

## “Karankawa Sun Dream and the Truth Teller” by Cruz Ortiz

### About the Artwork



“First, I would like to acknowledge the ancestral sacred lands and waters of the Karankawa and the Akokisas peoples on land in what we now call Houston, Texas. I want to honor and celebrate these peoples for their resilience and strength in defending these unceded territories. May we as a community learn from their spirit about how best to be stewards of this place we call home. For centuries these spaces were inhabited by people who understood the rich relationship between land and people. In Texas, there were hundreds of tribes, all of which had their own languages, customs, and traditions whose stories have been left out of our collective Texan historical understandings. The time has come for us to learn more about whom we are as a community by presenting a narrative that has been ignored. We should all strive to be good stewards of our home by connecting with what was here before. Across the globe, people are learning that we are deeply connected with our fellow humans, environment, and cosmos. Therefore, my goal for this project is to create a visual response to the natural area surrounding the greater Houston area along with a portrait of a native from this specific area.”

“My work has always been about the intimate relationship to land and to the dreaming of a better life. Using a limited color palette, the colors would reference natural pigments that have been sourced from the Americas. There will be two painting panels that would incorporate dynamic-colored angles with one panel depicting a landscape painting influenced by the Brazos Bend River and Galveston Island. The second panel would be a large-scale portrait painting of a Karankawa native representative. The large-scale images would also reference local plant and animal life creating a patterned free-flowing composition.”

“My vision is for the large landscape painting to be 10 feet by 20 feet. The portrait would measure 10 feet by 10 feet. The stretcher frames will be made from aluminum for a lighter and sturdier installation. The paintings would be produced using high-quality oil paints.”



“Ultimately, with my existing studio support system, personal art style, and larger vision of Texas, its histories, and peoples, I will be able to produce a project that is meaningful and perfectly captures the vision of the City of Houston. As a community collaborator, I understand the gravity of engaging with visitors by creating an energy that further drives Houston’s diverse cultural legacy. It would be an honor to be a part of a project designed to enhance the experience of travelers at the Houston Airport Systems.”

## About the Artist



Cruz Ortiz lives and works in San Antonio, Texas. In 1993, Ortiz co-founded San Anto Cultural Arts. It is a non-profit focused on fostering human and community-based arts. Community-engaged art has led to the creation of the Community Mural Program. The Program is responsible for the creation of over 50 public murals throughout San Antonio. They range in style and size but share similar themes of community and hope. Additionally, Ortiz has served on the San Antonio Arts Commission in 2007, the Arts Commission of Austin in 2008, been a board member of ARTPACE San Antonio since 2018, and has been a part of the selection committee for the Texas Medal of Art from 2018-19.

Ortiz uses painting, print, sculpture, drawing, and public activation to address issues related to his experiences growing up in the bicultural landscape of South Texas. Ortiz states that “there is constant unrest in the studio to observe and record as much as possible. Most of the works are based on direct observation, as it has been more difficult to trust images that are pre-existing. These paintings are not the end game. They are recordings, sketches, draftings, live portrait sittings, still-life paintings, and plein air landscapes, all research-based findings that are directly gathered by Ortiz. There is something to be said of finding truths and being a real witness to these truths.”

Ortiz has had solo exhibitions at Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art in Houston, Texas; Artpace in San Antonio, Texas; Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston, Texas; the University of Texas in Austin, Texas; and the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara, in Santa Barbara, California. He has been invited to participate in many major international exhibitions and institutions such as the Louvre in Paris, France; EVA in Limerick, Ireland; the traveling exhibition Phantom Sightings with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the San Juan Triennial in San Juan, Puerto Rico; and at the Blue Coat Museum in Liverpool, England. Recently, the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. acquired a larger-than-life portrait of noted Chicano scholar Tomás Ybarra-Frausto.

Ortiz tells the story of heroes and heroines in a dream-like sequence. These paintings include the shape-shifting manipulated shaman masked vaquero self-portraits. As well as the elaborated romantic cosmic portraits of Olivia, his life partner. There are dream paintings of heroines and heroes. Paintings of revisioned and reclaimed landscapes, tell a different story from what we have heard before from manifested conquerors. Ortiz has previously stated that painting to him is like being in love. There is a constant exchange between reality and the reflection of that reality.