

## ARTIST PROFILE

## Architect mixes art with business



**Artist Frank Moya has worked with architecture since he was a 16-year-old in Puerto Rico.**  
Photo by Leon Rainbow.

#### Interview by Leon Rainbow

*Contributor Leon Rainbow recently exchanged e-mail with artist and architect Frank X. Moya.*

**Trenton Downtowner:** How does your architecture differ from your fine art?

**Frank Moya:** Architecture remains committed to a client and a program, although the ideas behind the composition remain the same. These depict the significance of fragments in portraying a larger concept by providing glances of particular elements.

These elements in turn suggest a larger whole or encompassing theme. They are composed in a manner pleasing and delightful to the senses. They both allude to a narrative, a back-story that provides additional meaning to intellectually stimulate the mind.

Sometimes that narrative is quite literal, as in the poems in the back of each canvas (in Spanish) and those sometimes depicted in the front. I also write poetry, in Spanish of course.

**TDT:** How long have you been painting?

**FM:** Some years before that. Originally, I trained as a painter in San Juan at the Arts Student League before going to college. I had also apprenticed under my older brother, the painter Roberto Moya. Once I started my career in architecture, the painting effort stopped.

**TDT:** How long have you been an architect?

**FM:** Too long. At least 25 years. I have been working in construction since I was 16.

Then architecture became more of a business to me and I started to paint again with the encouragement of my partner and muse, Susanna Ramirez de Arellano. When we were both 14 back in Puerto Rico, she had encouraged me in my art and was the person responsible for my becoming an architect when she introduced me to her father, the architect Lorenzo Ramirez de Arellano.

**TDT:** What is your most significant achievement?

**FM:** My daughters. It has been a bumpy ride for them dealing with artistic temperaments. But they have been able to absorb the tools necessary to bring forth their own talented capabilities.

That is why I will share some space with my oldest daughter Adriana, who will be attending the School of Visual Arts in NYC this fall. Her work is centered on animation, where she has been able to meld her love for the performing arts with her talent for the visual arts.

**TDT:** What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?

**FM:** An artist by my definition is a multifaceted individual, a renaissance person if you will. Get involved in the environment that surrounds you, observe and absorb so that you can give back with your art. It is from experience that we can draw from our inner-most self and interpret for others. I gained much being part of the artistic milieu of Old San Juan during the '70s and the architectural upheaval in Princeton in the early '80s. And remember that not everything is learned in schools. Live a little.

**TDT:** If you could, what ways would you improve the arts in Trenton?

**FM:** Galleries have opened, which I think is great. Artists need to engage the public, the public needs to support the arts. The New York art scene has been scattered to the seven winds by the real estate boom. Lower Manhattan is no longer that inspirational wellspring mother lode of artistic talent it once was. That concentration of aspiring and established artists has now dispersed to the outer boroughs, Long Island, Jersey City and Hoboken—even as far as Paterson.

Trenton's unique opportunity in still being able to provide an affordable environment could be attractive for that wave of displacement. The city remains teetered through the Northeast Corridor train link just about 75 to 95 minutes away.

*Frank X. Moya works in Trenton and lives in New York City.*