green and gold outfit. She is surrounded by a bright halo that goes from pale yellow to orange to red. The background is just a pale blue sky. Another thought that has come to mind is to make a pilgrimage trip to Hidalgo, Tamaulipas to donate this painting to a church that is high up in the mountains. The name of the place is La Virgen del Chorrito which loosely translated means the waterfall virgin. My reason for donating the painting to this particular church is the fact that this church is supposed to house a Virgen de Guadalupe. The last time that I was there, I went into the church, and all I saw was a small stone carving representing La Virgen. I think that this place could really put my painting to good use, and I cannot think of a better place where to house my painting. This is a poor church, and it lacks the funds to get a bigger statue or a large painting. I also think that it would be a nice gift to the people from that community. El Chorrito, as some people call it, is an Indian village up in the mountains of Tamaulipas where people still settle their differences with machete fights. In these fights people get killed. I still remember my last trip to this place back in the early 80's. As we were going up the mountain, I noticed a cross on the side of the

road right next to a boulder. I knew that a person had died on that spot. In Mexico crosses are used as markers to indicate spots where people have died. I remember asking my cousin, who was serving as our tour guide, about the cross on the side of the road. His answer was that another man killed a man with a machete knife. This event inspired yet another painting which I will discuss later on in this paper. The painting is about how people settle their differences in duels with machete knives.

Next, I will talk about portraits, and the first one that I will discuss is El Gallero. This painting represents the typical cockfighter who breeds, and raises his roosters for the purpose of selling and fighting. A man who loves his roosters. This picture represents a friend of mine holding his favorite rooster. The painting was done in payment for some chickens and roosters that I got from him. In the picture, my friend is dressed in black. He wears a white hat and a traditional Mexican belt. The rooster that he is holding shows a very aggressive expression like if it is getting ready to jump off my friend's arms to get into battle. The background was painted using a cool bluish color to complement the warm tones used for the hat, flesh tones and rooster.

El Cuidavacas is a self-portrait that is based on childhood memories. This painting portrays me as a young boy at the time when I used to work tending cattle. I would do this to help out my grandfather who was getting too old to travel on foot with the cattle in search of pastures. Sometimes we had to travel up to two miles through the countryside. The cattle had to be rounded up on foot, and that was another thing that my grandfather couldn't do. Little by little, I took his place to allow him to stay home, and do chores that were easier for him. This picture shows a young boy holding a shepherd's staff, keeping an eye on the herd of cows that graze a few feet away from him. The foreground also shows a dog that helps the young boy take care of the cattle, and a couple of young

calves who seem more interested in resting than in eating. Some of the cows look in different directions while some others are busy eating. This picture is about sunshine, clear skies, wide-open spaces, lots of trees, animals and mountains. This is a happy picture.

El Senor de los Gallos, this painting is both the portrait of a cockfighter and a self-portrait. In this picture, I portray myself doing one of the things that I enjoy the most, that's taking care of my roosters. I breed, raise, train and sell fighting cocks. This painting shows a cockfighter walking around his roosters checking to see that everything is all right. He holds a rooster under his right arm. This rooster has a very aggressive expression like if it getting ready to jump off the cockfighter's arm to do battle with the roosters on the ground. The cockfighter's left hand is holding a shotgun to scare away two and four legged intruders or predators. Roosters are easy prey to dogs, opossums, raccoons, hawks and weasels, as well as a target for thieves who steal them to sell them later on the black market. Besides roosters and the small huts that the roosters use for shade, there is a tree that provides more shade and protection for these animals. Horses feeding on the green grass, and a person feeding a white rooster are seen in the background. The rest of the painting depicts a large empty field, and some trees in the distance. The sky is clear with the exception of a couple of clouds.

