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## New exhibition focused on Latino art

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Members of Las Damas perform at the opening of the Our Kentucky Home exhibit at the Kentucky Museum.

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A spacious room in the Kentucky Museum at Western Kentucky University was filled Wednesday with laughter and lively chatter in Spanish at the opening of a new art exhibition called *Nuestro Hogar Kentucky – Our Kentucky Home*.

Thirty-five works by 20 Kentuckians of Hispanic or Latin American heritage create a labyrinth that captivates visitors with its freshness and uniqueness. The artworks are done in different colors, styles and techniques. The exhibition is made up of paintings, photographs, sculptures and an installation. The materials that were used to create the works also vary significantly: from acrylic ink to spray paint, from glitter to crystals and from yarn to metal.

Brent Bjorkman, director of the Kentucky Museum and Kentucky Folklife Program, said he was “lucky” to be offered to showcase this exhibition.



Hispanic and Latin American people are “really underrepresented,” even though they bring a lot to the community of Bowling Green and the state, Bjorkman said.

One of the 35 works is called “I was told I take up too much space.” It is an art installation that was created by attaching different statements made out of vinyl letters to

a mantelpiece. The statements read “You can’t see my lack of choice,” “Get out of the way if you can’t lend a hand,” “My accent is a reflection of my culture, not my IQ” and so on.

Azucena Trejo Williams, the creator of the installation, said it was the fact that she was told she took up too much space that “was planted like a seed” and got her to think about all the people who are marginalized in one way or another.

According to Williams, it is not just the people who fall under a certain category in terms of race, gender or age, but also those who have been imprisoned, as well as their families, those who use medication and so on.

Williams said she always pays a lot of attention to the location of her installation.

“I purposefully look for a location that is marginalized – no one is fighting for that space, nobody wants to exhibit their work there,” she said.

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Previous locations of the “I was told I take up too much space” installation include doorways and the side of a staircase. Williams recalled that there was one time she attached white letters to a white wall. This way, she explained, the artwork is overlooked, and that is the concept. According to Williams, at the end of the exhibition the statements are peeled off and thrown away, going back to the concept of being marginalized.

One of the statements – “Access to food is my right” – was prompted by a grocery store closing in Williams’ hometown, which created a food desert, according to the artist.

During the opening of the exhibition, visitors also got to see Las Damas de BG, a folkloric group that has been performing traditional Latin American dances for over seven years.

Bjorkman said he was at a local Hispanic festival when he saw Las Damas and “was captivated.”

Abigail Rodriguez, one of the Las Damas members, said she was “really happy” and “pretty excited” to be dancing at the exhibition. Rodriguez said traditional dances help her express her identity, culture and feelings.

People at the exhibit were also offered traditional Mexican food, cooked by Kentuckians of Mexican heritage and provided by the city of Bowling Green. Visitors had the opportunity to try empanadas with chicken or cheese, flan, Jamaican water and horchata.

Bjorkman said he hopes such exhibitions can show the diversity of our community.

“Whether you have been here for two years or 200 years, we are all Kentuckians, and we all bring something of ourselves to the culture,” he said.

The exhibition will be on display at the Kentucky Museum until June 29.

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**Mariia Novoselia**