

LINDA VALLEJO

Keepin' It Brown

Vallejo's work is in the permanent collections of Vincent Price Museum East Los Angeles College; The National Museum of Mexican Art, Chicago, Illinois; Carnegie Art Museum, Oxnard, California; Los Angeles County Museum of Art Print Department, Los Angeles; UC Santa Barbara CEMA Archives; and UCLA Chicano Study Research Center, Los Angeles, CA .

Solo exhibitions of *Make 'Em All Mexican* and *The Brown Dot Project* have been presented at Texas A&M University Reynolds Gallery (2016); UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, Los Angeles, CA, Lancaster Museum of Art and History, California (2015); Soto Clemente Velez Cultural Center, New York (2014); New Mexico State University Art Gallery (2013); and California State University San Bernardino Fullerton Museum (2012).

Vallejo was included in the International Arts Foundation's catalog "L.A. Rising: SoCal Artists Before 1980" and in the Getty Foundation's 2013 PST: Art in LA 1945-1980 in "Mapping Another LA: The Chicano Art Movement" at the UCLA Fowler Museum, and "Doin' It in Public: Art and Feminism at the Woman's Building" at the Otis College of Art and Design Ben Maltz Gallery. Her work is included in several exhibitions surrounding The Getty Foundation's PST LA/LA in 2017 – 2018 including bG Gallery (Santa Monica), Self Help Graphics (Los Angeles), LACMA Charles White Gallery (Los Angeles), Salt Fine Art (Laguna), El Muzeo (Anaheim), Lancaster Museum of Art and History (Lancaster), and Studio Channel Islands (Ventura).

Vallejo states, "My work consolidates multiple influences gained from a lifetime of study and travel throughout Europe, the US and Mexico to create images that investigate contemporary cultural, social, and political issues. During my artistic grounding, I immersed myself in the Chicano art and indigenous communities—experiences that added to my multifaceted perspective and, by extension, my art practice. It has taken a forty-year artistic career to fuse this diverse arena of influences to create images that discuss and define the Latin American presence and influence in the United States. The intersection of these disparate worlds led me to create my series *Make 'Em All Mexican* and *The Brown Dot Project*."

Make 'Em All Mexican (MEAM) leads you down an ironic path to find yourself confronted by some of the most difficult questions of our time, "Do race, color, and class define our status in the world?" "Is it possible to be a part of and earnestly contribute to multiple cultures simultaneously?" "Does color and class define our understanding and appreciation of culture?"

I have produced over 200 MEAM sculptures, handmade books, and mixed media paintings from re-purposed porcelain and plaster figurines, postcards, and magazine pages found in antique stores and estate sales. I literally take precious images of national and world culture and “make them Mexican” by painting directly on antiques to turn history on its head.

In an effort to create a uniquely personal postmodern cultural image, it occurred to me that I am a model post-modern American—a woman, Mexican, born of poor immigrant grandparents, raising highly educated children, essentially living the American dream. Yet even as a third generation American I remain invisible in the cultural landscape.

One day, as I was sitting in a restaurant with an artist friend, I found myself blurting out, “I just wanna make ‘em all Mexican like me!” Images include a “brown” Elvis Presley, Fred Flintstone and Barney Rubble, Marie Antoinette and Louis Auguste, the Rose Parade Queen and her court, the Queen Mother, and a complete array of the Greek and Roman gods.

“The Make ‘Em All Mexican” series carries a strong electric charge. To some viewers, the images are hyper-political; for others, they are emotional portals to a past remembered and sometimes forgotten; and for another group, they are just down right hilarious.

The Brown Dot Project is an elegant solution to complex questions about Latino data. I began experimenting with formal geometric variations that were based on Latino data combined with my study in Mesoamerican and Native American textiles, architecture, and ceremonial symbology. Subsequent “Brown Dot” abstract geometric forms appeared influenced by Mondrian, Chuck Close, Agnes Martin, Charles Gaines, and other grid-oriented modernists.

The most recent “Brown Dot” images begin with photographs of Latinos taken from the Internet, which are then reversed and printed in a blue hue reminiscent of the Sea of Cortez, and finally superimposed with data in graph formula. I am literally counting one Latino at a time, brown dot by brown dot! I study a variety of data sets such as the number of Latinos in any given city or state and unearthed Latino health and employment statistics. The amount and kinds of data is inexhaustible.

“The Brown Dot Project: Los Angeles 48.3%” is a pictograph of the number of Latinos living in Los Angeles County. This 24 x 24 inch image contains a total of 48,400 squares (100% of the field) with 23,377 brown dots ($48,400 \times 48.3\% = 23,377$).

Counting squares and dots, completing the corresponding mathematics, and “dotting” the page takes Vallejo hours of concentration for both topic and execution. Vallejo counts the squares and multiplies that number by the percentage depicted to decipher the number of brown dots needed for each piece.