Pelea de Gallos, for this particular painting, I followed the same procedure that I used for the other paintings. First, I started by drawing a grid on the panel to divide the picture plane into sections. This grid is a circle inside a square. The grid is divided in halves, thirds and fourths. Vertical, horizontal and diagonal lines also divide it. This grid also has many geometric shapes in it. Some of these shapes include squares, rectangles, circles and triangles. That involves using mathematics, geometry and



symmetry. Second, I place the figures according to the spots where the golden section is located on the picture plane. Those are the areas that the viewer's eye find most pleasing on the picture plane. These areas are also called focal points because they attract the viewer's eye to those particular spots on the painting. I also consider vertical, horizontal and diagonal lines as good places where to place my figures. Using this procedure to compose my paintings allows me to create a classical composition in the same way as Raphael and Poussin did centuries ago. Pelea de Gallos is a painting that I wanted to do for a long time. I wanted to show all the action of a cockfight. Not only the two cocks in action but what goes on around them during the fight. For this painting I decided to include myself as one of the cockfighters. I am the one with the black T-shirt, and the white hat. I am squatting right behind the two fighting roosters. The other cockfighter is shown on the lower left corner. He has one knee on the ground, and looks intently at the cockfight. The setting for this painting is a Mexican palenque de gallos or cockfighting ring. In some places in Mexico, the cockfighters are allowed inside the ring during the fight. The rest of the picture shows what goes on during the fight. In order to reveal the intensity of the fight, I have shown two cocks suspended in mid air, both trying to kill each other. Loose feathers are floating up in the air, there are feathers on the ground, and blood is squirting out by the roosters. Drops of blood are shown on the ground. The spectators, including both men and women, are sitting down looking at the fight; some are standing up placing bets on the fighting roosters. The figure in the blue shirt and white hat is challenging the winner of that fight to fight against his rooster. He is also betting one hundred dollars on his rooster. During a cockfight there's a lot of drinking going on as depicted in this painting. The figure in the center of the picture already had too much to drink, and it is shown yelling and holding a wine bottle. He is also having

difficulty standing on his feet. Another man behind him tries to hit him with a hat to try to get him to settle down. The picture also shows a young man who is too busy trying to get his girlfriend's attention away from the fight by hugging her from behind and kissing her neck. Some of the spectators show Asian features since some of the spectators are supposed to be from the Philippines. This indicates the importance of the fight. Way in the back, there are a few figures lurking out of the shadows. This adds an air of mystery to the painting by making it more interesting for the viewer to look at.

The next group of paintings that I will discuss are the family portraits. First, I will start with La Piñata, a very old Mexican tradition which is used to celebrate a person's birthday. La Piñata depicts my family. The piñata in the painting was in honor of my daughter's birthday. In this picture, the birthday girl is shown hitting the piñata. The little boy in the right foreground who wears the red T-shirt and looks at the viewer is my son. The other boy right behind him is my nephew, and the young man behind my nephew is my brother in law. He is trying to prevent my nephew from getting any closer to the person who is hitting the piñata to prevent him from getting hit with the stick. The young boy who wears an orange T-shirt and blue jeans, who stands behind the piñata is an imaginary character. He was placed there for composition purposes, and so were the two men behind the tree. I think that those figures had to be placed there to balance out the composition, and to allow me an opportunity to repeat colors. The person who holds the rope to the piñata is married to my wife's sister. The heavyset girl who stands next to him is my wife's niece. The two ladies behind them are my mother and my mother in law. My mom is the one wearing the white dress; my mother in law wears a dark brown dress with light brown patterns. Right behind them is my house. This event took place in my back yard, and it shows the trees and the back yard of my home. On the far right,

there are two boys. One is looking on: he is the son of one of my friends. The other boy is holding a stick. He is the son of the man who is holding the rope to the piñata, and he is also my wife's nephew.

