

After the Chicano Rights Movement:
Mapping the Art Market for Contemporary Mexican American Artists

by Diana Ledesma

Sandy Lang
Department of Art and Art Professions
Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development
New York University

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Abstract

There is a severe lack of representation of Mexican American artists in important American institutions. This, coupled with the hindrance of identity politics and a resistance to diversity, have made the art market for Mexican Americans practically non-existent. In 1994, the Smithsonian Institution created a Latino Task Force and recognized 148 years of neglect. Raul Yzaguirre, the Chican@¹ activist and chair for the task force explains, “when it came to the presentation of the culture and achievements...we simply do not exist.”² Not only did the exclusion of Latin@ artists and curators alienate audiences of Mexican descent, but also Mexican American artists because they could not “see [themselves] as contributors to this nation.”³

Considering the influence the Mexican muralists had on American modernism in the 1920s-1940s, the omission is surprising. Currently the US population includes close to 55 million people of Latin@ descent — Mexican Americans account for more than half of this number at 64 percent — shifting the majority in areas of the American Southwest.⁴ Although the artists of the Chican@ Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s challenged the status quo and began to forge their way into the mainstream art world, this task is left incomplete, in large part because they are missing a supporting art ecology of dedicated historians, curators, museum directors, gallery owners, and collectors.

This paper is largely informed by the research of art historians George Vargas and Adriana Zavala, who tie the status of the art market of Mexican Americans to a lack of education on the topic. In her comprehensive 2013 study titled “Trajectories in Academic Discourse: Absenting the Latino in the so-called ‘Latin Boom,’” Zavala found that in a ten year period between 2002-2012 there was a 400% growth in the number of doctoral dissertations produced focusing on Latin American topics. However, when focusing on the Latin@ art subgroup, research did not exist, which she attributes to “the difficulty of finding encouragement and mentorship within departments of art history.”⁵ In conclusion, recommendations are made for teachers, museum educators, and galleries to employ research and educational methods that would reposition Mexican American art and help grow its market and collectorship.

¹ I employ the @-ending to promote gender equality. Identity labels for Mexican Americans include: Chicano, Xicano, Latino, Mexicano, and Tejano. Recently, the terms have been reimagined to challenge the Spanish-language convention that assumes that masculine or feminine nouns are gender-inclusive: i.e. Chican@, Latin@, Xican@.

² Jacqueline Trescott, “Smithsonian Faulted for Neglect of Latinos,” *Washington Post*, May 11, 1994, accessed March 2, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/1994/05/11/smithsonian-faulted-for-neglect-of-latinos/34b5076a-0b7c-4d1f-aab8-cab07dd383d9/>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Jens Manuel Krogstad and Mark Hugo Lopez, “Hispanic Population Reaches Record 55 Million, but Growth has Cooled,” Pew Research Center, last modified June 25, 2015, accessed February 13, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/06/25/u-s-hispanic-population-growth-surge-cools/>; Ana Gonzalez-Barrera and Mark Hugo Lopez, “A Demographic Portrait of Mexican-Origin Hispanics in the United States,” Pew Research Center, Last modified May 1, 2013, accessed February 13, 2016, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/05/01/a-demographic-portrait-of-mexican-origin-hispanics-in-the-united-states/>.

⁵ Adriana Zavala, “Latin@ Art at the Intersection,” *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, vol. 40, no. 1 (Spring 2015) 131. Zavala presented the research at the Getty Foundation symposium in conjunction with Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA in 2013.

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I. Introduction

Representation empowers individuals. It allows an opportunity to visualize oneself in different roles and grants a conceptualization of self. Coming of age in the civil rights era, the Chican@ rights movement was a way for Mexican Americans to self-identify after years of enduring being labeled “greasers” and “wetbacks” in segments of American society.⁶ Four years after state-sanctioned segregation ended with the Civil Rights Act in 1964, close to 1,500 Mexican Americans from all over the country gathered in Colorado for what became known as the Denver Youth Council; they reflected on ethnic identity and their position in the United States (US).⁷ The conference produced a manifesto titled, *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*, wherein the education, self-defense, and political liberation of Mexican Americans, among other topics were addressed. The document also called on creative people to produce literature and art “that is appealing to our people, and relates to our revolutionary culture.”⁸ The term *Chicano* was reclaimed as a way to reconnect Mexican Americans to a withheld indigenous past.⁹

M. L. Carlos and A. M. Padilla, at the 15th Interamerican Congress of Psychology in Columbia in 1974, proposed that ethnic identity is composed of six dimensions including language, cultural heritage, interaction with peers, ethnic pride, a distance and perceived discrimination, and generation of proximity to their country of origin.¹⁰ Collectively, Chican@ 1 artists in the 1960s-70s explored these dimensions whether consciously or not [See Exhibit I.1 for examples]. Like archeologists, Chican@s sought to uncover artifacts of their cultural past—relics their ancestors were forced to bury in Mexico and that had no place in the US educational

⁶ I employ the @-ending to promote gender equality. I did not change the word when quoted or alter the names of Institutions. Identity labels for Mexican Americans include: Chicano, Xicano, Latino, Mexicano, and Tejano. Recently, the terms have been reimagined to challenge the Spanish-language convention that assumes that masculine or feminine nouns are gender-inclusive: e.g. Chican@, Latin@, Xican@. For more information see Gene Demby, “‘Latin@’ Offers a Gender-Neutral Choice, But How to Pronounce it,” NPR, January 7, 2013, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2013/01/07/168818064/latin-offers-a-gender-neutral-choice-but-how-to-pronounce-it>.

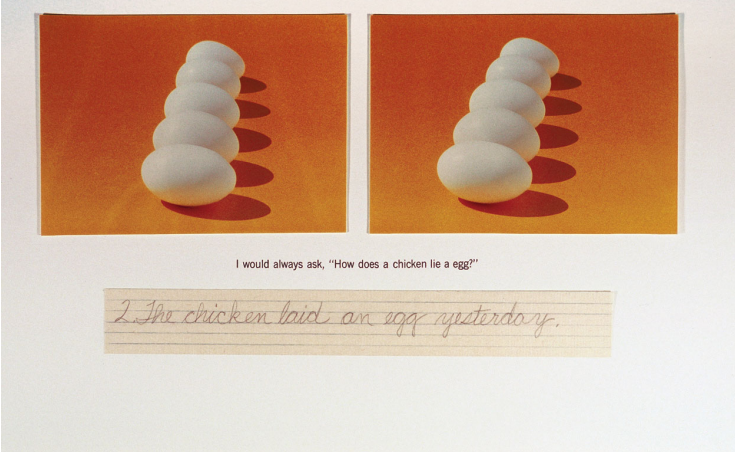


⁷ Francisco Arturo Rosales, “The Fight for Educational Reform,” in *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: University of Houston, 1996), 174-184.


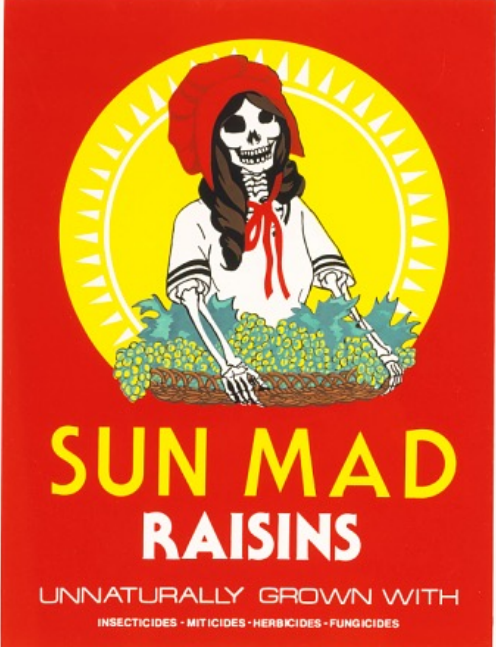
⁸ Shifra Goldman, “The iconography of Chicano Self- Determination: Race, Ethnicity, and Class,” *Art Journal*, vol. 49, no. 2 (summer 1990): 173.

⁹ “Chicano has been used by other Mexican-Americans of a ‘lower’ class who identify more with the Mexican- Indian culture than with the Mexican-Spanish culture.” See: Edward R. Simmen and Richard F. Bauerle, “Chicano: Origin and Meaning,” *American Speech*, vol. 44, no. 3 (Autumn 1969): 226.

¹⁰ Maria P. Echeverriarza, “Ethnic Identity, Conflict, and Adaptations in a Multiethnic Bilingual Classroom,” *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, no. 13, (1990): 232.

Exhibit I.1 (Page 1)

<u>Dimension/</u> Example	Image
<p><u>Language</u></p> <p>Celia Muñoz <i>"Which Came First?"</i> <i>Enlightenment #4, 1982</i></p> <p>Muñoz used this series to explore her difficulties absorbing the English language.</p>	
<p><u>Cultural Heritage</u></p> <p>Carmen Lomas Garza <i>Loteria- Tabla Llena, 1972</i></p> <p>Lomas Garza shows several generations of her family gathering around the patio to play Loteria together.</p>	
<p><u>Interaction with Peers</u></p> <p>Mario Torero, Mano Lima, Tomás "Coyote" Castañeda, and Balazo <i>We are not a Minority, 1978</i> <i>Estrada Courts Housing Project, East Los Angeles</i></p> <p>The artists use Che Guevara as their spokesperson to address their community.</p>	

<u>Dimension/</u> Example	Image
<p><u>Ethnic Pride</u></p> <p>Ester Hernández <i>Libertad</i>, 1976</p> <p>Hernández incorporates well-known Mayan and Aztec figures into the very iconic Statue of Liberty. She also writes Aztlán at the base which is the partly imagined home of the Chicano people.</p>	
<p><u>Perceived Discrimination</u></p> <p>Ester Hernández <i>Sun Mad</i>, 1982</p> <p>In this work Hernández comments on the horrible working conditions for migrant farm workers which includes harsh sun and exposure to pesticides.</p>	

system nor society at large—and reclaim them as a source of ethnic pride.¹¹ Social activist Bell Hooks suggests that “[For] Blacks, Chicanos/as, and Native Americans, memory allows us to

¹¹ For a history of the burial of Coatlicue see Octavio Paz, “The Power of Ancient Mexican Art,” *New York Review of Books*, vol. 37, no. 19 (December 6, 1990): 18-21. For a history of bilingual education in the US see Lilliana P. Saldaña, “Teachers’ Memories of Schooling: The Sociocultural Injuries and the Mis-Education of Mexican Teachers in the Barrio,” *Association of Mexican-American Educators Journal*, vol. 7, issue 1 (2013): 58-72.

resist and to heal: we know ourselves through the act of remembering.”¹² In other words, they had to go back into their past to understand their place in the present and visualize what that means for the future.

Mexican American art is often caught between Latin American and US collections and art historical canons because the imagery is informed by the layers of history, language, religion, and customs encountered from both sides of the US-Mexico border. Even though academics and curators have recently rewritten aspects of the American canon to include the impact that Mexican artists had on American Modernism—as well as highlight the contributions of Mexican American and/or Latin@ artists—many institutions continue to overlook the contributions.¹³ Little institutional acknowledgement coupled with the politics associated with the Chican@ Rights Movement (or the various names for it including la Causa or el Movimiento) and the terms by which they are identified by institutions and/or themselves (e.g. Chicano, Latino, Mexicano), have impacted the commercial success for Mexican American artists, leaving it lacking, if not non-existent.¹⁴ Thanks in part to the 2016 Presidential election and buzz of immigration politics, the Mexican American population has become part of a national conversation, with stereotypes and misinterpretations being challenged in the public arena through increased representation in television and radio programming. This paper aims to analyze the Mexican American art market through a historical lens and to evaluate a strategy of repositioning this important Mexican American art genre in the global art scene.

Spanish-speaking people have lived in North America since the sixteenth century when the Spaniards colonized Mexico; however, it was not until 1973 that the United States began to

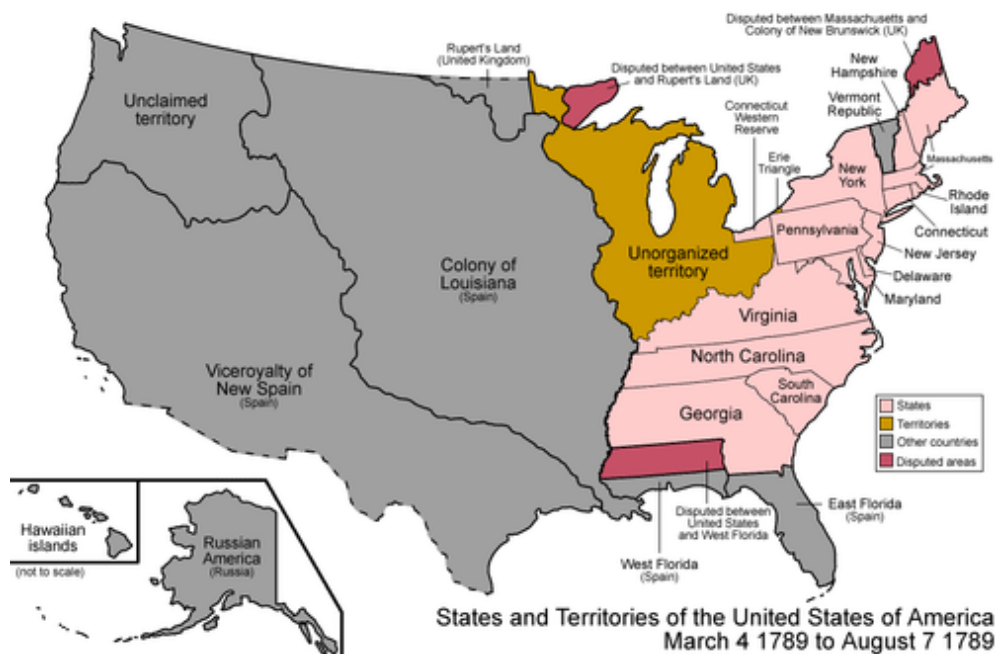
¹² Bell Hooks and Amelia Mesa-Bains, *Homegrown: Engaged Cultural Criticism* (Boston: South End Press, 2006), 107.

¹³ Historians including Jacinto Quirarte, Amalia Mesa-Bains, Holly Sanchez-Barnet, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, Shifra Goldman, and Chon A. Noriega, among others have devoted sustained attention to Latin@ and/or Chican@ artists. For the Mexican influence on Modernism in the US see Ellen G. Landau, *Mexico and American Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013). See Carolina A. Miranda, “Are US Art Museums finally taking Latin American Art Seriously?” *ArtNews*, May 15, 2014, accessed January 11, 2016, <http://www.artnews.com/2014/05/15/latin-american-art-in-u-s-museums/>. The author notes how the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles has only had one solo show for a US Latin@ artist, the graffiti artist RETNA, while hosting many Latin American themed exhibitions.

¹⁴ Unlike other American artists since the 1960s, there are nominal auction records for Mexican American artists, suggesting there is not a secondary market. Likewise, it is difficult to find Mexican American artists listed in the annual *Art in America Guide to Galleries and Museums*, which is often used as a source for appraisals.

distinguish the ‘Hispanic’ population from other ethnicities.¹⁵ Today the identifiers, ‘Hispanic’ and ‘Latino’ are used almost interchangeably. Both are umbrella terms that tend to blend and obscure the intricacies of the cultures of the residents of the United States descended from Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Caribbean, Mexico, and South or Central America. The word Hispanic was translated from the Spanish word *Hispania* which was used by the Romans to refer to the Iberian peninsula and later adopted by the Spanish to identify their descendants, but also anyone from Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America, and even Spanish or Latin Americans living in the US [See Exhibit I.2]. The term Latin American was coined by the French to distinguish non-Anglo America from Anglo-America in the 1830s.¹⁶ Latin refers to Latin roots as opposed to Anglo-Saxon.¹⁷

Exhibit I.2



¹⁵ ‘Mexican’ was previously an option on the Census in 1930, but was removed after protest from fear of racial discrimination. See “1930,” United States Census Bureau, accessed December 18, 2015, https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/index_of_questions/1930_1.html.

¹⁶ Jorge Garcia, “What Should we Call Ourselves,” in *Hispanic/Latino Identity: A Philosophical Perspective*, (Massachusetts, Blackwell, 1999): 1-26.

¹⁷ As a side note, when the term Latin American was coined in the 1830s, the French considered themselves Latin American, which they would not be labeled by any definition today.

