



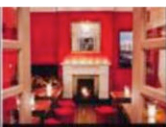
(EXPLORE)

SUMMONING KING TUT IN
NEW YORK



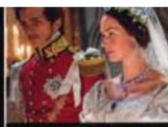
(ADVANCE)

FUNDRAISING WITH CIGNA'S
DAVID CORDANI



(INDULGE)

UNWINDING AT COTTON'S IN
SHANGHAI



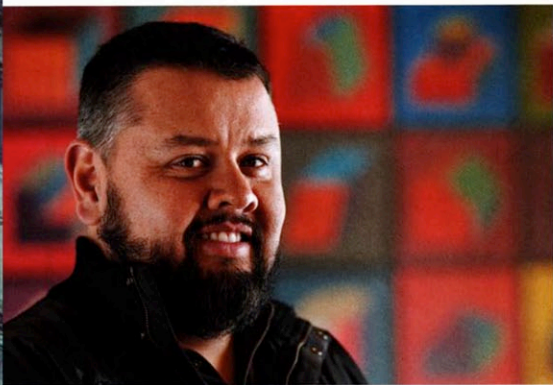
(TAKE FLIGHT)

VYING TO WIN OVER
YOUNG VICTORIA

Continental

APRIL 2010

advance / idea makers



Latin American Leanings

Curator Gilbert Vicario goes beyond contemporary art's designated borders

GILBERT VICARIO WANTED TO BE A PAINTER. He even went to art school. But there was one little problem. As he explains it: "I didn't know how to paint to save my life."

Luckily, the visual arts program at the University of California, San Diego, where Vicario earned his bachelor's degree, focused more on concept than on craft. "I realized the training I got in that program was similar to what was necessary to become a curator," says Vicario, who since August 2009 has held that very position at the Des Moines Art Center. "There was something very intellectually engaging about curating." Vicario is one of five guest curators for the FotoFest 2010 Biennial, which is taking place in Houston this month (see "Life in Pictures," below).

After earning a master's degree in curatorial studies from Bard College in 1996, Vicario, now 45, went to work at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The experience at an institution he calls "one of the great museums in the world for modern art and contemporary art" was an invaluable one. But for years, colleagues had encouraged Vicario to turn his curatorial attention south, to Mexico, the homeland of his parents. Anxious to avoid being pigeonholed, he always rejected the advice. It wasn't until the

early 2000s, as assistant curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in Boston, that Vicario started to focus on Latin American art. Of particular significance was an exhibit at the ICA called *Made in Mexico*. "It looked at the fact that Latin America is made up of people from all over the world," Vicario points out. "It was through that project that I developed a real desire to stay connected to what was happening down there."

Vicario built on that experience with a job as an assistant curator in the Latin America department at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and has also traveled throughout South America. He's very

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passionate about introducing young contemporary artists from Latin America to the rest of the world — something he plans to continue in Des Moines and through special exhibitions elsewhere.

Vicario has successfully avoided being typecast as a Latin America specialist. The Des Moines Art Center takes a broad view of contemporary art, and Vicario says his exhibit at FotoFest, *Mediation*, explores the ways "artists are actually looking at television as an inspiration" for their computer and video art and photography.

Adds Wendy Watriss, co-founder of FotoFest and clearly a Vicario fan: "He comes at photography and contemporary art from a very cosmopolitan point of view. He's always exploring."

Thankfully, without a paintbrush.

— Jenna Schnuer

FOTOFEST 2010 BIENNIAL

Life in Pictures

The FotoFest 2010 Biennial, which focuses on contemporary U.S. photography, runs through April 25. Spread across museums, galleries, shops, and even many restaurants throughout Houston, the major exhibits collectively provide a full-on immersion course. The event also includes curatorial dialogues and smaller shows.

To make the best of their art-viewing excursion, FotoFest co-founder Wendy Watriss recommends that visitors pick up the exhibition calendar and map at event headquarters (1113 Vine St., 713.223.5522), the Doubletree Hotel (400 Dallas St.), or online at fotofest.org.

— J.S.

