

Mexican Artist Manuel Solano's Unstoppable Artistic Journey Shines in Korea

Maria Kim – Dec 6, 2023



"I hope that all Koreans who see the exhibition will go back to childhood and discover the child alive within them." This is the message Manuel Solano conveyed to the Korean audience.

A woman who lost her sight at the young age of 26 is now a world-class artist. She is Mexican artist Manuel Solano. She is currently showcasing her first solo exhibition in Korea, the cultural heartland of Asia. Titled 'Pijama,' the exhibition is a collaboration between Solano and 'Peres Project Seoul.'

Visitors unanimously express that despite living in darkness, Solano's paintings radiate a vibrant and breathing brightness. Particularly noteworthy are her works, capturing daily life like a snapshot, depicted brightly and innocently, resonating with many modern individuals who, despite living in a bright world, feel a sense of darkness.

Solano lost her sight a decade ago due to HIV-related complications. Initially, she channeled her pessimism and anger onto her canvas but soon mentally overcame her challenges, creating her unique artistic world. Abandoning traditional brushes, she began relying on the sensitivity of her hands, transformed into antennae-like fingertips that could express the world more accurately than a brush.

PERES PROJECTS

In a recent interview with SayArt.net, Solano shared insights into her work 'Pijama,' the namesake of the exhibition. "Pajamas are clothes worn while sleeping and are comfortable and intimate. My work is a reflection of the pajamas my mother made. I hope the Korean audience can feel this comfort and love as much as I did," she said.

Despite facing challenges and needing assistance to move around, Solano often works independently, utilizing applications or assistants when necessary. Her unique 'Photographic Memory' ability, remembering everything like a picture, enables her to work alone despite these challenges.



Producing ten works in a year is a daunting task due to these difficulties. However, Solano's works, where she transforms pain and despair into 'joy,' exude unique and profound vitality. Going beyond paintings, she expands her artistic capabilities into various genres, including videos and performances.

Most of the works featured in this Korean exhibition are new creations, emphasizing the core essence of her art – 'positivity.' The portrait of her childhood, 'Pijama,' reflects a child's positive dreams of becoming a future artist.

The exhibition also showcases video works like 'La Patita (2020)' and 'As A Child (2015).' These videos, excerpts from her family story in the 1990s, reveal Solano's confident and energetic childhood. The camera always focuses on Solano, providing a glimpse into the future artist's life.

Viewers experience a still-image feel from most of her new works. 'Pijama (2023)' recalls the artist's self-portrait as a child playing in their parents' bed, while 'Big Bird (2023)' reinterprets a scene of a piñata fight filled with toys and candy, capturing fleeting moments seen in the video.

Despite the challenges, Solano prepared tirelessly for this exhibition, using nails, pins, and string on her canvas, creating tactile paintings with her sensitive fingertips.

Having presented solo exhibitions worldwide, including at the Solomon Guggenheim Museum in New York, Solano's works have earned her a place among world-class artists.

While Korean audiences may empathize with her living in darkness, Solano's works on display assert that she currently inhabits a brighter world than most.