The broad interpretations of the terms are confusing for most of the US population, including Latin@s themselves, who have to navigate through the many layers of identity not limited to Afro, Spanish, and/or Indigenous.¹⁸ The results for the 2010 Census were especially representative of this confusion. Although some Latin@s chose “Other” as their race in the absence of “Hispanic” or a more specific choice, the majority selected “White.” This could imply that *whiteness*, as defined by a darker skinned person living in the US means acceptance, language preference, or a level of assimilation.¹⁹ Presently, Hispanics are estimated to make up 17 percent of the overall population in the United States, at close to 55 million people. Mexicans account for more than half of this number at 64 percent, followed by Puerto Ricans, who represent a thinner margin at 9.4 percent [See Exhibit I.3].²⁰ In some areas of the southwest, the Latin@ populations outnumber the Anglo populations, which has caused some historians and sociologists to question whether ‘minority’ is indeed the correct term to describe them.²¹ By 2030, the population of the Hispanic so-called minority group is estimated to double. At what point does the definition of *American* change to reflect this fast growing, yet still underrepresented demographic? And parallel to this, will the art historical canon change to reflect the contributions of contemporary Mexican American artists since the 1960s?

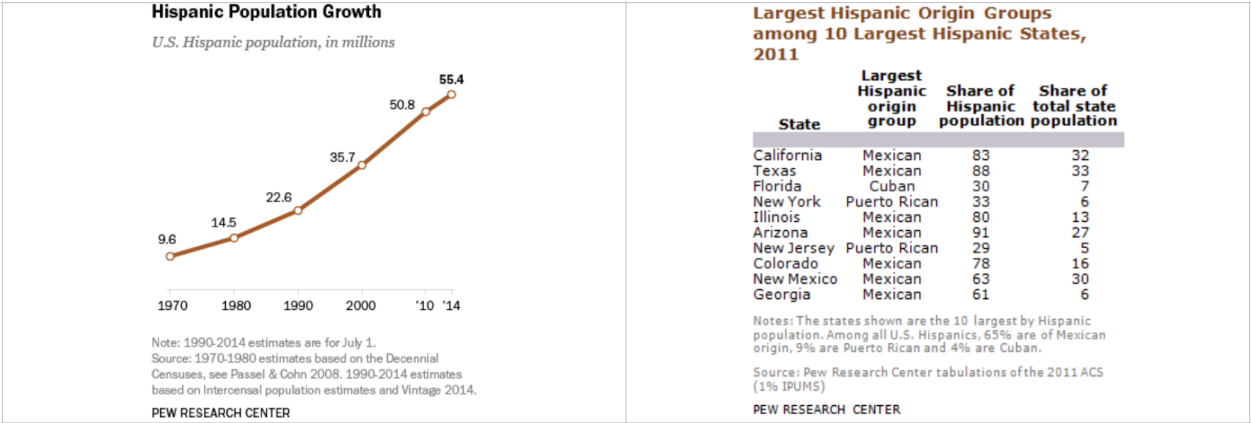
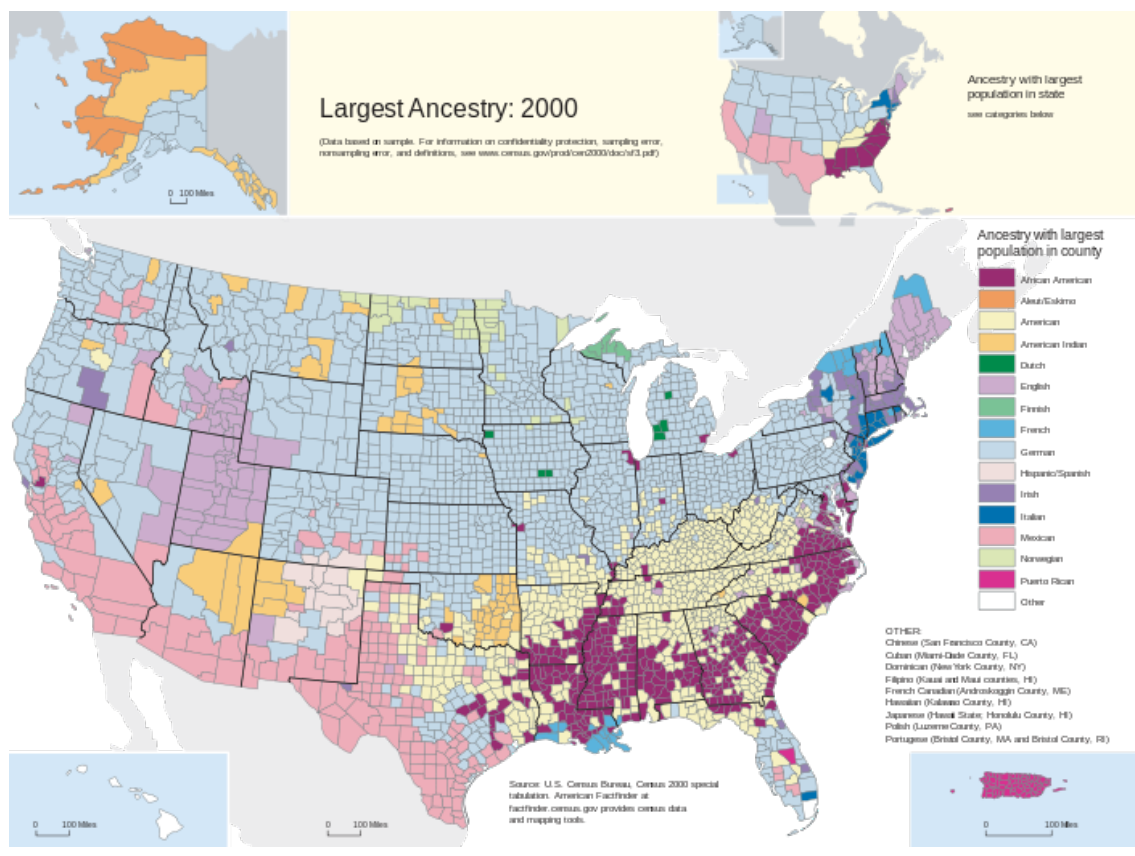
¹⁸ “A Conversation With Latinos on Race” (video) directed by Joe Brewster, Blair Foster, and Michèle Stephenson, *New York Times*, February 29, 2016, accessed March 8, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/video/opinion/100000004237305/a-conversation-with-latinos-on-race.html?smid=fb-share>

¹⁹ Julie A. Dowling, *Mexican Americans and the Question of Race*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014); Francisco Arturo Rosales, “Racial Ambiguities: Claiming Whiteness” in *Chicano! A History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*, (Houston: University of Houston, 1996), 95-96.

²⁰ Jens Manuel Krogstad and Mark Hugo Lopez, “Hispanic Population Reaches Record 55 Million, but Growth has Cooled,” Pew Research Center, last modified June 25, 2015, accessed February 13, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/06/25/u-s-hispanic-population-growth-surge-cools/>; Ana Gonzalez-Barrera and Mark Hugo Lopez, “A Demographic Portrait of Mexican-Origin Hispanics in the United States,” Pew Research Center, Last modified May 1, 2013, accessed February 13, 2016, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/05/01/a-demographic-portrait-of-mexican-origin-hispanics-in-the-united-states/>.

²¹ George Vargas suggests the term “minority” has been misused to imply inferiority of Chican@s and other non-white demographics, see George Vargas, *Contemporary Chican@ Art: Color & Culture for a New America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010): 2. The US Census has recently redefined Latinos as “majority minority” since their population has exceeded the white population in many regions, see Neal Conan, host, “Hispanics Become America’s New Majority Minority,” Talk of the Nation (MP3 podcast), *NPR*, April 18, 2011, accessed March 4, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/2011/04/18/135517137/hispanics-become-americas-new-majority-minority>; Jens Manuel Krogstad and D’Vera Cohn, “U.S. Census Looking at Big Changes in how it Asks About Race and Ethnicity,” Pew Research Center, last modified March 14, 2014, accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/03/14/u-s-census-looking-at-big-changes-in-how-it-asks-about-race-and-ethnicity/>.

Exhibit I.3 (Page 6)



In recent years, the art community in the United States has witnessed another boom of interest in art made outside the US in Latin American countries. In the last few years, several museums have named new endowed Latin American curators, added Latin American departments, and participated in an influx of scholarly exhibitions. Although this is an important advancement, Mexican Americans, and the other US-born Latin@ artists continue to be marginalized within the academic discipline and museum field.²² To this day, American society continues to have an Anglo point of view when it comes to “American” art. E. Carmen Ramos joined the Smithsonian American Art Museum in 2010 as the curator of Latino art to address this issue and explains, “If Latino art has at least two cultural and historical tributaries—coming from the North and South—then the American Art Museum should be able to tell the North American part of the story.”²³ She suggests that the process will take more than adding a few names to the end of the canonical narrative; it requires meaningful integration, and assessing how the fields of Latin@ and American art “overlap, digress, or even disappear.”²⁴

However, representation is complex and leaves us vulnerable to misrepresentation. The mishandling of identity labels by Anglo curators in the past lead to less participation in mainstream exhibitions by any Latin@ artists — including Mexican Americans — who have a resistance to external definitions of self.²⁵ More to the point, presentations not indicative or representational of artists’ intentions may have alienated audiences. Traveling exhibitions such as *The Latin American Spirit: Art and Artists in the United States, 1920-1970* (organized by the Bronx Museum in New York) and *Hispanic Art in the United States: 30 Contemporary Artists* (organized by Museum of Fine Arts, Houston) in the late 1980s presented US Latin@ artists alongside artists only from Latin American countries. While this did make sense for these exhibitions, Latin@s have rarely been exhibited in shows with other US artists, which has perpetuated a separatist view. Of course, there are notable similarities between themes and

²² Seph Rodney, “A Conversation on Latino Representation in US Art History Departments,” Hyperallergic, January 4, 2016, accessed February 1, 2016, <http://hyperallergic.com/265464/a-conversation-on-latino-representation-in-us-art-history-departments/>.

²³ E. Carmen Ramos, “The Latino Presence in American Art,” *American Art*, vol. 26, no. 2 (2012): 8.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ For this discussion, when referencing ‘mainstream’ I am referring to the established art structure composed of galleries, private collections, museums, critics and art periodicals.

techniques of the Latin American artists, but in reality, the art of Chicano@s mirrors their US experiences. Early murals in East LA depicted the frustration of being targeted by police, printmaking reflected the struggle of the migrant workers on strike in Delano, California, and paintings reflected home life in the border towns of Texas; these connections were often neglected.²⁶

The transnational influence of the art and culture of Mexico on Mexican American art and was fostered by an exchange of artists between the two countries, especially during World War II, when much of Europe was inaccessible. There was also the influence of extended families that remained in Mexico after immigration to the States.²⁷ The influence of Mexican artists is immeasurable, considering the exchange, and can be witnessed from the social realist murals painted in the US during and after the Great Depression for the Works Progress Administration (WPA 1934-1943).²⁸ Edward Chávez (1917-1995), one of the few Mexican American artists to participate in the WPA, counted Jose Clemente Orozco (1883-1949) as an influence. He stated, “The Mexicans were far ahead of us, Orozco was and is my god.”²⁹ Chávez described himself as “an American painter with a Mexican heritage and a desire to explore that heritage.”³⁰ However, despite the symbiotic relationship between the US and Mexico and themes of struggle that transcended national borders during the 1930s and 40s, Mexican American themes are today foreign to a general US audience.

In the introduction to the 1996 comprehensive survey, *Latin American Art in the Twentieth Century*, Edward Sullivan, an art historian, suggests that language—or rather, a failure to understand Spanish — has affected the reception of Latin American art in the US. He writes, “the ‘voice’ of Latin America itself was not always heard as strongly as it should be in English

²⁶ For a history of Chicano art see Victor Zamudio-Taylor, “Chicano Art,” In *Latin American Art in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Edward J. Sullivan (London: Phaeton Press Limited, 1996): 316-329

²⁷ Mary Panzer, “The American Love Affair with Mexico: 1920-1970,” *Archives of American Art Journal*, vol. 49, no. 3-4 (2010): 14-25; Also see oral interviews with WPA artists including Marian Goodman, Isamu Noguchi, Ben Shahn and others at aaa.si.edu.

²⁸ Leticia Alvarez, “The Influence of the Mexican Muralists in the United States. From the New Deal to the Abstract Expressionism” (master’s thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2001), accessed February 12, 2016. <https://theses.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-05092001-130514/unrestricted/thesis.pdf>.

²⁹ Stephanie Lewthwaite, *A Contested Art: Modernism and Mestizaje in New Mexico*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015): 162.

³⁰ Ibid.

speaking countries.”³¹ This could also explain the disconnect to themes explored by Mexican American and/or Chican@ artists such as *rasquachismo*, which represents a unique sensibility that values layering, texturing, and excessive materials and *domesticana*, which explores gender roles in conservative Mexican families using the materials of domestic space [See Exhibit I.4].³² These themes are more than concepts, but ways of living, and the nuances require more attention from institutions when trying to relate to contemporary audiences.

Exhibit I.4



Amalia Mesa-Bains

An Ofrenda for Dolores del Rio, 1984

© Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC, 1998, 1998.161

Rasquachismo, which represents a unique sensibility that values layering, texturing, and excessive materials

³¹ Edward Sullivan, “Introduction,” in *Latin American Art in the Twentieth Century* (London: Phaeton Press Limited, 1996): 7.

³² Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, “Rasquachismo: A Chicano Sensibility,” in *CARA: Chicano Art Resistance and Affirmation* (Los Angeles: The Wight Gallery, UCLA, 1991): 155-162; Amalia Mesa-Bains, “‘Domesticana’: The Sensibility of Chicana Rasquache,” *Aztlan: Journal of Chicano Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 157-167.



Carmen Lomas Garza

Curandera (Faith Healer), 1989

© Mexican Museum, San Francisco, CA, 1990, 1990/6.1

Domesticana is a concept for Chicana visual arts that focuses on a sensibility of the domestic. It is ultimately the process of reclaiming women's power in the domestic sphere through the act of consistently negotiating the power relations that marginalize women to the domestic space. The alter—seen here on the dresser—is a reoccurring theme.

During the Chican@ Rights Movement in the 1960s-70s, fueled by the protest to the Vietnam War, politicized Mexican Americans reacted to the status quo and an abuse of power within the US government.³³ Art was used to discuss these topics through a rediscovered Mexican lens in which the same symbols of rebellion and cultural pride used during the Revolution by their Mexican ancestors (1900-1920), were reappropriated to address different struggles in the US.³⁴ They supplemented their experience with a reconnection to indigenous and modern Mexican symbols, for example, their use of artist Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) as a modern day saint to represent suffering.³⁵ Yet, while the markets for Frida Kahlo and most other Mexican modernist painters have exploded in recent years, Chican@ artists have yet to find a proper

³³ Maria Hinojosa, host, "Blood and Betrayal in the Southwest," Latino USA (MP3 Podcast), *NPR*, March 11, 2016, accessed March 12, 2016, <http://latinousa.org/episodes/>. In the "The Darker Side of the Texas Rangers," the group "Refusing to Forget," discusses how their upcoming exhibition at The Bullock Museum in Austin, *Life and Death at the Border: 1910 to 1929*, was designed to promote conversation about the abuse of power exhibited by the Texas Rangers, who targeted Mexican Americans. The multifaceted project was formed by a group of professors in Texas in 2013.

³⁴ See Harry Gamboa's collected writings about his art which deals with segregation, the Vietnam War, and police brutality in *Urban Exile: Collected Writings of Harry Gamboa Jr.*, ed. Chon A Noriega (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

³⁵ George Vargas, "Que Onda? What's Happening? Chicano Art in Twenty-First-Century America," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, vol. 40, no. 1 (Spring 2015):145-148.

channel to sell their art.³⁶ Even as museums and other institutions have been trying to broaden their collections to encompass earlier modern Mexican artists, many late 20th-century and contemporary Mexican American artists are still relatively unknown by the American public.³⁷ By examining the history of Mexican and Mexican American art and identifying its intersections with American history, we can begin to analyze some of the main problems with the marketing and distribution of these artists' work and make recommendations for the future.

II. Histories: Modernity in Mexico and the United States (1900-1950s)

Mexican modernity began in the late 1800s with the experimental art of Julio Ruelas (1870-1907) and Dr. Atl (1875-1864). The more experienced Mexican artists were well traveled and also spent time living in the US. Their presence as well as the fostering of emerging American artists influenced the trajectory of American modernism. In the exhibition *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*, the Detroit Institute of Art sought to “provoke a re-evaluation of his work,” according to a curator, Linda Downs, because a change in politics and esthetic tastes had pushed Rivera out of the US canon and they believed that he merited another look.³⁸ In the catalogue, Francis V. O'Connor tried to analyze the influence of Mexican artists working in the United States. O'Connor, who is an expert on the works of Jackson Pollack, wrote:

One of the phenomena of the twentieth-century art in the Americas is that Mexico produced two such artists [Rivera and Orozco] at a time when the United States, having lost Albert Ryder in 1917, exiled Arthur Dove to his houseboat in 1920, and not yet aware of the strength of Thomas Hart Benton and Stuart Davis, possessed not one artist of comparable stature.³⁹

³⁶ In the US there are a number of galleries and museums dedicated to the art of Mexico, likewise there are specialized sales at Sotheby's and Christie's, but there is nothing comparable for the art of Mexican Americans.