Ninos con Gallos, this painting was done to commemorate my son's sixth birthday. In this picture, he chose to be painted holding his favorite rooster. A large red rooster anxiously waits on the ground to see if my son lets go of his rooster so that they can fight. My daughter, looking at the viewer, is shown a few feet away from my son. She is also holding her favorite rooster. Included in the background, are chickens walking around the property and a section of my home. A white house with a red roof that shows three windows, two of the windows are closed and one is open. The open window shows a partially hidden mysterious figure. Who is this figure? Is he spying on the two kids without being noticed, or is he trying to ambush and capture the chicken that is outside right in front of the window. Could this figure represent a ghost? My kids have complained about hearing knocking on the windows, and seeing a shadowy figure up on the roof at night. The rest of the background shows some trees behind the house, and a clear sky. I always try to include some mystery in every one of my paintings. In this case, that was the reason for painting the partially hidden figure looking out the window. This painting is intended to get the viewer involved in deciphering the riddle of the mysterious figure.

The next group of paintings that I will discuss are the ones that were inspired by movies. Buscando la Huella is one of those paintings inspired by an old Mexican movie. In El Rapto, directed by Emilio "El Indio" Fernandez, Jorge Negrete and Maria Felix played the two main characters. The painting shows two charros on horseback traveling through the countryside tracking down run away cattle. This is a typical activity of

working ranch cowboys in Mexico. Both of them are looking down as if they are searching for something on the ground. This same feeling is reinforced by one of the horses and the dog that accompanies them. Both, horse and dog, have lowered their heads close to the ground as if they are sniffing and looking for something while the other horse looks up ahead. The lower foreground shows three maguey plants and some shadows on the ground. The middle ground shows some trees and white birds painted against the darkness of the trees for contrast purposes. The background shows some mountains in the distance, a somewhat cloudy sky and birds flying very high. Despite the clouds in the sky, this picture shows lots of sunshine. The upper right hand side corner shows part of a tree. This tree is in the foreground, and it casts some of the shadows on the ground.

The painting Camino al Rancho was inspired by one of the many Mexican movies that I have seen in which the charro is idolized. This picture depicts one of the weekly routines of some of the Mexican cowboys. On weekends, they leave the ranch where they work to go visit family or to go shopping. This painting shows a group of cowboys on their way to the ranch where they work. The leader of the group is wearing a red shirt, and rides a white horse. He has made the horse to come to a halt, and it is signaling the rest of the group to stop. He has seen something up ahead, and that idea is reinforced by the two dogs that are running next to him. At the same time he is warning the group of riders behind him to keep their distance. What did he see? That's for the painter to know, and for the viewer to find out. A clue could be the red stains on the ground which could be interpreted as blood. Perhaps the blood of a dead animal or could it be the blood of a dead person? The middle ground shows some trees and cast shadows on the ground. The background shows some mountains and a clear sky.

Another group of paintings that I will discuss are the ones that portray charros on horseback. The first of these paintings is Duelo a Machetasos. This painting depicts the savage way in which people settle their differences in some areas of Mexico. It all starts with an argument, and the argument develops into a duel. The duel can be fought with guns, knives or machetes. In the painting, machetes were the weapons of their choice. In these duels people fight to the death to avenge something that has brought shame to their families. That could include a killing, a rape, a pregnancy out of wedlock or a beating. That's aside from not liking each other, or having a grudge over something that happened some time back. In these fights usually one person gets killed and the other survives. In some cases both persons die. The main characters in this painting are two charros on horseback fighting each other with machete knives while another one watches the fight from the distance. This painting was done in a pointillistic style. In order to explore the effects of color. This had to be done because I was already getting too comfortable with my painting technique, and I had to try something different that would allow me to experiment with technique and color. One of the advantages of using this technique is the fact that color is not mixed on the palette. It is applied as it comes out of the tube. Another advantage is the fast way in which paint is applied to the canvas or panel. Two or three dots of paint can be applied onto the canvas before reloading paint on your brush, and to me that speeds up the painting process. I used a different approach than Seurat's. He placed dots of two different colors side by side such as yellow and blue, and allowed the viewer to mix these colors with his or her eyes. From a distance, the viewer would see green instead of yellow placed next to blue. In my case, I used dots of color to fill in shapes. My dots were bigger than Seurat's. I used the head of a nail to make the dots instead of using small brush strokes like he did. There are some areas in the painting in

