

**TopSpin**  
Artists of Western New York and Beyond

**Lillian Méndez: Lily's Funky Parade**

February 3 – May 14, 2006

Opening reception with artist's talk: First Friday, February 3, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.



**lillianméndez**

(detail) *Birdseed Child*, 2005, mixed media, found objects

Combining the ancient “Pandora’s Box” and her own interpretation of a family parade, like a modern-day alchemist, Lillian Méndez has created a pressure-cooker of imagination. The resulting explosion is a gallery experience well beyond the magnitude and scope of Méndez’s previous artistic endeavors. *Lily’s Funky Parade* is an adventurous collection of personal trials and tribulations, presented through articulated, hand-sculpted dolls. The dolls are presented in minutely detailed garments, each exuding its own expressive feeling—cheer, surprise, intuitiveness, or trepidation.

Méndez has transformed the TopSpin gallery into an interactive stage-set, with a large institutional door and frame billowing out from a single core. Viewers are invited to pass through a metaphoric “door” into the artist’s life experiences. Each figure is at once racing in celebration of freedom but also trying to return to safety and anonymity behind the door. Through these sculpted memoirs, viewers are taken on a roller coaster ride through Méndez’s societal and cultural identities.

Breaking all the rules, the artist has candidly presented her personal history with blunt honesty, aware that she has placed herself in a vulnerable spot, with no safety net or veiled identity. *Lily’s Funky Parade* is an autobiographical representation of Méndez’s lifetime of family cultivation and nurturing. From past, present, and into the future, she has released this parade of experiences in order to open a dialogue with the viewer about her personal artistic development. As the maestro of her parade, she would not have it any other way.

**Michael J. Beam,**  
**Curator of Exhibitions**



*Girl on Tricycle,*  
2005, mixed media,  
found objects



*Girl Painting Self Portrait in Bed,*  
2005, mixed media, found objects





*Birdseed Child,*  
2005, mixed media, found objects

## Artist Statement



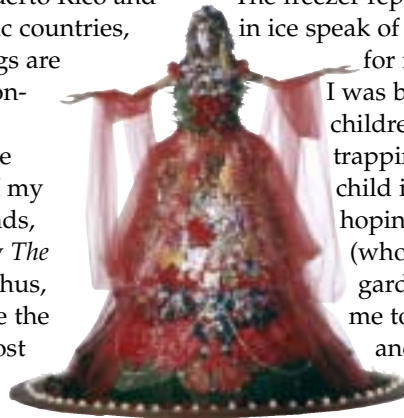
*Lily's Fuzzy Burrito,*  
2004, acrylic on canvas

at the Castellani Art Museum, which I call  
*Lily's Funky Parade.*

*Lily's Funky Parade* contains autobiographical references. The dolls are family, friends, acquaintances, and events that unintentionally contributed to my artistic vocabulary and growth. My use of dolls began years ago when I repaired a doll that had been long forgotten in an attic. I fell in love with the process of reconstructing, embellishing, and giving the doll a new lease on life. I took advantage of this passion and incorporated dolls in my works, *¡Ay, Mi Madre!*, 2000; *El Amor y El Tamarindo*, 2001; and *Lily's Fuzzy Burrito*, 2004.

A traumatic childhood experience is behind the *Girl on Tricycle*, an incident when I woke up in a hospital bed with a concussion sustained in a bicycling accident. The doll painting a portrait in bed is me as a teenager, at a time when I was taking art lessons at the Brooklyn Museum and Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. I have loving memories of the hours spent in these refuges of artistic expression.

In the traditions of Puerto Rico and other Latino/Hispanic countries, large family gatherings are central. Recently, a non-Latino friend, upon observing one of these spirited gatherings of my family and close friends, dubbed this assembly *The Parade* or *La Parada*. Thus, this nickname became the inspiration for my most recent art installation



*¡Ay, Mi Madre!*, 2000, mixed media

*"The dolls are family, friends, acquaintances, and events that unintentionally contributed to my artistic vocabulary and growth."*

LILLIAN MÉNDEZ

The freezer represents my married life, while the dolls frozen in ice speak of what was an uncreative and difficult time for me during those thirteen years. Nonetheless, I was blessed with the gift of two beautiful children during that time. The wagon with two dolls trapping a third, speaks of my future. The birdseed child in the cage represents beauty and fertility, hoping to be rescued from the two naughty girls (who, perhaps, are also me.) Time spent in my little garden or watching birds at the feeder is helping me to appreciate the beauty of little things more and more. I will rescue the birdseed child, just you wait and see!

The installation layout is quite simple. As in the opening of "Pandora's Box," I open the door, releasing its menacing contents into the world. The door, purchased from an antiques shop, seems quite fitting since it originally hung in a psychiatric hospital in Rochester, New York. Inside, a group of dolls come at the viewer as in a vision from the *Twilight Zone*. The dolls wear replicas of dresses my grandmother sewed for her daughters and granddaughters in Puerto Rico. Other dolls in float-like wagons are independently grouped but share a common spiritual purpose, promoting understanding and compassion, but also helping us to face our fears.



*El Amor y El Tamarindo*, 2001,  
mixed media, found objects

# Lillian Méndez

Lillian Méndez lives in Buffalo, where she maintains her studio. In addition to executing numerous commissions for public and private art projects, she actively works in conjunction with cultural arts organizations and local community centers to implement workshops based on Latino art and culture.