³⁷ The digital collection databases for the Philadelphia Museum of Art in Pennsylvania and the Brooklyn Museum in New York show that Mexican artists are included in their American collections.

³⁸ Leslie Bennetts, “Retrospective of Diego Rivera Work Celebrates the Artist's Centennial,” *The New York Times*, June 1, 1986, accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/06/01/arts/retrospective-of-diego-rivera-work-celebrates-the-artist-s-centennial.html>.

³⁹ Francis V. O'Connor, “The Influence of Diego Rivera on the Art of the United States during the 1930s and After,” In *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986): 159.

He goes on to suggest that the modernists of the 1920s were still trying to figure out how to interpret or mimic the influential *Armory Show* (1913), but by that time, Mexicans had already spent years “misreading the School of Paris, the Italian Renaissance, and their own indigenous culture with the ideological context of Marxism” to create a style unique to Mexico.⁴⁰ O’Conner concludes that it is not surprising that Mexicans had such an impact on American artists at this time, because they were filling a cultural void as the US had yet to define a national aesthetic.

MURALISM

As the first major art academy as well as the first museum in the Americas, including the United States, the Academy of San Carlos in Mexico City, now known as *Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes*, founded in 1781, was an important institution.⁴¹ It was not only instrumental for training artists in Mexico, but also featured collaboration between European and Mexican artists who worked there as instructors. A global perspective was fostered further by the fluid exchange of Mexican artists who studied in both hemispheres: Julio Ruelas (1870-1907) in Germany, Alfredo Ramos Martínez (1871-1946) in France, Dr. Atl (1875-1864) in Italy and France, and Diego Rivera (1886-1957) who traveled all over Europe studying everything from the Renaissance to cubism to socialist propaganda.⁴² All returned to Mexico following their travels to contribute to an evolving national identity and artistic style.

In addition to acquiring European techniques, Mexican artists were influenced by *indigenismo*, or a deep rooted connection to their pre-Columbian ancestry.⁴³ This phenomenon was witnessed in parts of Mexico, Central, and South American countries with strong Indian ancestry. As Edward Lucie-Smith explains in his 1993 book, *Latin American Art in the 20th Century*, *indigenismo* began mostly as a literary movement. He suggests that *Indigenismo* evolved as “a universal need felt in Latin American cultures, whatever their background, for the

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ For a history of the institution and the instructors see Justino Fernández, “Modern Art,” in *A Guide to Mexican Art*, trans. Joshua C. Taylor (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961): 123-150.

⁴² Ibid.,

⁴³ Edward Lucie-Smith, *Latin American Art in the 20th Century*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993): 10-13; Dawn Ades, “Indigenism and Social Realism,” in *Art in Latin America: The Modern Era, 1820-1980*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989): 195-213.

presence of a native enabling myth. The myth itself has varied widely according to context.”⁴⁴ Two examples of *indigenismo* as a phenomenon in Mexico are seen in Rivera’s references to Aztec poetry with his popular depictions of flower carriers and Frida Kahlo’s use of retablos, or the Folk Catholic devotional paintings, throughout her oeuvre [See Exhibit II.1].

Exhibit II.1



Unknown Artist

Retablo of Our Lady of Guadalupe

19th Century

Spanish Colonial

© de Young | Legion of Honor, Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, California, 2000

⁴⁴ Lucie-Smith, *Latin American Art*, 12-13.



Frida Kahlo, 1939
El Suicidio de Dorothy Hale (The Suicide of Dorothy Hale)
 Mexico
 © Phoenix Art Museum, Arizona, 1960



Diego Rivera, 1931
Flower Festival: Feast of Santa Anita
 Mexico
 MoMA, 1936
 © 2016 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

In the twentieth century, questioning ‘national art’ was in vogue. In different countries and under different circumstances, Robert Henri (1865-1929) in the United States and Alfredo Ramos Martínez in Mexico came to the same conclusions that Academies should foster individualism in artists. Uniformity of technique was the antithesis to a national art. As explained by Henri, “a real understanding of the fundamental conditions personal to a country, and then the relation of the individual to these conditions” are all that is necessary.⁴⁵ He goes on to write, the artist must first have an “appreciation of the great ideas native to the country and then the achievement of a masterly freedom in expressing them.”⁴⁶

Martínez had returned to Mexico from Europe in 1910, after a ten year stint to France, and was disappointed to find his country in turmoil. He was reacquainted with the watercolor studies of Mexican life and architecture he had painted in his youth and realized that Europe had submerged his own individualism. It is believed that he exclaimed in this moment, “My sympathy is here, where I belong, among my own people.”⁴⁷ In 1911, the students at the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes, his alma matter, began to protest the institution’s reluctance to allow artistic exploration beyond the European tradition, among other issues. Ramos sympathized with the students seeking change because he also was a restless student—often skipping his courses at the Academy in lieu of “straightforward observation and subsequent representation of daily things,” which he found more beneficial to his studies as an artist.⁴⁸

At the students’ request—and encouraged by Dr. Atl who was teaching at the Academy—Ramos became Assistant Director of the school, and by 1913 assumed the Directorship. In 1914, he founded the first Open Air School project in Mexico and stepped down as Director, but would return to the role in 1920. He wanted to change the curriculum, and in an attempt to open the students up, he moved class outdoors so they could capture their country. The first school opened with only 10 students, but by 1925, thousands of students had studied with him or his volunteer

⁴⁵ Robert Henri, “Progress in our National Art Must Spring From the Development of Individuality of Ideas and Freedom of Expression: a Suggestion for a New Art School” *The Craftsman*, no. 15 (January 1909): 387.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Brooke Waring, “Martínez, and Mexico’s Renaissance,” *The North American Review*, vol. 240, no. 3 (December 1935): 453.

⁴⁸ Margarita Nieto and Louis Stern, *Alfredo Ramos Martínez & Modernismo* (California: The Alfredo Ramos Martínez Research Project, 2009): 17.

teachers who included Rufino Tamayo (1899-1991) and Jean Charlot (1898-1979), a French expatriot.⁴⁹ Ramos' instruction was to approach art emotionally before intellectually and he was committed to molding a school of action that allowed the students to pursue their own interests. The teachers were merely guides to each student finding his or her uniquely Mexican style.

As early as 1914, Saturnino Herrán (1887-1918) explored imagery of his Mexican ancestry in the mural *Our Gods*; he married the Catholic traditions—forced upon the indigenous tribes by the *Conquistadores* beginning in the 1500s—with Indian traditions now forgotten [See Exhibit II.2].⁵⁰ Despite the reality that the Spanish conquest was a brutal overtaking that destroyed important religious sites and artifacts, Herrán depicted the natives and Spanish in the same light, without any negative connotation.⁵¹ In later plans, the artist superimposed a crucified Christ over Coatlicue, the earth-mother goddess for the Aztec Empire. He places the indigenous peoples opposite the Spaniards, all bowed down in prayer. The mural exemplified the acceptance of the blending of cultures and even though the artist died before it could be completed, the blending of culture is something Mexican artists and later Mexican American artists continue to explore [See Exhibit II.3] .

Exhibit II.2



The New Gods: The Spaniards, 1915

⁴⁹ Ibid, 455; Nieto and Stern, *Alfredo Ramos Martinez & Modernismo*, 35.

⁵⁰ Jacinto Quirarte, "Saturnino Herrán 'Our Gods' Mural Project," in *Readings in Latin American Modern Art*, ed. Patrick Frank (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004): 3-4; Dore Ashton, "Mexican Art of the Twentieth Century," in *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries* (Boston: Bullfinch Press Book, 1990): 581-584.

⁵¹ "Spanish Conquest," National Humanities Center, last modified June 2006, accessed March 30, 2016, <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/amerbegin/contact/text7/text7read.htm>.



Saturino Herrán

Clockwise: *The Old Gods: The Indians*, 1914; *The Old Gods: Three Suppliant Indians*, 1917; and *The Old Gods: The Offering*, 1917



Coatlicue Transformed, 1918

Exhibit II.3 (Page 17)



Amado M. Peña, Jr.

Mestizo, 1974

© Smithsonian American Art Museum, 1996, 1996.47.5

Diego Rivera, who was still abroad in Europe, returned home in 1921 to spearhead a national mural project—first introduced by Dr. Atl in 1906—a public initiative aimed to educate and create a national identity utilizing Mexican history and Revolution propaganda. Soon, Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896-1974) joined the endeavor and the three artists were known collectively by the affectionate moniker, *Los Tres Grandes* [the Grand Three]. The story of the Revolution, an uprising of the common man against his oppressive government is retold again and again on the streets of Mexico. The modernist Mexican artists were influenced by a decade of life-and-death situations, Siqueiros even fought with the Mexican Revolution Army. They made the war-heroes, Emiliano Zapata (1879-1919) and Pancho Villa (1878-1923), their symbols of rebellion and strength [See Exhibit II.4]. The World Wars made Mexico a desirable destination for a number of Americans, not only as an escape from racism, but because the community and the government fostered artistic freedom. Bohemian culture also thrived in

Mexico City, where parties facilitated intellectual conversations as everyone contributed to the nationalistic murals spreading across the walls in the schools, markets, and federal buildings.⁵²

Exhibit II.4 (Page 19)

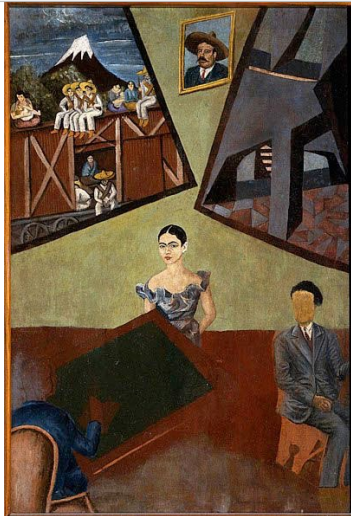


Diego Rivera

Agrarian Leader Zapata, 1931

MoMA, 1940

© 2016 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



Frida Kahlo

La Adelita, Pancho Villa, and Frida, circa 1927

© Gobierno del Estado de Tlaxcala, Instituto Tlaxcalteca de Cultura, Tlaxcala

⁵² Panzer, "The American Love Affair with Mexico," 14-25.



David Alfaro Siqueiros

Emilio Zapata on Horseback, circa 1930

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Jean Charlot, 1931

© 2016 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



José Clemente Orozco

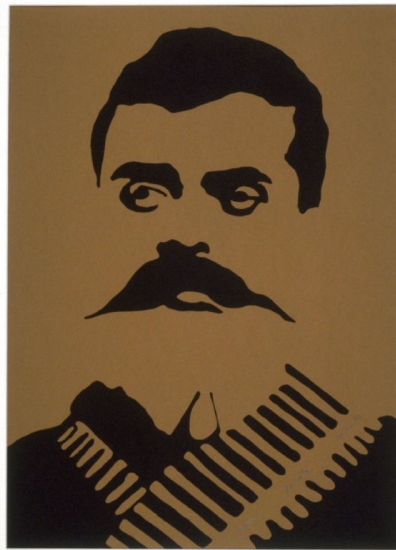
Zapatistas, 1931

MoMA

© 2016 José Clemente Orozco / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SOMAAP, Mexico



Armando Cid (Chicano artist)
Parque Dedicado a Emiliano Zapata, 1975
 © Smithsonian American Art Museum, 1995



Rupert Garcia (Chicano artist)
Zapata, 1969
 © de Young | Legion of Honor, 1990

The Japanese American artist Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988) wrote in his memoir, *Isamu Noguchi: A Sculptor's Life*, about his experiences in Mexico. He noted, “How different is Mexico! Here I suddenly no longer felt estranged as an artist; artists were useful people, a part of

the community.”⁵³ He was invited to Mexico by his ex love interest and fellow artist, Marion Greenwood (1909-1970), who offered him a piece of her wall for a mural at the marketplace in the historical downtown district, *Mercado Abelardo L. Rodríguez* [See Exhibit II.5] .⁵⁴ It was not until later that he was afforded the same opportunity in the US, he reflected that even though he was making nominal wages, his time spent in Mexico was a privilege because he was able to make “a real attempt at a direct communication through sculpture with no ulterior or money making motive.”⁵⁵ Until that point, balancing his artistic vision in commissioned work was a source of bitterness for the artist.

Exhibit II.5



⁵³ Ellen Landau, “Body Si(gh)ting: Noguchi, Mexico, and Martha Graham,” in *Mexico and American Modern Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013): 22.

⁵⁴ Noguchi’s proposal for the WPA was turned down in the summer 1934. “Timeline, 1934” Noguchi Museum, accessed December 20, 2015, <http://www.noguchi.org/noguchi/timeline>.

⁵⁵ Landau, *Mexico and American Modern Art*, 22.



Isamu Noguchi
Historia de México, 1934, various views
 Abelardo L. Rodríguez Market, Mexico City, Mexico



Isamu Noguchi
News, 1940
 Rockefeller Center, New York City, New York

Mexican artists were also traveling more frequently to the US as mural opportunities became available to them. Rivera alone was commissioned for three murals in the late 1920s-early 30s in San Francisco, Detroit, and New York. Between 1923 and 1925, eight articles about the Mexican muralism movement appeared in US publications making *Los Tres Grandes* more widely known and intriguing.⁵⁶ Siqueiros also had some exhibitions in New York and painted murals in Los Angeles. In 1936, he ran the Experimental Workshop in New York where he mentored the young Jackson Pollock.⁵⁷ Orozco lived in the States from the late 1920s through the early 1930s and had a lustrous career. He was commissioned for a number of murals including *The Epic of American Civilization* painted in the Library of Dartmouth College.

Art historian, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. (1902-1981) met Rivera in Russia in 1928 and was immediately enamored with his personality and artistic vision. Barr returned to the States with a big vision for the future of art that included muralism.⁵⁸ As Director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, he gave Rivera a solo exhibition from December 1931-January 1932, preceded only by Henri Matisse. Barr commissioned five “portable” murals made of large blocks of frescoed plaster, slaked lime, and wood, that Rivera painted onsite with an assistant. Later, Barr acknowledged the Eurocentric tendencies of the United States in the first sentence for the introduction to the exhibition, *The Latin-American Collection of the Museum of Modern Art* from 1943 when he states, “Thanks to the second World War and to certain men of good will throughout our Western Hemisphere, we are dropping those blinders in cultural understanding which have kept the eyes of all the American republics fixed on Europe with scarcely a side glance at each other during the past century and a half.”⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Eva Sperling Cockcroft, “The United States and Socially Concerned Latin American Art: 1920-1970,” in *The Latin American Spirit: Art and Artists in the United States, 1920-1970*, edited by Luis R. Cancel (New York: Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1988): 185; Anna Indych-López, “Mural Gambits: Mexican Muralism in the United States,” *Art Bulletin*, vol. LXXXIX, no. 2 (June 2007): 287-305.

⁵⁷ Ellen G. Landau, “The 1940s, Mexico, and Abstract Expressionism. Reinventing Muralism: Pollock, Mexican Art, and the Origins of Action Painting,” in *Mexico and American Modern Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013): 62-87.

⁵⁸ Miriam Basilio, “The Evolving Latin American Canon” (video of lecture, New perspectives on Spanish and Latin-American Art in Scholarship, Museum, and Exhibition Practices, Meadows Museum, May 2, 2013) accessed January 14, 2016, <http://www.meadowsmuseumdallas.org/symposium2013.htm>.

⁵⁹ Alfred H. Barr, “Forward” in *The Latin- American Collection of the Museum of Modern Art*, ed. Lincoln Kirstein (New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1943): 3.

MoMA's initial Mexican Art collection was donated by the cofounder, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller or cultivated by Barr directly due to his admiration for *los Tres Grandes* and understanding of Mexican history.⁶⁰ Rivera's 1931-1932 exhibition at MoMA was followed by three exhibitions from the Latin American collection that, although usually aligned with an anniversary or expansion project, gave recognition to these artists that were not receiving much attention in the US elsewhere.⁶¹ Unfortunately, when Barr retired in 1943, the Mexican and Latin American art collections remained stagnant for decades.