which I tried to use Seurat's approach, but I kept those to a minimum. As I mentioned before, this painting was done in a pointillistic style to explore the effects of color. As the painting progressed, I lost interest in the effects of color, and I concentrated more and more on working with pattern. Going back to the painting that I was discussing, the lower right foreground of Duelo a Machetasos shows two shadows on the ground. The shadows of a woman and a young child. These two people could be the wife and son of one of the fighters. Maybe they are standing by to see the outcome of the fight, or maybe they were the cause of the fight. Maybe the other man made a pass at the woman or tried to somehow harm the woman and child, and the husband came to their rescue. The setting for this painting is the countryside. There are a couple of trees in the middle ground. The background shows rows of trees in the distance, and behind the trees there are some mountains. The sky shows some clouds.

El Retorno del Ganado, this painting is about a cattle round up through the mountains. The picture shows three charros on horseback rounding up cattle to take it to another location across the mountains. The painting shows a lot of action. The right foreground shows the herd coming towards the viewer at full gallop. The herd is followed by two of the charros while the third one tries to round up a few cows that are headed in a different direction. The left background shows a maguey plant and some cast shadows on the ground. The background shows distant trees, and mountains that show the tower looking rock formation called "El Penon de las Animas." A long time ago, I saw an old movie in which this strange and fascinating rock formation was shown. I liked the shape of this rock so much that I decided to use it as the setting for my painting. The title of the movie where I saw this particular rock formation is also El Penon de las Animas. Going back to the painting, this picture also shows a clear sky, and some birds

that are flying very high. It also shows rhythmic strokes, and beautiful bright colors.

This painting is packed with action, movement and energy.

Another theme that I will discuss is bullfighting: this is a very popular sport in Mexico and Latin America, just as popular as the cockfights. This painting represents a tradition and a sport that has been practiced for centuries. It was brought to the new world by the Spaniards and it stayed with us. This picture also shows that Mexico and its people consider bullfighting an important sport despite the brutal, and bloody outcome of the bullfighting events. For a long time, I wanted to make a painting of a bullfight, but for some reason or another I never got around to it. Some time back, I was talking to a friend of mine about this idea. She told me that she had attended some bullfights in South America, and that she had taken some pictures of these bullfights. She was kind enough to lend me her photographs so that I could make a couple of sketches for this painting. This picture shows a bullfighter fighting a bull in the ring. The loose sand in the ring displays the footprints of the animal. A couple of hats have been tossed into the ring. Other bullfighters, and some spectators look at the fight from behind the ring's fence. The background shows some mountains in the back, sky and clouds. There were two other things that I also wanted to capture in this painting. First, I wanted to portray the battle between man and beast. Second, I wanted to show the grace, and the elegance of the bullfighter matched against the strength and the braveness of the bull.

The last group of art works that I will discuss is my metal sculptures. Even though these works have the same themes as some of my paintings: they are different in at least two aspects. First, the sculptures are three-dimensional pieces. Second, the sculptures are not as colorful as my paintings. I never liked to use too much color on my sculptures due to personal preference. I believe that the use of neutral colors such as black, white,

gray and brown on sculptures makes it easier for the viewer to focus on the artwork, and to appreciate it even more. I also believe that the use of bright colors on sculptures can be distracting if not used appropriately. In other words, the viewer is going to be concentrating on color rather than line, shape, form, and so on. Each one of these pieces was painted in black because I wanted to use a neutral, and at the same time elegant color that wouldn't be too distracting for the viewer.

Cockfighter on Horseback is the first piece that I will discuss. This is a metal sculpture that was made out of steel rods that were cut, bent, and welded in place. This work represents a cockfighter on horseback on his way to a cockfight. He is also holding a rooster under his left arm. This work was done with one purpose in mind, and that was to show action, repetition of line and shape.

The Cockfight, this is also a metal sculpture that was done in the same manner as the one mentioned above. This particular work shows a couple of roosters fighting to the death. Both are trying to finish each other off. This work also shows action, a flowing line that keeps on repeating itself, and repetition of shapes.

