

The Texas Artists Behind Meow Wolf Houston

The immersive art experience debuts its second Texas location, featuring works by more than 50 local artists

Art lovers and audiophiles prepare for liftoff. Meow Wolf's latest otherworldly art installation, Radio Tave, is open in Houston's Fifth Ward neighborhood. Providing a portal into a psychedelic immersive experience, Meow Wolf Houston marks the Santa Fe based company's fifth permanent exhibition, the second to call Texas home.

Set in ETNL, a fictional radio station transported into another dimension, Radio Tave features a myriad of interactive, mind boggling twists and turns. Through lights, sights and sounds, visitors can explore another universe, all constructed by a diverse task force of over 100 artists—more than 50 from Texas.

Some of these artists include Trenton Doyle Hancock who created CAMH COURT in 2023, the first playable basketball court in an art museum made in honor of Houston hosting the NCAA Men's Final Four; Havel Ruck Projects, a collaboration known for their architecturally altering installations; and Adela Andea who creates dazzling site-specific light works. Meow Wolf's Cowboix Hevvven, a honky tonk themed restaurant and bar, was curated by fifth-generation Texan Cole Bee Wilson. The space includes an interactive jukebox that plays music by Wilson in addition to 35 songs by Texas musicians. Hip hop artist Fat Tony, who grew up in the city's Third Ward, has also composed a series of tracks for the installation's arcade.



ARTURO OLMOS, Cowboix Hevvven is a functional bar and art installation inside Meow Wolf Houston.

Tasked to help curate Radio Tave, Houston's own Mario Enrique Figueroa, Jr., known artistically as GONZO247, was selected to serve as the project's artist liaison. GONZO247 is no stranger to the city's vibrant art scene and arts programming, having worked on projects with many institutions including DiverseWorks, Fresh Arts, Houston Arts Alliance, Project Row Houses, and Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. A pioneer in the Houston graffiti movement, he also founded Aerosol Warfare, an art collective that has evolved into an archive and art collection preserving the city's street art history.

"This is really an all-star lineup of Texas artists who are shaping the culture of our region," said Oloshove. "It has been a real unifying force for the creative community. It gives me great faith and pride for how the arts shape the culture of my city."

Here we spotlight three local artists whose works are on display at Meow Wolf Houston, which opens Oct. 31.

BILL DAVENPORT

Among the many Houston artists included in the project are Davenport, who moved to the city in 1990 to participate in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston's Core Residency Program. From 2008 to 2022, he operated Bill's Junk in the Heights neighborhood. The store sold his art alongside an ever-rotating assortment of secondhand objects.

Davenport's work for Meow Wolf combines that retail experience and one of the Orange Show Center for Visionary Art's iconic attractions: The Beer Can House. The house, surrounded by landscape features created from thousands of embedded marbles and rocks in concrete, is covered by over 50,000 flattened beer cans.

Regarding Davenport's installation The Beer Can Basement, he says, "One of the most popular items in my former junk store was funky fake food cans I made from chunks of wooden lawn edging, and one of the most popular attractions in Houston is the Beer Can House; so when Meow Wolf asked me to design something for them, I mashed them together to make it double-popular: funky fake beer cans!"

JASMINE ZELAYA

Zelaya, a first-generation Honduran American artist, is another Houston artist represented in Radio Tave. Drawing upon personal experience, her work explores themes of assimilation and identity, often through the use of bold floral elements. Over the years, Zelaya has been commissioned to create a number of public murals for spaces including 713 Music Hall at HTX Post, Houston's CityCentre Lobby, and Dallas' NorthPark Center.

Zelaya's immersive space in Meow Wolf Houston, titled Flower Face Room, is a continuation of her ongoing exploration through portraiture. Featuring large-scale portraits of Latina figures covered in the artist's signature floral patterning, the installation draws inspiration from the experience of cruising around with friends, further playing into the space's audible experience.

"Radio Tave gave me the opportunity to translate my work into new ways," Zelaya says. "I

worked with Meow Wolf to create a site-specific audio soundtrack and lighting sequence for my space. I also designed a custom floor for the room as well. This has been one of the most exciting experiences for me, as I feel the viewer will be fully submerged in Flower Face Room.”

ANGEL OLOSHOVE

Radio Tave also includes the work of ceramicist Oloshove, but it might look a little different from what most of her followers are accustomed to. “This is a very public new beginning for my work,” she says, “while still holding onto the hallmarks of my artistic voice: color, soft form, and light.”

Known for ceramics glazed in painterly gradients, Oloshove teaches ceramics courses around Houston, including classes at the Glassell School of Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Incorporating light and sound elements into her installation, she used ceramic to build out her cavernous space The Grotto of the Oracle.

“I wanted to represent Texas clay in this interactive space,” Oloshove claims. “It made them nervous at first, but I pointed out that ceramic is an incredibly strong material. It is used for everything from tile flooring to NASA rockets, which have ceramic coating to withstand the heat of the atmosphere! This stuff is tough.”

—CALEB BELL