Under the New Deal, the WPA employed artists including Ben Shahn, Isamu Noguchi, Marion Greenwood, and Lucienne Bloch to paint public murals for minimum wage. The initiative put artists to work and was successful. The former classmate of the President, George Biddle wrote Franklin D. Roosevelt in May 1933 about his experience in Mexico. Biddle wrote:

The Mexican artists have produced the greatest national school of mural painting since the Italian Renaissance. Diego Rivera tells me that it was only possible because Obregón allowed Mexican artists to work at plumber's wages in order to express on the walls of the government buildings the social ideals of the Mexican revolution. The younger artists of America are conscious as they have never been of the social revolution that our country and civilization are going through; and they would be eager to express these ideals in a permanent art form if they were given the government's cooperation.⁶²

Thomas Hart Benton (1889-1975), also an artist in the WPA, abandoned his synchronistic tendencies in favor of the social commentary he observed in the Mexican murals. This became evident after he founded the Regionalist movement with Grant Wood and John Stuart Curry in the 1930s. In murals like *America Today*, commissioned by the New School in New York in 1930, he was clearly inspired by modern industrialization and captured an important moment of transition where architecture and fashion were evolving in society. However, Rivera's impact on

⁶⁰ Mari Carmen Ramirez and Miriam Basilio, "Q&A With Mari Carmen Ramirez and Miriam Basilio," (video of lecture, New perspectives on Spanish and Latin-American Art in Scholarship, Museum, and Exhibition Practices, Meadows Museum, May 2, 2013), accessed January 14, 2016, <http://www.meadowsmuseumdallas.org/symposium2013.htm>.

⁶¹ René d'Harnoncourt organized an exhibition of Mexican Folk Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1930. See "The Nelson A. Rockefeller Vision: In Pursuit of the Best in the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas," *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, accessed March 4, 2016, <http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2013/nelson-rockefeller>.

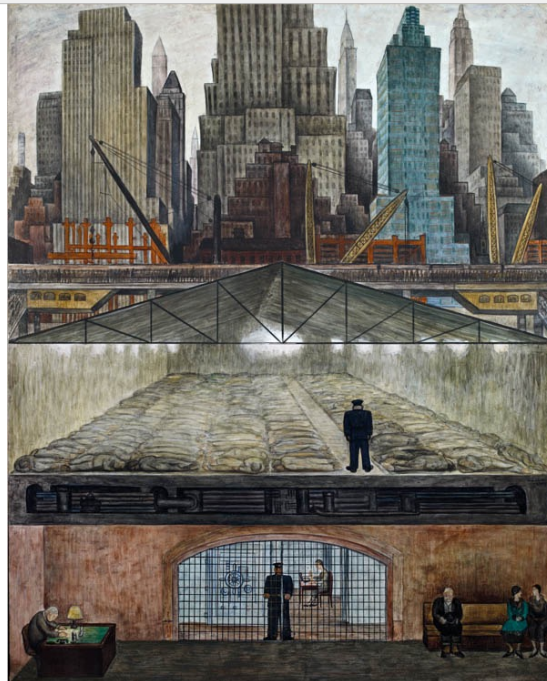
⁶² Francis V. O'Connor, *Federal Support for the Visual Arts: The New Deal and Now* (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society, 1969): 17-18.

Benton is witnessed through the hints of social commentary he laces throughout the work. Examples are the thick smog that is a byproduct of the industrial revolution or the hands reaching for coffee and bread that signify the suffering caused by the Great Depression [See Exhibit II.6].

Exhibit II.6



Thomas Hart Benton
Outreaching Hands (from 'America Today' 1930-31)
© 2012 The Metropolitan Museum of Art



Diego Rivera
Frozen Assets, 1931-1932
Museo Dolores Olmedo, Xochimilco, Mexico
© 2011 Banco de México Diego Rivera & Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
Diego critiques the city's economic inequalities by showing the homeless community that sleeps below the wealth of skyscrapers, and further down are the protected vaults of a bank.

PRINTMAKING

Printmaking has a long history in Mexican art. The printing process was introduced to the New World in 1539 by the Bishop of Mexico, Fray Juan de Zumárraga, to produce playing cards for gambling and Catholic devotional prints for worship.⁶³ It was not until the 1820s that printmaking became secularized in Mexico. José Guadalupe Posada (1852-1913) began to produce social and political caricatures of the President and his bourgeois lifestyle. At the time, his work, filled with calaveras, or human skeletons, was not well-known by the critics of the time and the artist died penniless. It was not until later when the Revolution was won that the artist was championed by the likes of Jean Charlot (1898-1979) and Leopoldo Méndez (1902-1969) and he became known as the “printmaker to the Mexican people.”⁶⁴

Despite its influence, not all Mexican artists fit into the national Mexican style as it was developing. In fact, some artists found it to be elite or overtly political. The artists who sympathized with the political efforts formed two alternative groups: Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios or the Revolutionary League of Writers and Artists, known as LEAR and the Taller de la Gráfica Popular or Popular Graphics Workshop, known as TGP.⁶⁵ The founding artists for both groups, Leopoldo Méndez (1902-1969) and Pablo O’Higgins (1904-1983), an American ex-patriot, utilized printmaking, a medium largely neglected by artists since the turn of the century, to easily distribute information for their political goals to the community.

III. Histories Part II: Chican@ Art (1960s to Present)

The Mexican American journalist, Rubén Salazar, was not the first to define *Chicano*, but he used his platform as a journalist to focus national attention to the questions in his 1970 article, “Who Is a Chicano? And What Is It the Chicanos Want?” in the Los Angeles Times. In short, “a Chicano is a Mexican-American with a non-Anglo image of himself,” meaning a person who

⁶³ Jules Heller, “Printing and Printmaking in Mexico: An Overview,” in *Codex Méndez: Prints by Leopoldo Méndez (1902-1969)* (Tempe: Arizona State University Art Museum, 1999): 15-17.

⁶⁴ Lyle W. Williams, “Evolution of a Revolution: A Brief History of Printmaking in Mexico,” in *Mexico and Modern Printmaking* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2006): 4-8; David W. Kiehl, “Printmaking: Posada and His Contemporaries,” in *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1990): 538-552.

⁶⁵ Heller, *Codex Méndez*, 28, 41-42.

recognizes that his or her ancestors did not arrive to this continent via the Niña, the Pinta, or the Santa Maria.⁶⁶ In fact, they can trace their family origins to before Columbus accidentally discovered America.⁶⁷ Salazar, who was reckoning the definition and purpose of the self-defining label himself, expressed his dissatisfaction with the nuances of the term. He writes, “when you think you know what Chicanos are getting at, a Mexican-American will tell you that Chicano is an insulting term.”⁶⁸ It is true that not every Mexican American adopted the label. In fact, the word itself is not a literal translation from any Spanish or English word and has a way of alienating those outside *la Causa*. At best, the word translates to “soul,” but more than anything, it is a way of life. He continues, “Chicanos say that if you have to ask, you’ll never understand, much less become a Chicano.”⁶⁹

Perhaps the best way to understand Chican@, the label/the art/the movement, is to place it in its context. The word was reclaimed during the Chicano Rights Movement, which was born in the Civil Rights era, where most non-Anglo minorities, women, and homosexuals were waging a metaphorical war for equal rights against the American government. In solidarity, Chican@s joined the protests to the Vietnam War which became a national spectacle. Racial tensions in the US intensified as the draft brought into question the concerns already in conversation domestically.⁷⁰ Chican@ groups protested the over-representation of Mexican Americans in the death toll from the war. It is theorized that *machismo*—the tendency to promote a hyper-masculinity within the male population—and the institutionalized racial bias towards Mexican Americans in the US could have influenced the large number of Latin@s to enlist as a way to validate their citizenship and prove their patriotism [See Exhibit III.1] .⁷¹ Regardless of

⁶⁶ Rubén Salazar, “Who Is a Chicano? And What Is It the Chicanos Want?” *The Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 1970.

⁶⁷ In an emotional retelling, Native Americans explain the emotions the word “Columbus” conjures for them. WatchCut Video, “One Word : Christopher Columbus (Native Americans)” (video), November 24, 2015, accessed December 20, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fYTXRDtYzYc>.

⁶⁸ Salazar, “Who is a Chicano?”

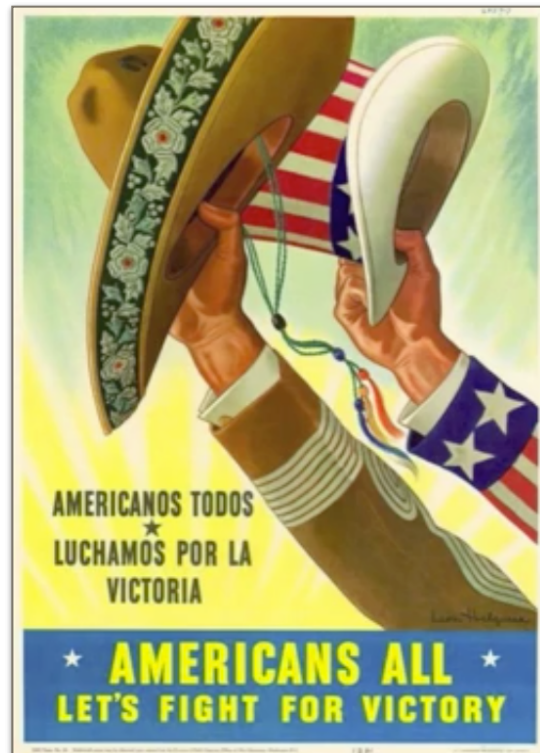
⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ James Maycock, “War Within War,” *The Guardian*, September 14, 2001, accessed January 28, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2001/sep/15/weekend7.weekend3>.

⁷¹ Claudia Roesch, “Machismo: Representation of Mexican American Masculinity between Social Experts and the Chicano Movement,” in *Macho Men and Modern Women* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015) :409. The author quotes writer John Kuenster from his book, *Mexicans in America* (Chicago: Claretian Publications, 1972).

the reason, of the nearly 58,000 American casualties, it is estimated that about 19% of them had Spanish surnames, more than any other ethnic group.⁷²

Exhibit III.1 (Page 29)



State-sanctioned racial segregation plagued the US for a century before it was overturned in the 60s, but even then, the battle for equality had not been won. African Americans were not the only race targeted, and furthermore discrimination was not limited to schools, but affected housing, restaurants, movie theaters, and public pools.⁷³ In the case of Mexican Americans, land had been a source of contention since 1848, when Mexico lost about one-third of its territory to the United States during the two-year Mexican-American War. Present-day southern California, Texas, Utah, Nevada, Arizona and New Mexico, along with the tens of thousands of Mexicans

⁷² IDCLS Claremont, "Mexican American Machismo in Vietnam" (video), December 9, 2013, accessed March 5, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tApsudZ3dhQ>.

⁷³ Hinojosa, host, "Blood and Betrayal in the Southwest." In "No Mexicans Allowed: School Segregation in the Southwest," Sylvia Mendez is interviewed about the seminal 1947 case of *Mendez v. Westminster*, the first case in U.S. history to rule on desegregation. Mendez recalls how her children could not attend school with their cousins because of their darker skin tone and how her father took the issue to court and won.

that inhabited the land, became part of the States with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 overnight [See Exhibit III.2] The landowners were able to keep their ancestral land with a promise to assimilate to a US way of life. However, almost immediately, language and indigenous customs became a direct violation of that promise. Soon unjust and prejudicial legislation amended the treaty and made it difficult for families to keep their land and homes. Many were displaced and disheartened.

Exhibit III.2



By the 1930s, the Great Depression intensified racial tensions as jobs became scarce [See Exhibit III.3]. Los Angeles, Detroit, and other major cities executed mass deportations, or as they officially referred to them, repatriation of anywhere between 350,000 to 2 million Mexican immigrants and their American born children.⁷⁴ Mae Ngai, expert of immigration history, explained “it wasn’t even a matter of determining if they were legal or illegal immigrants, because most of them were legal immigrants. So there really wasn’t grounds to deport any of

⁷⁴ Mae Ngai explains that because this was not a coordinated federal program there are insufficient statistics, so numbers range from 350,000- 2 million repatriated in Neal Conan, host, “A Tale of Deportation in the 1930s,” Talk of the Nation (MP3 Podcast), *NPR*, April 18, 2013, accessed February 13, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5325400>. Francisco Balderrama, author of “Decade Of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation In The 1930s,” estimates that 60 percent were American citizens in Terry Gross, host, “America’s Forgotten History of Mexican-American ‘Repatriation,’” Fresh Air (MP3 Podcast), *NPR*, September 10, 2015, accessed February 13, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/2015/09/10/439114563/americas-forgotten-history-of-mexican-american-repatriation>.

them, let alone the citizens.”⁷⁵ Children used to urban areas and partial to speaking English had to ‘return’ to Mexico, which was also facing an economic depression. The emotional stress this caused was significant, because even though they were technically American citizens and could return, they would be forced to leave their families who were no longer welcomed.⁷⁶ However, or rather ironically, in 1942, the US Bracero program reintroduced Mexican migrants to create a steady labor force needed during WWII.⁷⁷ As such, the nearly 2,000 mile border is often the subject of contention that Mexican and Mexican American artists explored in their work.⁷⁸ The reality is a trans-border culture; family and memories exist on both sides of the Rio Grande and neither country exclusively defines the identities of Mexicans and/or Mexican Americans.

Exhibit III.3 (Page 31)



⁷⁵ Conan, host, “A Tale of Deportation.”

⁷⁶ IDCLS at Claremont, “Perceptions Of Mexican Americans and the Mass Deportations of the 1930s” (Video), December 8, 2013, accessed February 16, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXVVMc-KBRc>.

⁷⁷ Carla Pineda and Daniel Medina, “Timeline: The Unintended Harvest of US Intervention in Latin America,” KCET Link, last modified April 4, 2016, accessed February 16, 2016, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/link-voices/timeline-the-unintended-harvest-of-us-intervention-in-latin-america>.

⁷⁸ Guillermo Gómez Peña was the first Chicano/Mexicano to receive a MacArthur genius award. His unique performance pieces ask the audience to question colonialism and consider the imaginary border. For an interview with the artist see Maria Hinojosa, host, “Mightier Than the Sword,” Latino USA (MP3 Podcast), *NPR*, April 22, 2016, accessed April 22, 2016, <http://latinousa.org/episode/mightier-than-the-sword/>.

PERFORMANCE ART

Luis Valdez (b. 1940), the son of migrant workers, returned to his hometown of Delano, California in solidarity with the National Farm Workers Association strike, later known as the United Farm Workers movement, lead by César Chávez (1927-1993) and Dolores Huerta (b. 1930).⁷⁹ The artist, who produced his first play in grade school, utilized his craft to disseminate information to the workers and the public. El Teatro Campesino, or the Farmworker's Theater, was formed in 1965; the group of volunteer farm workers and students wrote and performed 15 minute, one act plays to teach a neglected history.⁸⁰

Valdez passionately and consistently challenged Mexican American stereotypes on stage throughout his career. He has become best known for his Broadway play *Zoot Suit* (1978) which was later adapted into a Hollywood movie with the same title (1981), about the trial and riots proceeding the wrongful arrest of Hank Leyvas and his friends in the early 1940s. Leyvas and his crew were often targeted by police because of their hair style and extravagant clothing preferences [See Exhibit III.4].⁸¹ Despite the fact that Valdez was able to infiltrate the mainstream, a visit to most local museums or a peruse of current movie titles will show that it continues to be extremely difficult for most Latin@s to find roles in movies that did not perpetuate negative stereotypes, or to find authentic representations of themselves in museums. In many ways it is still a challenge.⁸² Performance became a way to mock the regimes of representation for many Chicana@ artists, but also to forge a way in, on their own terms.

⁷⁹ "Board Members: Meet the people behind the scenes of El Teatro Campesino," *El Teatro Campesino*, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://elteatrocampesino.com/about-us/>.

⁸⁰ Beth Bagby and Luis Valdez, "El Teatro Campesino Interviews with Luis Valdez," *The Tulane Drama Review*, vol. 11, no. 4 (Summer 1967): 70-80.

⁸¹ The screen print made for the play by Ignacio Gomez in 1978 was acquired by the Smithsonian American Art Museum in 2011, see "Zoot Suit," *Smithsonian American Art Museum*, accessed March 20, 2016, <http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=82158>; Ed Fuentes, "El Pachuco and the Art of 'Zoot Suit,'" KCET Link, June 6, 2013, accessed March 20, 2016, <https://www.kcet.org/departures-columns/el-pachuco-and-the-art-of-zoot-suit>.

⁸² The Artnews interview Los Angeles based artist, Linda Vallejo and Chon Noriega, the director of the Chicano Studies Research Center at UCLA explain how Vallejo's project "Make em all Mexican" challenges the Academy and film industry's lack of opportunity for Latinos see Maximiliano Durón, "'You Want to be a Mexican, Here You Go' Linda Vallejo on Her 'Brown Oscars,'" *Artnews*, February 27, 2016, accessed March 5, 2016, <http://www.artnews.com/2016/02/27/you-want-to-be-a-mexican-here-you-go-linda-vallejos-brown-oscars/>.