El Jinete, this sculpture was also done in the same way and technique as the other two that I already mentioned. This work shows a vaquero or cowboy trying to tame a wild horse. The horse is standing on its hind legs, and tries to shake off its rider. The rider is trying to hang on to the horse to avoid being thrown off of it. Once again, the type of sculpture that I chose allowed me to experiment with flowing line, repetition of shapes as well as showing the figures in action.



## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

To conclude, I have always been inspired by themes such as horses, fighting cocks, people, and landscapes. Old Mexican movies were also a great source of inspiration. In addition to that, I also use childhood memories, and life experiences from the past and the present as themes for my artwork. All these topics are represented in my artwork. My artwork is also a representation of the Mexican and Mexican-American cultures, the people who live on both sides of the border, their traditions and their way of life. I found it fascinating, and challenging to create paintings depicting these themes, and I enjoyed every single step of the creation of those paintings. For the last three years I have been preparing for my M.F.A., exhibit. These three years have been years of exploration and experimentation. During this time I have tried different things such as switching from a tight and almost classical painting style to a style that is more relaxed and impressionistic in which I use looser brushwork. Other areas that I spent time working on are my use of composition and color. First, I started using a classical composition in which I use mathematics, geometry and symmetry to compose my pictures. Second, I have been experimenting with color, trying out different color schemes to see what I can do with that. Basically, I have been using tints, shades and tones and placing clean pure color on top of that to make colors sparkle. It was also during this three years that I started working on subject matter dealing with the Mexican and Mexican-American cultures. I

enjoyed painting those subjects so much that I intend to continue using subject matter that is related to these same themes. My M.F.A. series contains at least two themes that can be developed into a series of paintings. This task should keep me busy for a few more years until I can find another theme or subject that I would like to explore.



