



The San Juan Star

Néstor Millán's exhibit of untitled photographs starts today at the Francisco Oller Gallery at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus. Above, photo from the series "Con Otros Hombres." Story, Page 3.



PHOTOGRAPHY

Millán's photographs open to interpretation

By ENEID ROUTTE-GOMEZ
Of the STAR Staff

Néstor Millán crossed printmaking and photography and came up with a metaphor about the male nude.

The result is a portfolio of untitled photographs which go on view tonight at 6 p.m. at the Francisco Oller Gallery at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus.

The photographs have an air of mystery about them and are deliberately open to interpretation.

"I want viewers to come to their own conclusions, to make their own connections," he said.

One connection that viewers will make is the inherent sexuality in the photographs facing them. That sexuality is in the mind of the beholder, asserts Millán, who earned his master's degree in photography and graphics at New York's Pratt Institute.

What viewers are seeing, he says, is a metaphor for repression.

"This photograph is a metaphor," he said, pointing to the sensational photograph that announces his show.

"It's not about a sexual act," he explained. "It's more about repression, covering and uncovering a part of the body that is not free anymore."

Millán, who teaches fine arts at UPR, has injected black humor into the "symbol and ritual" and "the emotional possibilities of pose and movement" of his photographs.



Untitled photo by Nestor Millán from his 1985-86 series, "Seres en la Habitación."

"You don't know whether to laugh or not," he says, describing his work as an equal mixture of improvisation and reality. "I don't see photography as a document of reality," he adds.

Millán was born 27 years ago in San Germán and has always been involved in artistic expression. As a child he painted, drew, acted in plays, designed sets — all with the full support of his family.

In 1984 he graduated from the University of Puerto Rico with a degree in fine arts, with a concentration in printmaking. His teachers were Susanna Herrero and Lope Max. After a stint as a junior high school teacher he left for New York.

"New York educated me," Millán said. He learned the techniques of art at UPR, he said, but not what moved them. "Here I learned how," he explained.

"There I learned why."

Millán's encounter with the big city's heady artistic atmosphere made him decide to take the risk, to be an artist come what may. New York was the spark that connected mind and soul — so he began his journey as an artist using photography as a source. Then he realized that photography was a medium he could use for self-expression. "People became interested in my work," he said.

Since then he has exhibited in various museums, including the Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art in New York City. Two of Millán's photographs are also included in a homage to the late Andy Warhol.

In April 1990 the Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art in conjunction with two other museums, will hold a major show on the subject of identity, and Millán is one of the invited artists. He will also be featured in the next edition of Nueva Luz, a New York-based magazine on Hispanic-American photography.

The photographs on exhibit at the UPR gallery are only a selection of his work. He's also working on a portfolio of female figures, he said. "It's in process," he said. Interestingly, two women influenced his art: his teacher, Herrero, and photographer Frieda Medin. He explains: Medin was saying the same thing about women in her photos that Millán is saying about men in his.

Millán's exhibit is on view through Sept. 21.