Exhibit III.4 (Page 33)



Ignacio Gomez
Zoot Suit, 2002
Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2011 2011.51.1
© 1978, Ignacio Gomez

The 2008 traveling Chican@ exhibition, *Phantom Sightings: Art After the Chicano Movement*, places much emphasis on the group, Asco (1972-1987).⁸³ The title of the exhibition itself was inspired by founding member Harry Gamboa Jr.'s (b.1951) language regarding himself and other Chican@ artists which includes, "phantom culture," "urban exile," and "orphans of modernism."⁸⁴ The conceptual group's name, Asco, can be roughly translated from Spanish to mean nausea or disgust. The members were in fact disgusted with perceived injustices in their community and by extension, the US. Their art, a mixture of performance, video, and muralism, aimed to stage interventions with the status quo.

Highways separated the Mexican American neighborhoods of East LA from the greater city; as a result, Mexican Americans were literally segregated from the rest of the community, but the highway metaphorically represented an exclusion from society at large. In a 2010 article Gamboa explained how excessive policing, or what he describes as the "military occupation" in his neighborhood, fueled his activism. He stated, "Chicano youths were routinely rounded up, harassed, beaten and arrested, without regard to their constitutional rights. I had firm beliefs regarding my activist role as an American citizen who sought change from my cultural perspective. Being shot at by numerous riot police strengthened my sense of purpose."⁸⁵

Although meant to be non-violent, the protests could become dangerous quickly. In one such raid of a bar after a march against the Vietnam war, the Chican@ ally, Rubén Salazar, was struck by a way-ward bullet as it pierced through a red curtain and the smoke from the tear-gas missile tossed in moments before. Salazar, the victim of the wrong side of rash decisions, became a martyr for the movement [See Exhibit III.5].⁸⁶

⁸³ Jessica L. Horton and Cherise Smith, "The Particulars of Postidentity," *American Art*, vol. 28, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 6.

⁸⁴ See Gamboa's collected writings in *Urban Exile: Collected Writings of Harry Gamboa Jr.*, ed. Chon A Noriega (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

⁸⁵ Harry Gamboa Jr., "Against the Wall: Remembering the Chicano Moratorium," *East go Borneo*, November 16, 2010, accessed March 4, 2016, <http://www.eastofborneo.org/articles/against-the-wall-remembering-the-chicano-moratorium>.

⁸⁶ For information regarding the records related to Salazar's death were released after years of protests from the Associated Press see Hector Tobar, "Finally, Transparency in the Rubén Salazar Case," *Los Angeles Times*, August 05, 2011, accessed March 15, 2016, <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/aug/05/local/la-me-0805-tobar-20110805>.

Exhibit III.5 (Page 35)



Frank Romero

Death of Rubén Salazar, 1986

© Smithsonian American Art Museum, 1993, 1993.19

Unfortunately, for Gamboa, Gronk (Glugio Nicandro, b. 1957), Willie Herrón (b.1951), and Patssi Valdez (b.1951), violence was a way of life. When not face to face with death overseas in an unpopular war, gang violence and drugs were becoming more rampant at home. Asco's art continuously exemplified the Chican@s' distaste regarding their situation. In *Decoy Gang War Victim*, 1974, the group staged a homicide on a barren street [See Exhibit III.6]. Gronk's lifeless body rests peacefully on the asphalt, bathed in blue light; they used ketchup in lieu of blood. Surrounding the body, red flares pierce the blue and dot the horizon.

The performance was not shown to an audience of spectators, but rather was captured with a camera. The photo was then sent to various news organizations in an attempt to humiliate them for their tendency to portray these everyday tragedies with a tabloid-style approach. Gamboa explains how two major newspapers in LA would "often [list] the names, addresses, workplaces, and gang affiliations of victims or their family members," which he believed was a way to sell more newspapers by "maintain[ing] high levels of reciprocal gang violence."⁸⁷ They called this event and others like it, *No Movies*. It was part performance and part social

⁸⁷ Michelle Kuo, "L.A. Stories: A Roundtable," *Artforum* (October 2011): 46.

commentary. Like Cindy Sherman's film still series, they placed themselves in Hollywood-esque settings to star in movies that never were. They took it a step further when they staged their own award ceremony to question the Academy which notoriously failed to recognize Latin@s. They were creating imagery as an aid to imagine Chican@s in alternative systems of representation, complete with mock promotional materials.

Exhibit III.6 (Page 36)



Asco
Decoy Gang War Victim, 1974

In 1971, Asco performed *Stations of the Cross*, in which they staged a traditional Mexican procession on the streets of LA to protest the war. With their faces painted white, the men, dressed as biblical figures, marched down Whittier Boulevard bearing a 15-foot cross made of cardboard and pasted paper. The procession ended at an Army recruiting office where they awkwardly barricaded the doors with the oversized cross before running off. Their performances were unique, humorous, but also blunt. Some may say ahead of their time.⁸⁸ Asco witnessed increased popularity recently with a retrospective at Los Angeles County Museum of Art

⁸⁸ Emily Colucci, "Before Occupy Wall Street, Artforum Remembers There was Asco," Hyperallergic, October 6, 2011, accessed February 21, 2016, <http://hyperallergic.com/37283/occupy-wall-street-artforum-asco>; "Whitney Museum in New Home to Feature Work by CSUN's Harry Gamboa Jr.," CSUN University Advancement, April 21, 2015, accessed February 21, 2016, <http://www.csun.edu/advancement/news/whitney-museum-new-home-feature-work-csun's-harry-gamboa-jr>.

(LACMA) in 2011—39 years after they protested the Museum’s non-existent representation of Mexican Americans—and the lack of acquisitions of their work at major American institutions such as the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Whitney Museum of American Art [See Exhibit III.7]. Even so, the group’s do-it-yourself approach, overt political commentary, and performative nature, make this art difficult to collect and moreover, problematic when interpreted out of context.

Exhibit III.7



MURALISM

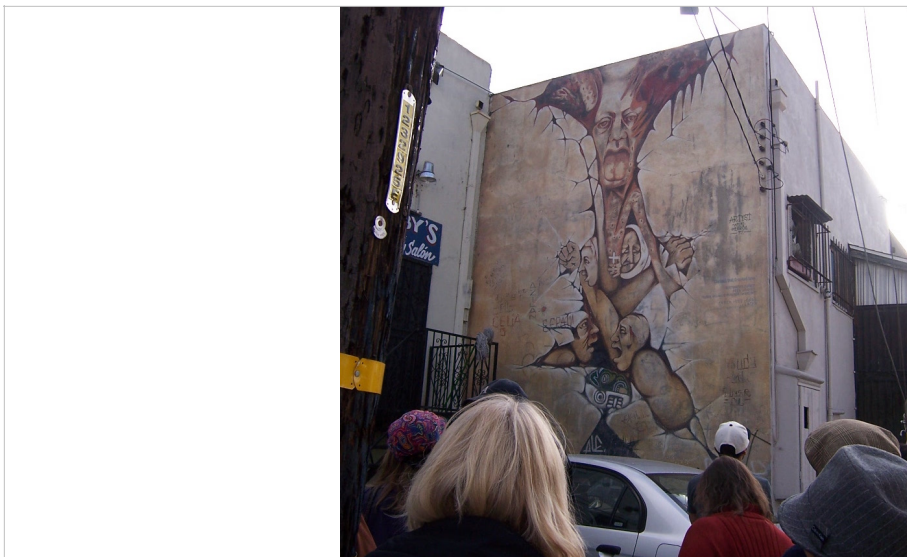
Like the Mexican muralists, Chican@s used muralism to strengthen their cultural identity.⁸⁹ However, unlike the Mexican artists, Chican@s were usually not given authorization or support from state or local governments. Known as graffiti, the murals were often painted in the dark of night on appropriated public spaces. The walls of the barrios became public platforms

⁸⁹ Victor A. Sorrell, “Chicano Murals: Walls with Tongues,” in *CARA: Chicano Art Resistance and Affirmation* (Los Angeles: The Wight Gallery, UCLA, 1991): 148-150; Harry Gamboa Jr., “In the City of Angels, Chameleons, and Phantoms: Asco, a Case Study of Chicano Art in Urban Tones (or Asco was a Four-Member Word),” in *CARA: Chicano Art Resistance and Affirmation* (Los Angeles: The Wight Gallery, UCLA, 1991): 121-130.

to address the socio-economic and political inequalities within the United States.

Both Gronk and Herrón were established muralists when they formed Asco. Gronk recalls, “I didn’t go to galleries or museums. They weren’t part of my childhood,” but that is not to say art was not a major part of his life.⁹⁰ He explains, “all I had to do was walk outside my front door to see visual images all around me. Graffiti was everywhere and it helped develop a sense for what I wanted to do.”⁹¹ Herrón’s early style was also heavily influenced by a violent barrio life. One of his first murals, *The Wall Cracked Open*, circa 1972, overlooked the alley where he found his brother’s lifeless body after a gang fight [See Exhibit III.8]. For an early work by the untrained artist, Herrón’s stylized imagery of two strong arms crashing through the facade of the brick to expose underneath a demon, casualties of violence, and a crying grandmother, captured the anger he must have felt in that moment. The artist incorporated the graffiti already on the wall into his mural, questioning the notion that graffiti is solely vandalism. Ironically, that graffiti was the same reason the mural was later whitewashed by the city.⁹²

Exhibit III.8



Willie Herón III
The Wall that Cracked Open, circa 1972

⁹⁰ Max Benvidéz, “Chicano Art: Culture, Myth, and Sensibility,” in *Chicano Visions: American Painters on the Verge* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2002):15.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Marcos Sanchez-Tranquilino, “Willie Herron’s ‘The Wall that Cracked Open,’” SPARC Murals, accessed April 7, 2016, <http://www.sparcmurals.org/preserv/Herron1.html>.

In Asco, the artists continued to work on murals, but often pushed the natural boundaries that walls create including their fixed position and the natural limitations of two dimensionality. In Asco's hybrid performance-murals such as *Walking Mural*, 1972 and *Instant Mural*, 1974 they made their bodies the medium [See Exhibit III.9]. Chican@ Historian, Chon Noriega proposes that the group's conceptual approach and the "guerilla-style street performances" challenged the Chican@ movement's Mexican-inspired nationalist political rhetoric. He writes:

[Asco was] arguing that it promoted an orthodoxy and corresponding identity that failed to take into account the profound contradictions that actually shaped the lived experience of Chicanos — a group marked by cultural but not structural assimilation and, as a consequence, a group that was quite 'American' and yet excluded from or discriminated against by social institutions.⁹³

Exhibit III.9



Asco
Walking Mural, 1972

⁹³ Chon Noriega, "Your Art Disgusts Me: Early Asco 1971-75," East of Borneo, last modified November 18, 2010, accessed February 16, 2016, <http://www.eastofborneo.org/articles/your-art-disgusts-me-early-asco-1971-75>.



Asco
Instant Mural, 1974

With other artists, the direct influence of *Los Tres Grandes* and the WPA muralists can be interpreted more clearly. Judy Baca (b.1946) uses her talent to transform communities, not only because the aesthetic landscape changes once adorned by her masterful social realist work, but because communities come together in solidarity to plan, fund and execute the projects. In a way, she has transcended the roll of artist to become a community organizer. Critic and artist, Suzanne Lacy, spoke of Baca's "socio-aesthetic intention" when she wrote, "the process of coming into, understanding, and successfully mobilizing an entire community are intrinsic aspects of a complex artwork."⁹⁴

Every project is a passion-project for the Baca. She usually spends months getting to know the areas she depicts; eating at local restaurants and talking in length with local residents before drafting plans. She has come to see herself as a "political landscape painter" because she

⁹⁴ Erika Doss, "Raising Community Consciousness with Pubic Art" in *Spirit Poles and Flying Pigs: Public Art and Cultural Democracy in American Communities* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995): 157-158.

often chooses “to use land as [her] method of recording memories and stories.”⁹⁵ In her first large-scale mural, Los Angeles was the main character. Every panel depicts how the land (first) and the people who inhabited it (secondly) had evolved since prehistoric times.

Through her collective, known as Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC), she was able to convert the 2,754 feet of barren wall space lining the Tujunga Flood Control Channel of the San Fernando Valley into a Los Angeles treasure. Artists, including Judy Chicago, Yreina Carvantez and Patssi Valdez, joined oral historians, ethnologists, scholars, and hundreds of community volunteers to design and paint the *The History of California (The Great Wall of Los Angeles)* from 1974-1983 [See Exhibit III.10].⁹⁶ The mural, which has its own *Yelp* page boasts 4.5 stars with 22 reviews. Yelper, Patricia D. gave the mural 5 stars and wrote in 2012:

Often I get a little envious that most of the historical landmarks that have set identity to this country are found around the East Coast. After my visit to The Great Wall of LA, that envy is no more! Outside of the cookie cutter history books that are written from one perspective, The Great Wall involved a diverse group of young individuals with their families working with historians, artists and academicians to give an accurate and personal presentation of California/Los Angeles history! ⁹⁷

However, not all were as positive. In another review from 2015, Yelper Vency L. gave the mural only 2 stars and wrote, “Nothing special to me.” He continues, “it’s not much of a tourist attraction, more like street art.”⁹⁸ Fortunately for the mural, the community at large does not share Vency’s sentiment. Restoration due to extensive sun damage, car exhaust and smog, began in 2011 with more than \$2 million raised through public and foundational funding. Sam Bloch for LA Weekly covered the public event announcing the restoration and wrote, “radical upon its

⁹⁵ Judy Baca, “Artist Statement,” Judy Baca, accessed April 3, 2016, <http://www.judybaca.com/artist/page/artist-statement/>.

⁹⁶ Barbara Tannenbaum, “Art/Architecture; Where Miles of Murals Preach a People's Gospel,” *The New York Times*, May 26, 2002; Doss, “Raising Community Consciousness with Pubic Art,” 175-184.; Judy Baca, “The Great Wall Explained,” Social and Public Art Resource Center, accessed February 20, 2016, <http://sparcinla.org/programs/the-great-wall-mural-los-angeles/>.

⁹⁷ Patricia D., “The Great Wall of LA,” *Yelp*, August 9, 2012, accessed April 7, 2016, <http://www.yelp.com/biz/the-great-wall-of-la-valley-glen>.

⁹⁸ Vency L., “The Great Wall of LA,” *Yelp*, August 1, 2015, accessed April 7, 2016, <http://www.yelp.com/biz/the-great-wall-of-la-valley-glen>.

conception, the *Great Wall* is an institution now.”⁹⁹ According to Bloch, city council men called the mural and the adjacent park a tourist destination and hundreds of visitors clapped when one suggested adding highway signage.

Exhibit III.10 (Page 42)



⁹⁹ Sam Bloch, “The Great Wall of LA, Legendary LA River Mural Restored to Former Glory,” *LA Weekly*, September 19, 2011, accessed April 7, 2016, <http://www.laweekly.com/arts/the-great-wall-of-la-legendary-la-river-mural-restored-to-former-glory-2371490>.

PRINTMAKING

Similar to printmakers in Mexico affiliated with LEAR and TGP, Chican@ printed art in the US was used to convey information for their cause, *el Movimiento*. Known as ‘Gráfica Chicana,’ prints depicted important symbols and ideals and also served as a historical record.¹⁰⁰ Like Méndez, Chican@ artists were inspired by Posada’s protests in printed form and the venues of distribution used in Mexico including calendars, known as almanaque. Collectives including Self-Help Graphics in Los Angeles and the Royal Chicano Air Force in Sacramento featured the work of well-trained artists like Rupert García (b. 1941) and Ester Hernández (b. 1944). These artists produced iconography that celebrated cultural difference and universal struggle.