Top: Landscape with Figures  
Bottom: Charro with Horses



Top: Horses and Dog  
Bottom: Landscape with Red Barn



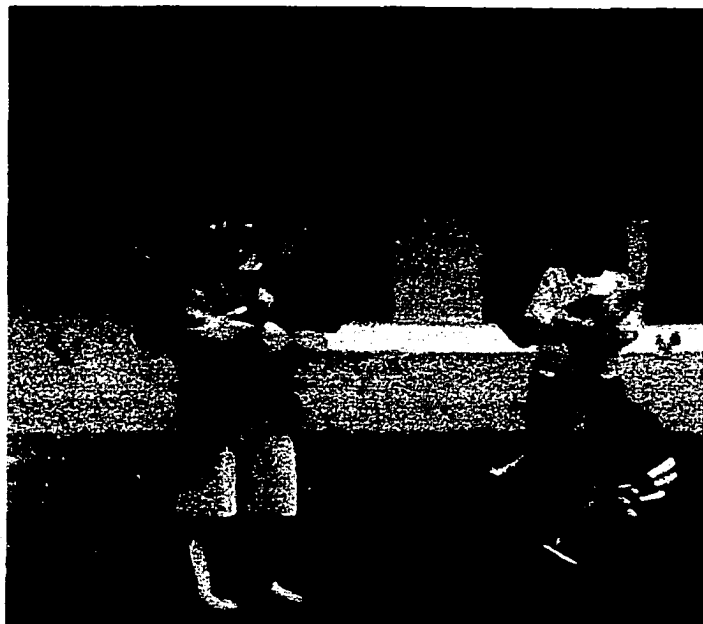
Title: La Virgen de Guadalupe



Top: El Gallero  
Bottom: El Cuidavacas



Top: El Senor de los Gallos  
Bottom: Pelea de Gallos



Top: La Piñata  
Bottom: Niños con Gallos





Top: Buscando la Huella  
Bottom: Camino al Rancho



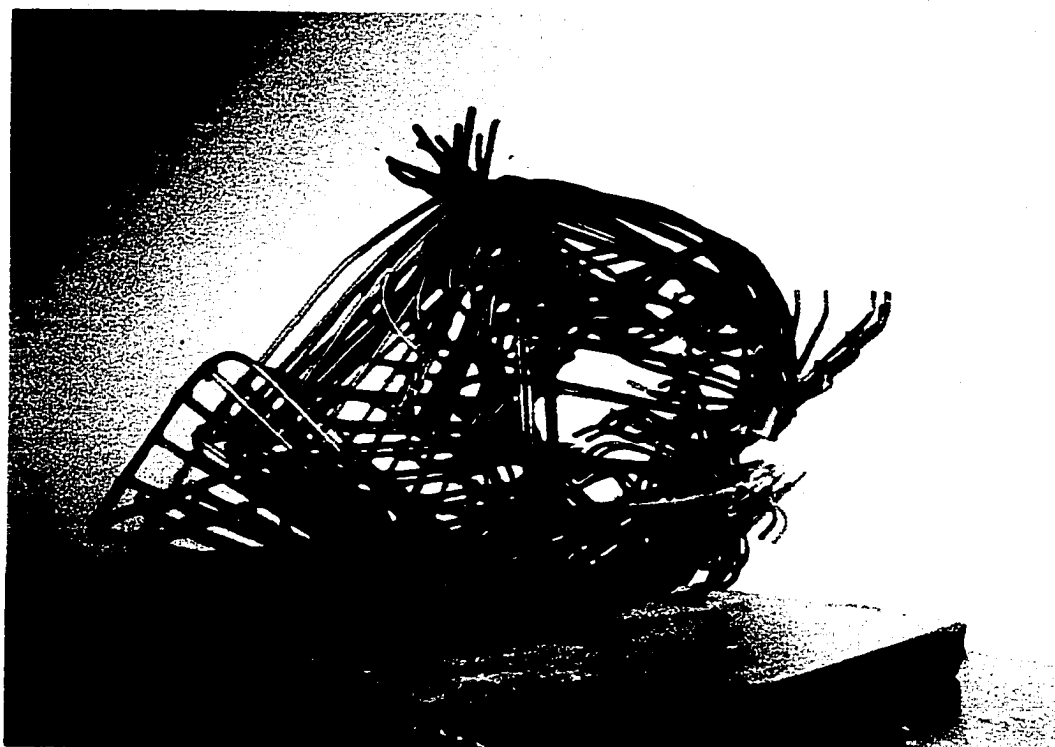
**Top: Duelo a Machetasos**



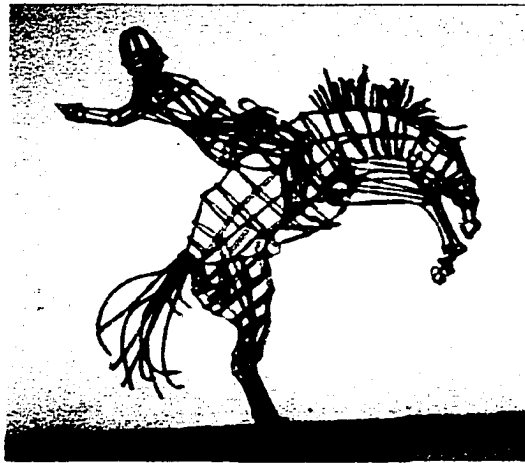
**Top: El Retorno del Ganado**



**Top: The Bullfight**



Top: Cockfighter on Horseback  
Bottom: The Cockfight



Top: El Jinete

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**Rosendo Sandoval**  
**2001**



## VITA

Rosendo Sandoval

### Education

M.S. Art 1986  
Texas A&I University. Kingsville, Texas.

B.F.A. 1982  
Pan American University. Edinburg. Texas.

### Professional Activities

From 1982 to the present time I have been working as an art teacher for the Mercedes Independent School District in Mercedes. Texas.

From 1998 to the present time. I have been working on my M.F.A. degree at U.T.P.A. in Edinburg. Texas. My graduation date is August, 2001.

### Other Occupations

Besides being a student. I am a husband. a father. a full time worker. a son. a brother. a friend. and still find the time to do chores around the house and take care of the many roosters and chickens that I have.

### Permanent Address

P.O. Box 1072  
Weslaco. Texas 78599