## Education

1981-82 Independent Study, School of Fine Arts and Architecture, Luminy, France

1981 Master of Fine Arts (Graphic Design), Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts, Cracow, Poland

1977 Bachelor of Arts, State University of New York at Stony Brook

## Professional Activities and Awards

1977 Blackburn Printmaking Workshop, New York, New York

1970-72 Arts Awareness Program Scholarship, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

1966-68 Drawing and Painting Scholarship, Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York

## Memberships and Community Service

1987-91 Member, Board Member of the Hispanic Woman's League, Buffalo, New York

1994-96 Board of Directors, Young Audiences of Western New York, Inc., Buffalo, New York

1995-9 Committee Member, Buffalo Arts and Cultural Funding Advisory, Buffalo, New York

1995-9 Committee Member, Regrant Committee, Arts Council of Buffalo and Erie County, Buffalo, New York

1994-96 Member, Board of Directors, Buffalo Community Music School, Buffalo, New York

## Awards and Honors

2003 Achievement in the Arts Award, Hispanic Women's League, Buffalo, New York

Sister/Brotherhood Arts Award, The National Conference for Community Justice, Buffalo, New York

Artist Grant, The Puffin Foundation, Teaneck, New Jersey

2001 Special Opportunity Stipend, New York Foundation for the Arts, Buffalo, New York

1999 New York State Hispanic Heritage Month Committee Award (for achievements in the field of art), Albany, New York

1997 Grass Roots Community Star Award (for community service), Buffalo, New York

1996 Community Service Award, Hispanic Women's League, Buffalo, New York

Arts Award, 1996 Annual Hispanic Conference of Upstate New York, Buffalo, New York (for excellence in creating awareness of Hispanic/Latino issues and history through the arts)

## Solo Exhibitions

2003 *Guaracha Hecha Mujer, Colección Azúcar*: Pensádoté Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York

1999 *Puerto Rican Folk Art*: Adams Art Gallery, Dunkirk, New York

*Images from the Past*: Galeria Boricua, Boricua College, Brooklyn, New York

1998 *Our Puerto Rican Culture, Images, and History*: Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University, Lewiston, New York

1998 *Our Puerto Rican Culture, Images, and History*: Oller/Campeche Gallery, New York, New York

*Growing up Puertorriqueña, An Exhibition of Images*: La Galeria Hector Montes Wing, Boricua College, New York, New York

1996 *Growing up Puertorriqueña, An Exhibition of Images*: El Museo Francisco Oller Y Diego Rivera, Buffalo, New York

## Group Exhibitions

2003 *Reaction to Traction: The Work of Seven Artists*: Burchfield-Penney Art Center, Buffalo, New York

2002 *Re-interpreting Puerto Rican Traditions*: Galeria Lorenzo Homar, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

*Who is the Virgin of Guadalupe?* Henry Street Settlement, New York, New York

2001 *Members Exhibition*: Big Orbit, Buffalo, New York

*58th Finger Lakes Exhibition*: Memorial Art Gallery, Rochester, New York

2000 *Herd about Buffalo?* City Wide Community Arts Project, Buffalo, New York

1999-2000 *Window Project, Main Street Art Street*, Buffalo, New York

1999 *Urban Girls*: El Museo Francisco Oller Y Diego Rivera, Buffalo, New York

*57th Finger Lakes Exhibition*: Memorial Art Gallery, Rochester, New York

1997 *Members Exhibition*: Big Orbit Gallery, Buffalo, New York

*Boxes, Books and Alters*: Hallwalls, Buffalo, New York

*The Three Spirits*: Buffalo Art Studio, Buffalo, New York

1996 *Women of Hope*: Niagara Community College, Sanborn, New York

*Group Invitational Exhibition*: Women's Gallery, Buffalo, New York

## Selected Publications

2003 "Featured Artist-Artist of the Week," *ArtVoice*, September 11, 2003, p. 24.

2002 "Herd about Buffalo? City Wide Community Arts Project," *Sculpture International Magazine*, 21 (January/February 2002): 1.

2001 "58th Finger Lakes Exhibition," *Democrat and Chronicle*, April 15, 2001, p. F1.

2000 "Notable Women," *TEMAS* 565/11-III (November 3, 2000): 62.

"Herd about Buffalo?" *Buffalo News*, November, 11, 2000, p. F1.

"Urban Girls," *Buffalo Beat* (April 20, 2000): 20.

1999 "Our Puerto Rican Culture, Images, and History," *TEMAS* 561/111-IV (March, 1999): 53.

1998 "Our Puerto Rican Culture, Images, and History," *Niagara Gazette*, December 4, 1998, p. 15.

"Our Puerto Rican Culture, Images, and History," *IMPACTO* 1203 (July, 1998): 26.

1997 "Boxes, Books, and Alters," *The Buffalo News*, February 13, 1997, p. D3.

# TopSpin

Artists of Western New York and Beyond

The museum's Tops Gallery – long dedicated to the exhibition of work by local and regional artists – now presents the **TopSpin** series. This juried series of solo exhibitions draws from the richly diverse work of WNY artists, as well as that of artists beyond the region. **TopSpin** will feature a broad range of visual expressions, varied in media as well as message.

**TopSpin** is made possible through the generous support of Tops Markets, LLC.

## 2006 TopSpin Series

### Ani Hoover

June 2 -  
September 24, 2006

**Opening Reception:**  
Friday, June 2,  
5:00 - 8:00 p.m.

### Joseph Miller

October 3, 2006 -  
January 21, 2007

**Opening Reception:**  
First Friday, Oct. 6,  
5:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Catalog design by JCharlier  
Communication Design



This Exhibition is made possible, in part, through generous support from the New York State Council on the Arts.



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