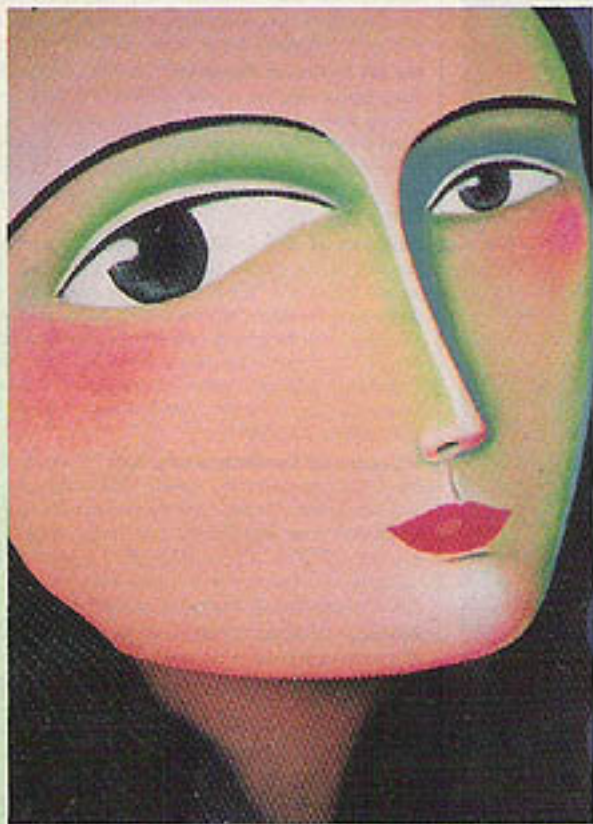


Self-Taught Dreamer



Dark eyes seem strangely aware of an audience as they gaze longingly into a spectral universe in one of Rafael Gallardo's latest paintings, "Poetes." He describes it as "the dreamer that I see in me...the purity of color which permits me to communicate with everybody through beauty and the senses."

Working with tubes of acrylic paint, Gallardo lays thousands of points to create visual relief in each of his portraits. Some works have taken as long as two years to complete and have been appraised at thousands of dollars. Gallardo, however, does not paint for praise, but as a form of prayer.

"Painting became a way of breathing for me," he explains. "Something I must do to live."

Having never gone to art school to mold or train his talents, the Venezuelan artist attributes his growing success to being self-taught, including the individuality that it brings to his work. "What is important in painting is authenticity and originality," he says. "Being self-taught enables you to speak in your own language."

The works of this internationally recognized artist are on exhibit at Amerson Gallery (4157 Adams Ave., Kensington). For more information, call 281-9600.—CM