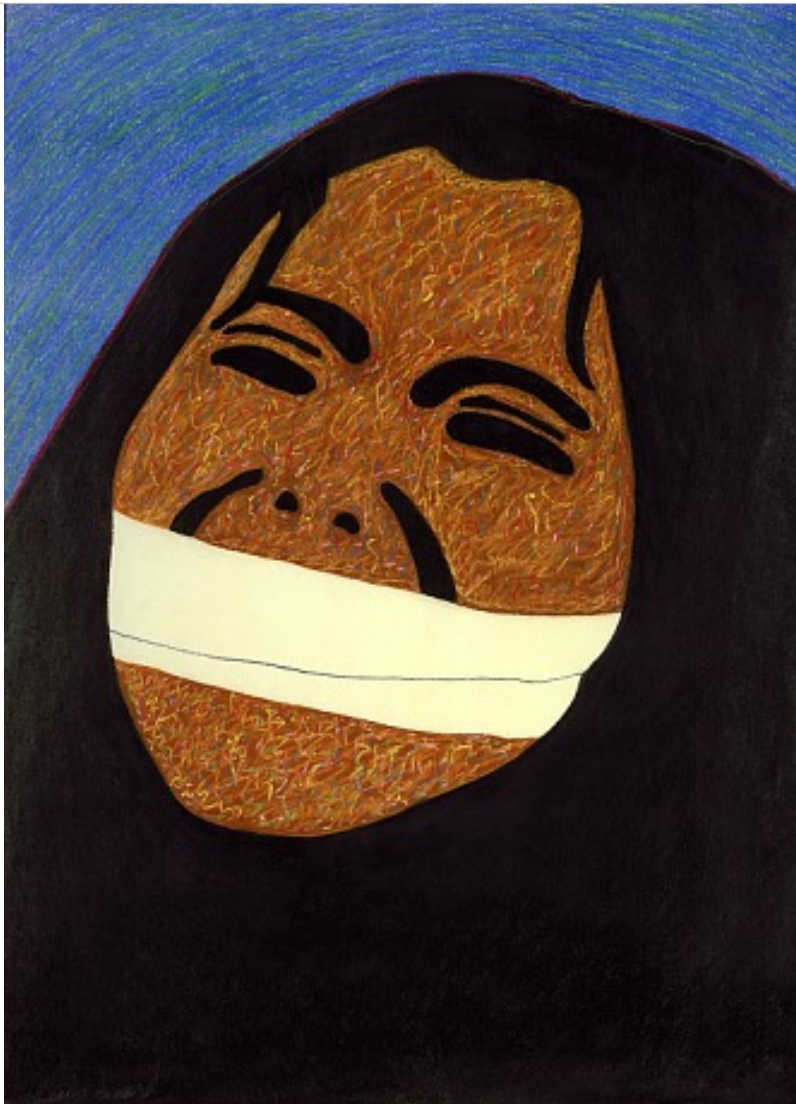
García, who was born and raised in northern California, was as much inspired by the Mexican school as he was pop art and abstraction. Both his prints and paintings are evident of these diverse aspects of modernism. Unlike some other Chican@ artists, García was able to successfully infiltrate the mainstream early on, despite the political nature of his work. The Smithsonian American Art Museum has owned García’s emblematic pastel, *Political Prisoner*, 1976 [See Exhibit III.11] since the year it was made.¹⁰¹ The powerful yet minimalistic image of a woman screaming under a white gag was inspired by a Newsweek cover story about Vietnamese refugees. García, a Vietnam War veteran, was drawn to a crying woman in the picture. He isolated her from the others to focus on her pain and added the gag to signify the injustice she had faced. Her brown face floats in a sea of black hair and bright blue sky. On the webpage for the exhibition *Our America: The Latino Presence in American Art*, the Smithsonian offers a suggestion that the universal nature of García’s work was a way to “invite viewers to confront the injustices of our day.”¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Zamudio-Taylor, “Chicano Art,” 318-319.

¹⁰¹ According to their database, the work has been in their collection since 1976 and was a gift of the artist. It is not currently on view but was featured in two exhibitions, both specifically for Latin@ or Chican@ art. See “Political Prisoner,” Smithsonian American Art Museum, accessed April 5, 2016, <http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=8808>.

¹⁰² “We interrupt This Message,” Smithsonian American Art Museum, accessed April 5, 2016, http://americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/online/our_america/art/1978.107.cfm.

Exhibit III.11 (Page 44)



Rupert Garcia

Political Prisoner, 1976

Smithsonian American Art Museum, 1978 1978.107

© 1976, Rupert García

Unlike García, who works in a variety of mediums, Hernández considered herself to be primarily a printmaker.¹⁰³ However, early in her career she was involved with the group *Mujeras Muralistas* (Women Muralists) which painted large-scale depictions of everyday life within the Mexican community around San Francisco's Mission District, exemplifying the breadth of her

¹⁰³ Zamudio-Taylor, "Chicano Art," 318.

talents [See Exhibit III.12].¹⁰⁴ Embracing the calaveras (a decorated representation of human skull) of el Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) tradition in works like *Sun Mad*, 1981 [See Exhibit III.13], she was able to express her anger regarding the contamination of pesticides in the water of Southern California due to raisin production. The smiling skeleton mimics Sun Maid's well known mascot since 1915, down to the bright red bonnet, but also points out the potential risk to both consumer and farmworker. Unlike the original, Hernández' version shows the bountiful basket of green grapes dripping with yellow and added the disclaimer "Unnaturally Grown with Insecticides, Miticides, Herbicides, Fungicides."

Exhibit III.12



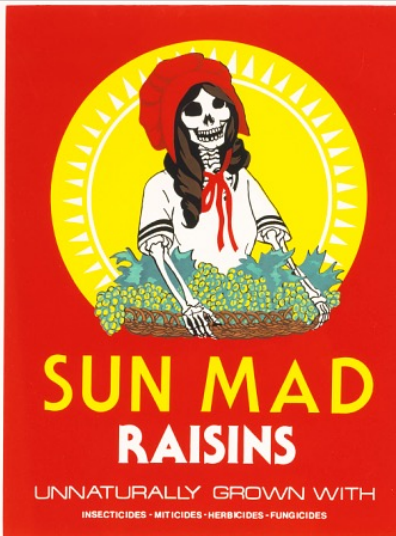
Mujeras Muralistas (Patricia Rodriguez, Graciela Carrillo, Consuelo Mendez, and Irene Perez)
Panamericana, 1974
 Mission St. bet. 25th & 26th St, San Francisco, California

Hernández is a first generation Chican@ whose grandparents immigrated to the US during the Great Depression to work as migrant farm workers. She was the first in her family to attend college. Although controversial because of the direct socio-ecological commentary on the

¹⁰⁴ Rowan Bain, "Ester Hernández: Sun Mad," *Art in Print*, vol. 3, no. 6, (March-April 2014), accessed April 5, 2016, <http://artinprint.org/article/ester-hernandez-sun-mad/>.

human and environmental cost of food production in America, this work in particular can be found in the permanent collections of the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum in the UK, which holds an impressive range of political posters.¹⁰⁵ There are at least three known editions of this poster, which, like García's and other poster makers' images of the Chican@ Rights Movement, were intended for wide distribution.

Exhibit III.13 (Page 46)



Ester Hernandez
Sun Mad, 1982
Smithsonian American Art Museum, 1995 1995.50.32
© 1982, Ester Hernandez

IV. CARA Chicano Art Resistance and Affirmation: 1990-Present Day

Considering the past and current lack of recognition of Mexican American and Chican@ culture and art, it is surprising that there were a number of exhibitions focused on art by Mexican Americans during the late 1980s and through the 90s [See Appendix A]. Even though these exhibitions were most likely an attempt by mainstream cultural institutions to prove they were representational of their multicultural communities, prominent museums hosted these exhibitions to varied audiences nationwide and in Mexico, where Chican@s are also misunderstood and

¹⁰⁵ "Sun Mad Raisins," Victoria & Albert Collection, last modified in 2014, accessed April 5, 2016, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1277917/sun-mad-raisins-poster-hernandez-ester/>; "Sun Mad," Smithsonian American Art Museum, accessed April 5, 2016, <http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=34712>.

stereotyped. The artist, activist, and historian, Lucy Lippard, explains this 1990s phenomenon in her book *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America*. On one hand, it is important to acknowledge the diverse and rich cultural makeup of US residents, but perhaps misrepresentation can be almost as damaging as no representation at all. Lippard explains that the title “is an ambivalent play on the possibilities of an intercultural world that reflects not doubt about its value, but a certain anxiety about the forms it could take.”¹⁰⁶

The 1980s traveling exhibitions, *The Latin American Spirit: Art and Artists in the United States, 1920-1970* and *Hispanic Art in the United States: 30 Contemporary Artists*, made stops throughout the US and Mexico City. The latter exhibition, curated by two Anglos, excluded artists with political content and emphasized those with Expressionist or Folkloric tendencies, presenting what some considered a false picture of Chican@ art, life, and values and perpetuated stereotypes.

Critic Michael Kimmelman reviewed the Hispanic art exhibition for the New York Times when it was shown at the Brooklyn Museum in 1989 and concluded it was “the wrong exhibition at the right time.”¹⁰⁷ Although he recognized that the curators were attempting to rectify the previous neglect of some of the selected artists, he criticizes the work as “disproportionately expressionistic,” saying “already the exhibition looks dated.”¹⁰⁸ Critic and historian Margarita Nieto blames the usage of the term ‘Hispanic’—used by the Government to group individuals into categories—in her review for the exhibition in 1987. She says:

the usage of the umbrella term *Hispanic*, to include contemporary artists whose work has not been associated with Latino art such as Robert Graham and Manuel Neri, along with Ceasar Martinez, Luis Jimenez, and John Valadez, artists whose work is intimately connected with the sociocultural constructs of Latino art brings up one more problematic

¹⁰⁶ Lucy Lippard, “Mapping,” in *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990): 3.

¹⁰⁷ Michael Kimmelman, “Review/Art; 30 Hispanic Artists at Brooklyn Museum,” *New York Times*, June 9, 1989, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/06/09/arts/review-art-30-hispanic-artists-at-brooklyn-museum.html>.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

issue in this publication in terms of its context and purpose. What was the criteria used for selecting the artists represented in the book? [referring to the exhibition catalogue]¹⁰⁹

In reaction to this exhibition, three students at the University of California in LA: Marcos Sanchez-Tranquilino, Holly Barnet-Sanchez, and María de Herrera approached Shifra Goldman, the late Chican@ historian and professor at the University, with plans for a Chican@ exhibition unlike any other seen so far. *Chicano Art Resistance and Affirmation*, today better known by its acronym CARA, implemented a national advisory committee for the exhibition that aimed to reposition Chican@ art from a monolithic experience to anything but.¹¹⁰ Even the title evolved over the multi-year planning stage, addressed the different purposes of Chican@ art for the artists: resistance from the exclusionary practices of society, stereotypes born of popular television and film, and affirmation of their relevance and worth. Furthermore, the acronym the title created, Cara, the Spanish word for Face, reflected the many identities of the artists. The result was a massive, historical exhibition that explored the relationship between the economic and political movement and its expression in art. CARA was able to confront mainstream identity politics and assert that Chican@ art was an indigenous American art, different from the mainstream, but not an art of the immigrant experience, or “alter-Native,” as Alicia Gaspar de Alba, a Chican@ historian labels it.

The exhibition was designed and planned through a unique curatorial process that tried to replicate the grass roots character of the Chican@ movement. Artists, historians, administrators, and students made up the numerous national and regional committees that played a role in selecting the artists and planning everything from publication choices to outreach initiatives. The final product was a presentation of 125-140 works by 90 artists and considerable archive materials related to the Chicano Right Movement.¹¹¹ The chronological exhibition was preceded

¹⁰⁹ Margarita Nieto, “Is Hispanic Art Non-European? Hispanic Art in the United States,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 20, 1987, accessed April 1, 2016, http://articles.latimes.com/1987-09-20/books/bk-9177_1_latino-art.

¹¹⁰ Alicia Gaspar de Alba, “Through Serpent and Eagle Eyes: Intercultural Collaboration,” in *Chicano Art: Inside/ Outside the Master’s House* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998): 91-118; Richard A. Lou, “The Secularization of the Chicano Visual Idiom: Diversifying the Iconography,” in *Hecho en Califas: The Last Decade 1990-1999*, ed. Rebecca Reynolds (San Diego: Plaza de la Raza, 2000): 17; Eva Sperling Cockcroft, “From Barrio to Mainstream: The Panorama of Latino Art,” in *Handbook of Hispanic Culture in the United States*, ed. Thomas Weaver (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1994): 194.

¹¹¹ The number of work presented varies in reviews and literature.

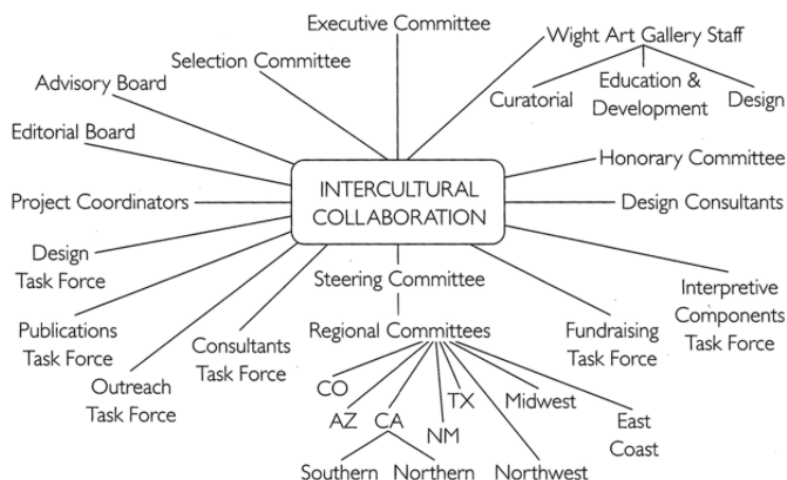
by an abridged timeline that began at ‘Pre-Columbian America’ and ended at ‘The Migrant Farmworkers Strike.’ The art was then divided into subgroups that included titles such as Cultural Icons, Civil Liberties, Urban Images, Regional Expressions, Feminist Visions, and more.

FUNDING

The first planning grant proposal for the Chican@ art exhibition to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) was submitted in the Spring 1984.¹¹² The grant petitioned for the funding to assemble scholars, curators and artists for two meetings in Los Angeles to discuss the possibilities of a project of this magnitude, these meetings would later become known as the CARA Advisory Committee [See Exhibit IV.1]. The proposal was denied in large part because terms including ‘Chicano’ was offensive to the Mexican American community according to the Director of the Wight Gallery, Edith Tonelli. The committee submitted a second proposal the following Spring, which they felt better explained their mission with the terminology used.¹¹³ This time, the money was granted and the committee was able to begin the planning process.

Exhibit IV.1

The Organizational Structure of the CARA Exhibition



¹¹² Gaspar de Alba, "Through Serpent and Eagle Eyes," 92.

¹¹³ Ibid.

With planning underway, the committee applied again to the NEH, this time to execute the exhibition, which planned to visit several museums around the country. They also sought assistance for the production of the exhibition catalogue, which was to include essays by the curators Shifra Goldman and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, as well as the three students who dreamed up the concept, and Harry Gamboa. However, their efforts were in vain. The first letter denying the funding provided the excuse that, “the panelists worried that the project makes political statement, that it is politics masquerading as culture, and the proposal contains jargon and reads like a manifesto.”¹¹⁴ Again terminology including “struggle” was thought to be too restrictive and exclusive for the NEH. For a second time, the committee revised its proposal to amend some of the issues without sacrificing its main goal, but to no avail.

In anger, the committee wrote a letter of protest to the NEH panelists suggesting that their denial was an implicitly racist position. They stated, “it has come to our attention that a number of projects dealing with Latino subjects have received no support.”¹¹⁵ For a third time, the committee was encouraged to reapply, which they did, and for the last time were denied. Over the process of applying and reapplying, the committee drastically cut its own budget from \$684,047 in the original proposal to only \$292,476 in the third.¹¹⁶

The exhibition would cost over 1 million dollars to produce, and even though the funding by the NEH was never realized, the exhibition was made possible by grants from the UCLA Art Council, the UCLA Chancellor’s Challenge in the Arts and Humanities, and the Rockefeller Foundation, which they explicitly thanked in the forward saying, “we must express special appreciation to Alberta Arthurs and Steven Lavine of the Rockefeller Foundation, who had faith in this project from the beginning, and never let it falter.”¹¹⁷ The Rockefeller Foundation was especially helpful to the project by arranging and hosting a meeting for the CARA committee to

¹¹⁴ Ibid. Gaspar de Alba quotes Thomas H. Wilson’s letter to Edith Tonelli, dated May 18, 1989, CARA Archives, UCLA.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 93. Gaspar de Alba quotes the executive board’s letter to Lynne Cheney, dated December 16, 1989, CARA Archives, UCLA.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 93.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 95; Quote found in Edith A. Tonelli, “Foreward,” in *CARA: Chicano Art Resistance and Affirmation* (Los Angeles: The Wight Gallery, UCLA, 1991): 5.

pitch the idea to foundations including the Andy Warhol Foundation for Visual Arts and the Lila Wallace—Reader’s Digest Fund which both contributed funding.¹¹⁸

Additional funding was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council, the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department, the 1990 Los Angeles Festival, and the Anheuser-Busch company. Not to mention accessible funds made possible by the local municipalities in each city it visited. Although printed after the exhibition premiered at the Wight Gallery, the exhibition catalogue was paid for by the Getty Grant Program.¹¹⁹ In the end, the committee’s persistence paid off and the exhibition was able to travel around California, the Southwest, and New York, including the Denver Art Museum (January 25- March 18, 1991), the Albuquerque Museum of Art (April 7- June 9, 1991), the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (June 27- August 25, 1991), the Fresno Art Museum (September 25- November 24, 1991), the Tucson Museum of Art (January 19- April 5, 1992), the National Museum of American Art (May 8- July 26, 1992), the El Paso Museum of Art (August 23- October 25, 1992), the Bronx Museum of the Arts (March 2- May 2, 1993), and the San Antonio Museum of Art (May 29- August 1, 1993).

