

Scene Chicago S

VODKA COCKTAILS

LATER LOUNGES

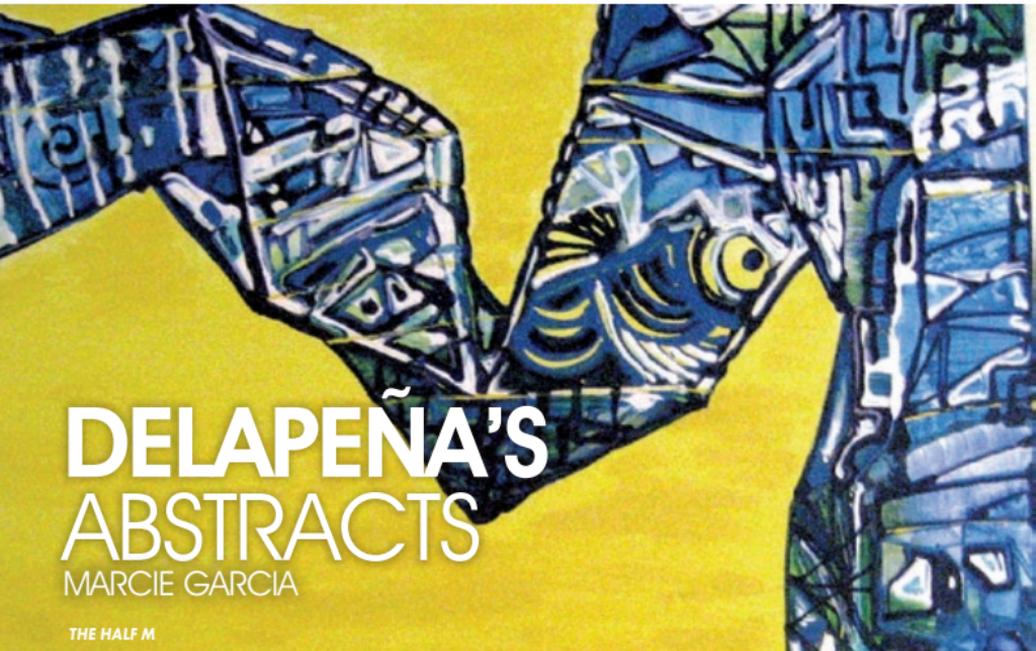
PUB GRUB

ENTREPRENEURS

AND MUCH MORE...

september 08 Chicago-Scene.com

\$1.95



DELAPENA'S ABSTRACTS

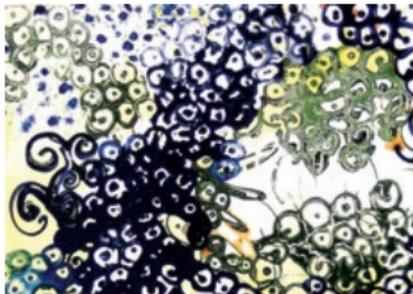
MARCIE GARCIA

THE HALF M

Maneuvering through artist Licha DeLaPeña's Logan Square art studio and apartment is comparable to moving through a crowded CTA train. There is always something colorful to see in between all the twists, turns and bumps on the tracks, and, in DeLaPeña's case, throughout her art-cluttered hallway. There are paintings in every room, some hang, others lean against the walls, and the largest stand

on their very own and compel the utmost attention. Those are unavoidable.

DeLaPeña, originally of Dolton, Ill., started seriously painting the final year of school at Columbia College, the largest arts and communications college in the United States. Since graduating with a bachelor's degree in advertising in one hand and a paint-brush in the other,



EVERY MINUTE OF EVERY DAY

DeLaPeña has since created vibrant abstracts using extremely bright primary colors and thick textures on canvas that have allowed her to splash her emotions on countless pieces throughout her 12-year career. She has raised eyebrows and has slowly emerged from obscurity throughout the city, mostly on the West Side, where her art has been displayed at venues such as Gallery Cabaret, Gallery 1633, Simons, 20/30 Club Charity Events, TOP Charity Events, KDT Designs Inc., Green Eye Lounge, The Charleston, Filter, Advance Spine and Sports Care, and No Friction Café.

Her latest achievements are on display at Studio 2941 where she will debut several



TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

new pieces. To hear DeLaPeña talk of her latest collection, at times, mirrors how a mother would speak of her child. They are coming to life for all to see.

“The emotion of happiness and to be loved is what inspired this collection,” she says. Two pieces right now that are favorites are *The Half M*. “I love its brightness and the path of the strokes,” says DeLaPeña. “My other favorite would be *Believe* because it’s a simple idea, but it represents an emotion that is sprouting within all people.”

The true propeller, the creative engine in DeLaPeña’s mind’s eye is exactly what you see when looking at the bright

tones, careful strokes, blended bursts of color and keen precision. Of course, her most extensive work cannot possibly be explained, but she is hopeful that her paintings will raise emotion from the viewer.

The raven-hair artist finds inspiration



from everyday life. "There is no one inspiration," she says, "Life drives me right now, happiness, little things in life that make you smile, also patterns and shapes that I see throughout the day, and great music. These are the closest items I

can list that are inspirations. I always listen to music when I paint. Sam Roberts Band is always motivating to me."

The same can be said of the Brooklyn-based indie band named Hymns, whom DeLaPeña met last year. The groovy foursome inspired the artist so much it compelled her to paint one of her most electric paintings to date, *I Can't Be What U Want*, after their same-titled hit song.

"I heard that song and I had to paint," she says. "I feel like that song changed my life. To me, it's about always being yourself in a relationship. It was this little piece of music that I loved so much it hurt and made me happy at the same time."

Jason Roberts, Hymns' guitarist, was excited by the effect the song had on DeLaPeña. "To be honest, it really blew my mind that this happened," Roberts says. "I think the highest compliment you can get when you're an artist, is to have someone else use your work while creating their original work. We all think the painting is beautiful, I mean, we're def-



initely a little biased, but it's the perfect painting to look at while listening to our song."

Though music has definitely struck a chord with DeLaPeña, she has always been enthralled with artists like Picasso, Klimt, Robert Smithson, Montana Morrison and Gor Avetisya.

At least seven new pieces will soon be making their debut to the public. The changes are most evident in comparing her earlier work that seems more undis-

ciplined as compared to the eagle-eyed focus that is shown in her current art.

"I felt that I have had a turning point in my work," she says. "It was what I always wanted and finally got there. I feel that my life is actively always fulfilling itself and I am happier than maybe I've ever been and I think that has to do with the changes in my work that people are seeing."

She has grown confident and uninhibited. DeLaPeña simply says she can see clearly now.

"I feel as though there was something in my way, something preventing me from truly seeing, and I only had a glimpse of what I wanted—as if a window was closed and I could only window shop," she says. "But now, the window is open and I'm not blocked anymore. I am seeing clearly. I think there was turmoil inside me before, and now, I am past it and my work is showing a glowing brightness, as though someone turned the light on. I'm excited about this chapter." She smiles: "I feel this is where it's all happening." **scene**