

# Ipsis Litteris

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The barriers to entry into a new culture often can be boiled down to two things, being in the vicinity of said culture and knowing the language in which they speak, read and write. While the former takes only a journey physically, the trek that is learning a new language proves an often-insurmountable force for many. Every language has its nuances and intrigues that seldom make the process easy, but we all begin a new language with the most basic of associations, the visual relations.



What's here is an apple, regardless of the language this text is translated to, or if you have no idea what this text even says. The language or languages you know do not differ in that distinction. Language gives expressible form to the symbol of the apple, but the meaning of the symbol and the symbol itself are universal.

Collage artist **Silvana Soriano** takes the medium of visual art and transcends language in her representations of idioms, metaphors, sayings and stories by presenting them as literal as can be, playing with the mixtures of cultures and narratives given through words. The exhibition *Ipsis Litteris*, as **Soriano** has given name to the series, translates to "word for word," as a play on the pieces' quite literal portrayal of their meaning. This portrayal carries through in pieces like *Wear Another Shoes*, named for the English phrase "to put yourself in someone else's shoes" displayed in the literal sense via its humorous imagery, until the realization that even the character is pondering how they feel about the shoes in their show of emotion. The thought that even the character themselves debates this gendered contraction between the heels and shoes brings forth even yet another layer to the discussion, from what normally seems as light-hearted a piece as the next.

Simultaneously in pieces like *After Mountains More Mountains*, we have the callback to historical art works that have visual connections in ties with the perception from idioms, like the Creole saying the pieces name hails from, "dèyè mòn, gen mòn," or "behind mountains there are more mountains". Yet the historical reference gives way to the combined aesthetic influences in the representation, in this fusion of heavy texture more akin to a sculpture in contrast to the almost traditional Chinese pastel mountainous background. The otherwise unrelated nature of Caspar David Friedrich's original piece to a Creole saying, and such varied aesthetics brings **Soriano's** original concept of the series to its full fruition, where the bounds of the visual and cultural reference are tied together. Knowing one side of the equation lets conclusions be drawn to the other, giving the viewer insight not only into a new culture they otherwise would not know, but letting them now associate between what they knew before and what they know now.