Despite the “niche” nature of the show, the exhibition witnessed large crowds in a lot of the cities it visited. For instance, while at the El Paso Museum of Art, the show opened with lowriders—handsomely decorated cars, a staple in Chican@ culture—and broke the museum’s opening-day record with 3,700 in attendance and drew record attendance for the exhibition as well with about 13,000 visitors total.¹²⁰ For the last stop on the tour, Deborah Carr, the San Antonio Museum of Art’s Program Director pulled out all the stops because in her words, “CARA is one of the most important exhibits to be displayed in the museum since *Splendors*,” referring to the exhibition organized by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1990, *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries*.¹²¹ She continues, “it is the first time Chicano art and its

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Burr, Ramiro. "Record turnout is goal for 'CARA' 130 works featured in - Chicano art exhibit opening May 30," San Antonio Express-News, April 11, 1993, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com/resources/doc/nb/news/0F223175D88AC7F6?p=AWNB>.

¹²¹ Ibid.

contributions to American art have ever been recognized.”¹²² Carr and her team organized mural projects for local youth, theater and dance performances by local artists, community leaders, and political figures who were involved with the Chicano movement. They also planned a lowrider parade for the opening day and were not afraid to hit the streets, passing out flyers for the exhibit around town in various community centers.¹²³

PAST & PRESENT PUBLIC RECEPTION

Gaspar de Alba, in preparation for her 1998 book about this seminal exhibition, *Chicano Art: Inside Outside the Master's House*, found there to be more than 150 reviews, not including announcements for the exhibition or listings.¹²⁴ In one such review, Maria Acosta-Colon, the executive director of the Mexican Museum in San Francisco, summed up the major problem for introducing a mono-ethnic show like this to mainstream audiences and critics in her review for CARA titled, *Chicano Art: It's Time for a New Aesthetic...* for the Los Angeles Times in September 1990. “Art critics may often be put in the position of evaluating creative expression that might stand outside their own frame of reference,”¹²⁵ was her response to a review written by William Wilson for the same paper, only a few weeks earlier, in which he stated, “The style of what we see here is neighborhood art.”¹²⁶ It is undeniable that Chican@ art started in the streets, but does that mean it is not worthy of a mainstream exhibition?

Wilson also continuously reduces the artistic merit of Chican@ artists by repeatedly calling it a “subculture,” as well as implying that the imagery is no more than a bad copy of the Mexican school sampled from a sort-of buffet with the statement, “Admiring memories of the great Mexican revolutionary muralists, Rivera, Siqueros and Orozco, are everywhere with a dollop of Posada and a whiff of Tamayo thrown in. Yet none of the Chicano artists display the

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 163.

¹²⁵ Maria Acosta-Colon, “Chicano Art: It's Time for a New Aesthetic...,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 24, 1990, accessed March 28, 2016, http://articles.latimes.com/1990-09-24/entertainment/ca-802_1_chicano-art.

¹²⁶ William Wilson, “Festival '90: Art Review: LA Festival: Chicano Show Mixes Advocacy, Aesthetics,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 12, 1990, accessed March 28, 2016, http://articles.latimes.com/1990-09-12/entertainment/ca-112_1_chicano-art.

masters' command of materials, heroic scale, or symbolic savvy."¹²⁷ Acosta-Colon responded, "Rather than the traditional limited definition of 'great art,' truly great art should be defined as that which moves the viewer viscerally and visually."¹²⁸ She continues, "[CARA] is a significant exhibition because it is an organic expression of a culture at a particular historical moment showing us the form, content and process of a distinct style."¹²⁹

Holland Cotter, art critic for the New York Times, reviewed the exhibition in 1993 when it was shown at the Bronx Museum in New York City. Unlike Wilson, Cotter was impressed by the art. He called it a great example of "how expressively varied and conceptually subtle political art can be."¹³⁰ He compared the exhibition to the 1993 Whitney Biennial, another political exhibition of the 1990s and CARA wins in his eyes, although he does note that it is a great injustice that the catalogue was not bilingual. He calls the Biennial a theatrical show filled with sex appeal and shock value where "politics were a matter of attitude rather than argument, of style rather than logic."¹³¹ In contrast, "[CARA] is the real thing, coming straight from the heart and mind of an entire culture, and having both the vitality and the limitations that such a breath of intention and intensity bring."¹³² Of course, the exhibition only represents the Mexican Americans who chose to label themselves 'Chicano,' but it is understood what he means.

Wilson seems to be questioning whether social and political issues have a place in "fine" art. He explains, "Art is about organic feeling," but believes that exhibitions like this, "reduced [the art] to ideology by advocacy scholarship."¹³³ Acosta-Colon is quick to say that Wilson dismissed the art because he would "rather keep art within a narrowly defined apolitical context" and continues that "It is a phenomenon of Euro-American art criticism that dictates that art must

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Acosta-Colon, "Chicano Art."

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Holland Cotter, "Artview; Chicano Art: A Lustier Breed of Political Protest," *The New York Times*, April 4, 1993, accessed March 28, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/04/04/arts/art-view-chicano-art-a-lustier-breed-of-political-protest.html>.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Wilson, "LA Festival."

be divorced from its social context and must be ‘universal.’”¹³⁴ Ironically Wilson foresaw this kind of criticism and alluded to the protests of the evaluation of art through a Eurocentric lens when he wrote, “Some commentators are insisting these days that *quality* is a code word for judgmental domination of white males. Nonsense. That’s not what the word means. Quality has to do with every person’s desire to get better, to express themselves with greater eloquence, force and finesse.”¹³⁵

In the end, his takeaway of the examples of 90 artists was “CARA’s art rarely shows Chicano artists at their best.”¹³⁶ However, Wilson’s assessment seems to be the minority opinion. There was excitement for the new kind of presentation. An example of the excitement is provided by visitor comment signed D.M., “I found the exhibit to be profoundly moving and informative. It reacquainted me with a part of my history I had somehow ‘misplaced.’”¹³⁷ Another read, “I’d like to thank the silent heroes of the exhibit: the workers that put it together, the funders that gave it money, and the committees that included and excluded art,” the visitor continues, “I urge all of you in continuing your efforts.”¹³⁸

That is not to say all the visitor comments were positive. Some reviewers shared the NEH’s sentiment that the Chican@ focus was too restrictive, stating, “too much concentration on pachuco ideas, values, and accepted classification of people by so called white people.”¹³⁹ Another suggested, “forget about the small politics.”¹⁴⁰ Still there were others that could not be described any other way than racist and closed minded. The purpose of the pre-colonial timeline was lost on the visitor who wrote:

¹³⁴ Acosta-Colon, “Chicano Art.”

¹³⁵ Wilson, “LA Festival.”

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Alicia Gaspar de Alba, “Appendix- Selected Viewer Comments,” in *Chicano Art: Inside/Outside the Master’s House* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998): 227. Gaspar explains, “for the most part all the comments have been transcribed exactly as they were written; a few punctuation, spelling, and tense errors were corrected.”

¹³⁸ Ibid, 229.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 223.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 228.

Viva la Border Patrol. Where fences divide misunderstandings flourish. I feel that the Chicano people will never be equal to the white people. We didn't force them to come here and yet they complain. They could have stayed in Mexico. There will always be a fence dividing America and Mexico, that won't change. They have a bad reputation. They made it that way. J.L.¹⁴¹

The exhibition continued to have an impact after the show closed. In the catalogue for the show *Hecho en Califas*, produced by the Plaza de la Raza in 2000, curator Richard Alexander Lou explains how the organizational model for his exhibition was inspired by CARA's. He writes, "The CARA exhibit had ambitiously and successfully cultivated an awareness of Chicano art."¹⁴² He continues to explain how the exhibit challenged the notion that there was not a rich history of Mexican American artists in this country. Or more specifically that "their work could not compete aesthetically, technically, or conceptually on a national and international level."¹⁴³ Aside from the impact the exhibition had on the community, it also made an impact on himself as a curator. For his exhibition, he questioned, "what is after affirmation and reclamation?"¹⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

Lippard warns that "affirmation does not automatically bring happy endings," and Gaspar de Alba found this to be true for CARA as well after years of documenting the exhibition.¹⁴⁵ However, Lippard offers a silver lining, "The exclusions of these cultures [African, Native American, Asian, and Latino] from the social centers of this country is another mixed blessing."¹⁴⁶ She continues, "drawn to the illusory warmth of the melting pot, and then rejected from it, they have frequently developed or offered sanctuary to ideas, images, and values that otherwise would have been swept away in the mainstream."¹⁴⁷ This seems to be true for the

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 226.

¹⁴² Lou, "The Secularization of the Chicano Visual Idiom," 17.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Lippard, *Mixed Blessings*, 6

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 5.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

artists included in the exhibition, who otherwise might not have created their own alternative spaces such as the Aztlán Dance Company in Sacramento, the Border Arts Workshop in San Diego, Galería de la Raza in San Francisco, the Mexican American Development Association in Montrose, Colorado, and Mi Raza Arts Consortium in Chicago, just to name a few.¹⁴⁸

It is also possible that the artists' contention with the mainstream, as explored in the themes in Asco's *No Movies*, as well as Shifra Goldman's earlier and continued comments that the mainstream perverts artistic merit, could also have become a barrier for Chican@ art infiltrating the art market. For instance, Goldman wrote in a review for a string of Chican@ exhibitions in 1981 for the magazine *Artweek*:

What is at stake, basically, is the question of commitment: should Chicano artists at the cost of economic security and possible artistic recognition, continue to express themselves artistically around the same matrix of social change and community service that brought their movement into existence? Or should they, now that some of the barriers are cracking, enter the mainstream as competitive professionals, perhaps shedding, in the process their cultural identity and political militancy? Or is there a middle path between the two?¹⁴⁹

Goldman's comments were criticized by an artist participating in one of the exhibitions in the same magazine a few months later. Judithe Hernández wrote, "why should changes in my work and social-political attitudes be construed as compromising my commitment?"¹⁵⁰ She continued to question why her position as a Chican@ must "eternally chain [her] to 'Chicano art,'" when she wrote, "while in another artist the same would be perceived as personal and professional growth?"¹⁵¹ Regardless, Chican@ art and history was more-or-less introduced with the CARA exhibition and then, besides a few notable examples, became only a footnote in most of the museums who hosted the exhibit. By 2008, we were told that we were in a post-Chican@

¹⁴⁸ For a comprehensive listing see "Appendix: Catalog of Grupos, Centros, and Teatros," in *CARA: Chicano Art Resistance and Affirmation* (Los Angeles: The Wight Gallery, UCLA, 1991): 223-232.

¹⁴⁹ Shifra Goldman, "Chicano Art-Looking Backward," *Artweek*, (June 20, 1981).

¹⁵⁰ Judithe Hernández, "Readers Forum," *Artweek*, (August 1981).

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

world with the exhibition *Phantom Sightings: Art After the Chicano Movement* although they were careful not to use those words.¹⁵²

V. Conclusion: The Non-Market: The Status of the Mexican American Art Market

An art market does not simply end or begin with an exhibition nor can one specialized gallery cultivate a collectorship. It takes a village, as they say; the collaboration of educators, students, museums, curators, critics, dealers, et cetera. Even though visibility is an important first step, the erratic institutional acknowledgment and mishandling of Mexican American artists has not encouraged participation of artists and audience alike.

As a conceptual artist and photography and media professor at the California Institute of the Arts, Harry Gamboa has spent his career examining the Chican@ market. Gamboa concluded that there is no “Chicano market” when he states bluntly, “Type in the word ‘Chicano’ on the web sites of Sotheby’s and Christie’s and you get a big fat zero.” He points to institutional neglect when he summarizes, “look at the collections of the major museums. That will also tell you something.”¹⁵³ Even Gamboa cannot be found on either auction house’s website—this celebrated artist who has exhibited at Musée de l’Elysée, Lausanne in Switzerland (2009), the Centre Pompidou in Paris (2006); the Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo (2008) and the Museo Nacional de la Estampa (2005) in Mexico City, along with a number of domestic museums.¹⁵⁴ Is there simply not a secondary market for Chian@ art? Or does it imply that difficult-to-define genres cannot be sold in an auction house?

Recently, Gamboa’s work with Asco has been acquired by a handful of institutions, but even so, the works remain token examples in those collections [See Appendix B for an example of *Decoy Gang War Victim*]. More to his point, even though the “Biennials are always affected by the cultural, political, and social moment,” the 2010 Whitney Biennial in New York did not

¹⁵² For more on Post-Chicano and Phantom Sightings see Jessica L. Horton and Cherise Smith, “The Particulars of Postidentity,” *American Art*, vol. 28, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 2-8; Chon A. Noriega, “The Orphans of Modernism,” in *Phantom Sighting: Art After the Chicano Movement* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2008), 16-45.

¹⁵³ Carolina A. Miranda, “How Chicano is it?,” *Artnews*, September 1, 2010, accessed March 13, 2016, <http://www.artnews.com/2010/09/01/how-chicano-is-it/>.

¹⁵⁴ For Gamboa’s complete biography see Harry Gamboa, “Biography,” Harry Gamboa Jr., last modified April 28, 2014, accessed April 7, 2016, <https://harrygamboajr.wordpress.com/2014/04/28/harry-gamboa-jr-bio/>.

included a single Chican@ or Latin@ artist.¹⁵⁵ That is not to say that the Whitney Biennial had never featured a Mexican American artist. In fact, the participation of Daniel Joseph Martinez (b. 1957) in the 1993 Biennial made news because it turned multiculturalism on its head. His words “*I Can’t Imagine Ever Wanting to be White*,” printed on small, metal museum-admission badges elicited mixed reactions from the audience and critics; 21 years later the conceptual project and incarnations of it remain a topic of conversation.¹⁵⁶

Even still, despite the controversy and praise the project elicited, and even with Martinez’s gallery exposure through Track 16 in Culver City, California, *Museum Tags: Second Movement (overture)* or *Overture con Claque - Overture with Hired Audience Members*, 1993, sells for a mere \$900 for the complete set of 6 badges [See Exhibit V.1].¹⁵⁷ Likewise, Rupert García’s woodcuts, in his iconic negative space style, only sell for \$3,000 to \$5,250 through Rena Bransten Gallery in San Francisco [See Exhibit V.2].¹⁵⁸ However, the Turner Carrol Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico—a participant in the Dallas Art Fair—is offering a limited edition, cotton Jacquard tapestry by the artist, titled *La Xochitl IV* from 2003 for \$25,000.¹⁵⁹ This gallery also handles work by well known American art icons such as Alex Katz and Chuck Close. And, I will add that it is hopeful to see that this and other work can be found on Artsy under the label “Chicano Art.”¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ “2010 Whitney Biennial: February 25-May 30, 2010,” Whitney Museum of American Art, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://whitney.org/Exhibitions/2010Biennial>; Vargas, “Qué Onda?,” 146; Miranda, “How Chicano is it?”

¹⁵⁶ Max Benavidez, “Listening to the Militant Muse : The Streets are Daniel Martinez’s Gallery,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 1994, accessed March 13, 2016, http://articles.latimes.com/1994-02-06/entertainment/ca-19722_1_art-world; Noelle Bodick, “A Brief History of the Whitney Biennial, America’s Most Controversial Art Show,” *Artspace*, March 4, 2014, accessed March 15, 2016, http://www.artspace.com/magazine/art_101/in_focus/history_whitney_biennial-52098; Jerry Saltz, “Jerry Saltz on ’93 in Art,” *The New Yorker*, February 3, 2013, accessed March 18, 2016, <http://nymag.com/arts/art/features/jerry-saltz-1993-art/>; “Free Your Mind! Improvising Post-Multicultural Art | Art Practical,” The Institute for Diversity in the Arts, May 23, 2013, accessed February 18, 2016, http://www.artpractical.com/feature/free_your_mind_improvising_post_multicultural_art/.

¹⁵⁷ Sean Meredith of Track 16, e-mail message to the author, March 23, 2016. The gallery said that they do not represent him, but have handled this and other work in the past.

¹⁵⁸ Jenny Baie of Rena Bransten Gallery. e-mail message to the author, April 12, 2016.

¹⁵⁹ “La Xochitl IV,” Artsy, accessed April 11, 2016, <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/rupert-garcia-la-xochitl-iv>.

¹⁶⁰ “Chicano Art,” Artsy, accessed April 11, 2016, <https://www.artsy.net/gene/chicano-art>; Martinez is not not under the label, but can be found under “Identity Politics” with artists including Robert Mapplethorpe, Hans Haacke, and Ana Mendieta.

