

# Mood is central theme in Eddie Martinez' Mandalas on display at Davis Museum in Wellesley

By Keith Powers, Correspondent

Posted Sep 24, 2017 at 12:34 AM

You could call it “graffiti grows up.” It’s more like “graffiti moves indoors.”

Brooklyn-based artist Eddie Martinez (b. 1977) has a major show, “Ants at a Picnic,” on view now at the Davis Museum on the Wellesley College campus. Large circular paintings/collages, along with a small gallery of study sculptures and paintings, give a strong, coherent taste of the artist’s strengths and inclinations.

Seven large works—each labeled “Mandala”—occupy the main gallery. Unlabeled except for title and materials, they stand on their own merits. Martinez formed them in a build-up process—silkscreen first, mostly black outlines, from a smaller design, for shape. Then he paints and adds occasional collage materials to the blown-up design. Textures, despite the occasional collage accretion, appear almost exclusively flat.

In most, a central mid-point circle creates the sensation of depth, like looking into a well (or a washing machine, from above). The outer circle is often left alone as the edge, or surrounded by a hasty wash of solid color, unobtrusive.

Depending on mood and point of view, the mandalas either radiate out from a central point, or collapse into it. The effect is quite striking, and builds up only after some elapsed time for viewing.

Most are colored. The color does not accent, and stays confined inside its borders. One mandala (#5), quite striking, is entirely black-and-white, with even more central depth than the others.

The work is casually painted, brushed or made with a palette knife with obvious intention, but also with speed. There is no rushed feeling, but also no contemplative one to the application of materials.

There is, however, intention in the design. There are recurring visual themes: the artist’s initials; what looks like a horse head; the square pattern of wire mesh. Since Martinez calls them each “Mandala,” attention is drawn to the shapes within the shape, and the central point.

But no spiritual suggestions recur. These might be urban mandalas: haphazard, riotous, energetic—but not focused outwardly.

The exhibition title—“Ants at a Picnic”—taken from one of the mandalas, seems random as well (as is the misspelling, apparently).

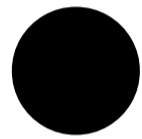
A small study gallery has a dozen or so assemblage sculptures, and some smaller works on paper. The sculptures—found objects like scissors, fan cages, wire mesh, hinges, tennis balls halved—are all fabricated casually, then heavily covered in paint. They appear to be exercises in shape.

Street art obviously influences Martinez’s work, but these are studio creations, not installations. Each of the seven large mandalas develop visually upon careful consideration, and as a group they create an elusive but confident narrative.

The Davis begins its fall season with several other exhibitions of interest as well, all on view through Dec. 17. Included are a collection of 16th century prints celebrating the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther’s religious protests; “Life on Paper,” contemporary prints from South African artists; and “Horizon,” a short but dramatic video installation from Hrair Sarkissian, documenting the perilous Mycale Strait between Turkey and Greece, a frequent passage for forced immigration used by refugees from the Middle East.

For information on each, visit [www.wellesley.edu/davismuseum](http://www.wellesley.edu/davismuseum) or call 781-283-2051.

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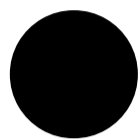
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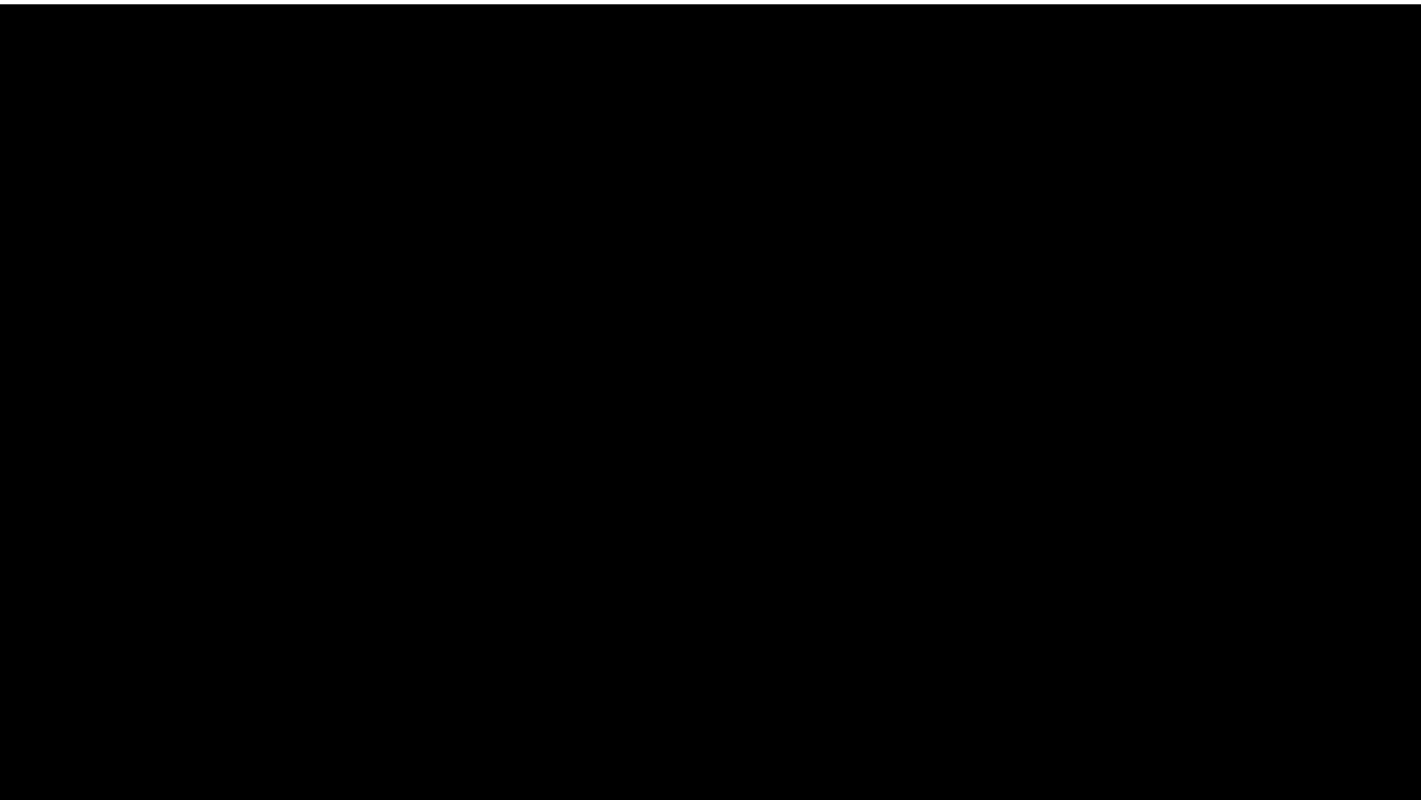
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