Exhibit V.1 (Page 59)



Daniel Joseph Martinez

Museum Tags: Second Movement (overture) or Overture con Claque - Overture with Hired Audience Members, 1993

© Track 16, 2016

Exhibit V.2 (Page 59)



Rupert Garcia

Frida Kahlo, 2002/1975

edition of 50

© Rena Bransten Gallery, 2016

For younger Chican@ artists not alive during the Chicano Rights Movement, such as Fransisco ‘Enuf’ Garcia (b. 1989), gallery representation is even harder to obtain, although he does admit that he has yet to approach a gallery himself. For now he enjoys the freedom of exploring imagery as he sees fit. He explains, if a gallery were to focus on the art of Mexican American artists like him, it would have to “be open to letting the artists create whatever the artists need to create.”¹⁶¹ He worries “that there is a lot of censorship and a lot of politics within the art world...I feel that there are a lot of gatekeepers.”¹⁶² Even as an artist with plenty of accolades under his belt including the Mayor’s Art Award in Phoenix (2015) and the Eric Fischl Vanguard Award at the Phoenix Art Museum (2008), there is no place, besides his personal website, that promotes his work, but he has found that to be a positive thing as he is able to connect with other artists all over the world. Art Historian George Vargas has found in his studies of Chican@ art that digital technologies have allowed artists the opportunity to “exhibit, sell, and discuss their art...regardless of medium or message,” and reach a greater audience to promote “the new American reality.”¹⁶³

In many ways, multiculturalism made the 1990s a perfect storm of circumstance that opened a door for a lot of undervalued artists. Holland Cotter explains in an article for the New York Times that "When the economy tanked at the end of the 1980s and the art market fell apart, some serious gate crashing happened. Artists long shut out from the mainstream, many of them African-American, Asian-American and Latino, gained entry and changed the picture.”¹⁶⁴ Unfortunately, even institutions that had been experimental in the past, have not sustained that inclination.

For instance, the 1994 Task Force on Latino Issues assembled by the Smithsonian Institutions found that the museums were guilty of “willful neglect” regarding the “presence of

¹⁶¹ Fransisco Garcia, interview by author, New York, March 2, 2016. [See Appendix C]

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Vargas, “Que Onda?,” 144.

¹⁶⁴ Holland Cotter, “A Time of Danger and Pain, Two Long Decades Ago ‘NYC 1993’ Exhibition at New Museum,” *New York Times*, February 14, 2013, accessed February 12, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/15/arts/design/nyc-1993-exhibition-at-new-museum.html>.

Hispanic Americans at every level of its operations.”¹⁶⁵ The document spelled out how this important national venue of validation for artists had a pattern of discrimination dating back 148 years. Raul Yzaguirre, the Chican@ activist and chair for the task force reflected on the result, “When it came to programming, when it came to the presentation of the culture and achievements... we simply do not exist.” He explains that it is not just the fact that Latin@s are alienated from the institution, but they cannot “see [themselves] as contributors to this nation.”¹⁶⁶ Given that this was, after all, one of the reason that Chican@s in the 1960s and 70s protested, one must ask, has anything changed?

Even so, we cannot trace the Chican@ non-market to the lack of representation in museums and galleries the 1990s or after; the problem is more nuanced than that. For true diversity in the art market we will need more than just Mexican American or Latin@ art on display, but also the dedicated and passionate participation of Latin@ museum directors and curators, gallery owners, art historians, auction specialists, collectors, and audiences. The 1994 Smithsonian task force concluded, that the museum had an alarming lack of employees of Latin@ descent, citing that it provided nothing to encourage them to visit, let alone seek employment or even volunteer.¹⁶⁷ In response to the report, they created The Smithsonian Latino Center in 1997, to promote the Latin@ presence within the institutions. Today, they list their “diversity initiatives” on a designated website page and when you google to find a statistic of “employed Latinos at the Smithsonian,” the first seven links are various pages of their website. This might indicate that they are trying to control the story. Either way, the task force disbanded shortly after its inception and since then, it has become increasingly difficult to find articles in any national publications that list such numbers, therefore the “success” of the Latino Center is hard to quantify.

Even though the intentions of the Smithsonian’s Latino Center might not be fully understood, the addition of curators with Latin@ perspectives have been positive. E. Carmen

¹⁶⁵ Jacqueline Trescott, “Smithsonian Faulted for Neglect of Latinos,” *Washington Post*, May 11, 1994, accessed March 2, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/1994/05/11/smithsonian-faulted-for-neglect-of-latinos/34b5076a-0b7c-4d1f-aab8-cab07dd383d9/>.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

Ramos, the first curator of Latino Art at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, has expanded the museum's permanent collection to include the works of Chican@ artists: Amelia Mesa Bains, Yolanda Lopez, and Margarita Cabrera since 2010, when she joined the institution. In the 2013-2014 exhibition she curated for the museum, *Our America: The Latino Presence in American Art*, she has worked to answer, "What is Latino about American art?" She believes the question is rarely asked, but "the juxtaposition of 'Latino' and 'American' exposes a gap in the ways in which we traditionally think about our national culture."¹⁶⁸

Despite Ramos' best efforts with the exhibition, some critics were quite critical, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Philip Kennicott. He wrote, "[is it] even possible to organize a major art exhibition devoted to an ethnic or minority group[?]," stating, "Latino art, today, is a meaningless category."¹⁶⁹ He added that when Latin@ art—rich with content informed by various styles, moments of time, and a myriad of cultures—is grouped together, "you get a big mess."¹⁷⁰ His comments make one question, are we past "Latino" as a category of art?

Susana Smith Bauista, a Latin@ art historian, believes that artists are often reluctant to be put into groups by nationality or style, and Chican@ artists today are no different.¹⁷¹ Chican@ artist, John Valadez (b. 1951) explains that this is a natural progression for an artist. He suggests, "you start out wanting to be an artist that is Chicano. Then you become a Chicano who is an artist."¹⁷² Chon Noriega, the Director of the Chicano Studies Research Center at the University of California in LA adds to this conversation, "if [Chican@ artists] get exhibited under the category and then don't get exhibited elsewhere, it becomes the totality of what they are."¹⁷³ Daniel Martinez agrees and believes that, "once we get past the issue of identity, we have to

¹⁶⁸ E. Carmen Ramos, "Exhibition talk: What is Latino about American Art?" (video of lecture, Smithsonian American Art Museum, October 15, 2013), accessed February 20, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZcSQqSHwHg>.

¹⁶⁹ Philip Kennicott, "Art Review: 'Our America' at the Smithsonian," *Washington Post*, October 25, 2013, accessed March 4, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/art-review-our-america-at-the-smithsonian/2013/10/25/77b08e82-3d90-11e3-b7ba-503fb5822c3e_story.html.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Jake Cigainero, "From One West Coast to Another; Mexican-American Art of Los Angeles Brightens a Sister City in France," *New York Times*, September 10, 2014, accessed February 12, 2016, <https://www.questia.com/newspaper/1P2-38015360/from-one-west-coast-to-another-mexican-american>.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Miranda, "How Chicano is it?"

move into the next stage.”¹⁷⁴ For Martinez, the next stage is to drop the Mexican from the introduction ‘American artist.’

In contrast to opinions that the Chican@ category has reached its expiration, Adriana Zavala, an art historian and the Director of the Latino Studies program at Tufts University, purposes that “while scholarly work benefits from an intersectional understanding of identities and from interdisciplinary, we need to bring greater visibility of Latin@ art within academia and especially within the field of art history.”¹⁷⁵ She feels that it is important to “embrace the Latin@ category, [or] the extraordinary accomplishments of many artists will continue to be relegated to the margins of both Latin American and American art history.”¹⁷⁶ Independent curator Pilar Tompkins agrees and adds that Latin@ art as a concept has not been fleshed out. She says, “I think more articles have been written about whether Chicano art exists than there have been art exhibits dedicated to exploring the idea.”¹⁷⁷

Zavala has conducted quantitative research on how much the Latin American art history field has grown since 1992. She presented her findings at the symposium titled “Trajectories in Academic Discourse: Absenting the Latino in the so-called ‘Latin Boom’” for the Getty Foundation in 2013 in conjunction with Pacific Standard Time II: Latin American/Los Angeles—a major initiative by California institutions aimed to fill the gap of Latin@ representation.¹⁷⁸ For convenience, she focused on the ten year period between 2002-2012 and found a 400% growth in the number of relevant doctoral dissertations produced. However, when narrowing her focus on Latin@ art, she noted that the research results were much lower, which she attributed to “the difficulty of finding encouragement and mentorship within departments of art history.”¹⁷⁹ Through various outreach methods, she was only able to find six full professors of Latin@ art and of that group, only one taught Chican@ and/or Latin@ art full time. She stressed, “When

¹⁷⁴ “Free Your Mind!,” Institute for Diversity in the Arts.

¹⁷⁵ Adriana Zavala, “Latin@ Art at the Intersection,” *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, vol. 40, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 126.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Miranda, “How Chicano is it?”

¹⁷⁸ “Adriana Zavala curriculum vitae,” Tufts University, accessed April 4, 2016, <http://ase.tufts.edu/art/documents/cvs/zavala.pdf>.

¹⁷⁹ Zavala, “Latin@ Art at the Intersection,” 131.

you really just focus on the people that are dedicated to bringing forward knowledge of the art and visual production of people who identify as US Latino, or can be identified that way, there's only one."¹⁸⁰

According to Zavala's research, of the nearly 95 colleges and universities that offer Latin American art history courses, there are only eight doctoral students currently writing dissertations on Latin@ topics suggesting that the "alarming underrepresentation" might not see change in the foreseeable future. Zavala explains that it is important to study Latin American and Latin@ artists independently from one another, saying, "[they are] not parallel tracks of study, because when we're talking about US Latinos and Chicanos, we're talking about people whose history, their political experience, their cultural experience is conditioned in some form by a state of colonization within the US."¹⁸¹

Today, institutions such as the Museum of Fine Art, Houston in Texas are including US Latin@ art as part of a larger Latin American digital archive project known as the International Center for the Arts of the Americas (ICAA), which according to the project's website, is "intended as a catalyst for the future of a field that has been notoriously lacking in accessible resources."¹⁸² Initiated in 2002, and funded by dozens of arts organizations, the project has recovered and published thousands of primary-source materials related to Latin American studies to address the "endemic lag" in the field of Latin American and Latino art histories. The program director and Wortham Curator of Latin American Art at the Museum, Dr. Mari Carmen Ramírez, has used her position to expand the public definitions of Latin@ and Latin American art and point out the richness and significance with her exhibitions, publications, and symposiums; her contributions have not gone unnoticed.¹⁸³ However, perusing past exhibitions on the Houston museum's website confirms that they too have yet to explore Chican@ art.

¹⁸⁰ Rodney, "A Conversation on Latino Representation."

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² "About the Archive," International Center for the Arts of the Americas, accessed December 12, 2015, <http://www.mfah.org/research/international-center-arts-americas/archive-launch-and-symposium/>.

¹⁸³ The Puerto Rican native was named one of the 25 most influential Hispanic people in 2005 by Time Magazine see Lacayo, Richard, "25 Most Influential Hispanics in America," *Time*, August 22, 2005, accessed December 15, 2015, http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2008201_2008200_2008223,00.html.

VI. Recommendations

I tend to agree with Adriana Zavala and her colleagues Francisco Arturo Rosales and George Vargas—and by extension Mari Carmen Ramirez with the project ICAA—who believe that education is key for the future of Chican@ and Latin@ art. All three explain instances where as teachers they had to introduce the history of the Mexican American population to their students for the first time. In the introduction to his 1996 book, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*, Rosales writes, “today many of my students, Mexican Americans included, know little about or have never heard of the Chicano Movement.”¹⁸⁴ For Rosales, this is a tragedy, because as he explains, “in the history of the US, no other era embodies the rise of youthful self-conscious idealism.”¹⁸⁵ He dedicates an entire chapter to “The Fight for Educational Reform,” one of the demands of the Chican@ protests, that unfortunately has yet to be met on a national level besides a few notable exceptions.¹⁸⁶

Zavala and Vargas, who were not involved with the Chican@ Rights Movement personally, had to more-or-less teach themselves the history in absence of any guidance from their peers. Zavala explains, “preparing my course syllabus and teaching the course presented a steep learning curve.”¹⁸⁷ She adds, “as I have since confirmed, most [Art Historians], at least in my generation and earlier ones, who do this work have had few direct mentors and have studied Latin@ art principally in a self-directed way.”¹⁸⁸ Vargas confirms, “I had to painstakingly conduct original research and interviews as there existed no experts or courses in Mexican or Chicano art history at the University of Michigan until I later taught them as a graduate teaching

¹⁸⁴ Rosales, “Introduction,” in *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: University of Houston, 1996), XV.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ By 2018, the Oakland Unified School District will require that high schools offer ethnic studies; elementary and middle schools will also be encouraged to incorporate the new curriculum. The district’s Civic Engagement Coordinator, Young Whan Choi said, “Almost 50 years ago, a broad coalition of students from San Francisco State University walked out of classes and engaged in the longest student strike in U.S. history in order to establish the nation’s first College of Ethnic Studies,” referring to early Chican@ Rights activists. See Frances Kai-Hwa Wang, “Oakland Schools Join Others in California Requiring Ethnic Studies,” NBC News, November 10, 2015, accessed April 5, 2016, <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/oakland-schools-join-others-california-requiring-ethnic-studies-n459886>.

¹⁸⁷ Zavala, “Latin@ Art at the Intersection,” 127.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

fellow.”¹⁸⁹ He adds however, that “in my initial investigation into Mexican and Chicano art, I experienced disapproval in academe due to ingrained Eurocentricity.”¹⁹⁰

For an example as to why future developments in curricula are important for the future success of Chican@ artists, I refer again to the artist Francisco ‘Enuf’ Garcia who explained to me in an interview, “education is important and education is the root of change.”¹⁹¹ In his youth, Garcia met the Chican@ artist, Martin Moreno during a difficult time, “I was getting kicked out of different high schools, getting in trouble with the law, getting into fights. I was headed in a negative direction.”¹⁹² By what he considers to be a sort-of divine intervention, his trouble with the law placed him in a program targeting troubled youth and provided education and employment opportunity. Moreno took Garcia aside and showed him a book about the Chican@ Rights Movement in which the artist had participated and Garcia noted that “this was the very first time, in my life, that I saw a brown person, or a Mexican, Chican@ man in a book.”¹⁹³

This is of course, a common problem with Mexican American children who experience the highest dropout rates in high school through graduate school.¹⁹⁴ Garcia too fell victim to this tragedy explaining, “[G]rowing up in the country, I always felt like an outsider. I never felt I fit in to the American mold that has been created for us. I don’t feel like I fit that mold, but neither do I feel like I fit the exact Mexican mold. There is a quote, “ni de aqua ni de allá,” which means I am neither from here or there.”¹⁹⁵ He dropped out, unable to identify with Columbus or the Anglo Presidents of the United States, and now as an adult who works freelance in school districts throughout Phoenix, Arizona, as a youth mentor, he sees this imbalance of minority teachers, especially in poor communities.

¹⁸⁹ Vargas, “Que Onda?,” 141.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Garcia, Interview, March 2, 2016.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Deana B Davalos, Ernest L. Chaves, and Robert J. Guardiola, “The Effects of Extracurricular Activity, Ethnic Identical, and Perception of School on Student Dropout Rates,” *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 21, no. 1 (February 1999): 61-77; Elvia Ramirez, ““Quê Estoy Haciendo Aquí? (What Am I Doing Here?)”: Chicanos/Latinos(as) Navigating Challenges and Inequalities During Their First Year of Graduate School,” in *Equality & Excellence in Education*, vol. 47, no. 2 (2014): 167-186.

¹⁹⁵ Garcia, Interview, March 2, 2016.

According to the Albert Shanker Institute, more than half of students who attend public schools belong to minority groups, yet 83 percent of their teachers are of Anglo descent.¹⁹⁶ The company found minority teachers to be more motivated to work with struggling minority students, have higher academic expectations for minority students resulting in more success stories, but also “all students benefit from being educated by teachers from variety of different backgrounds, races, and ethnic groups, as this experience better prepares them to succeed in an increasingly diverse society.”¹⁹⁷

Garcia, who had both a Chican@ and a Jewish mentor would testify to that. He says, “it was important to have both because it broke a lot of stereotypes I was taught growing up in Los Angeles, but also gave me a sense of pride knowing that one of my mentors came from the same background as me, and yet, he was successful.”¹⁹⁸ Garcia eventually finished high school, thanks to the program, and went on to college where he was able to study the art of Rivera and Kahlo abroad in Mexico. For him, and many other Latin@s in this country, there are not positive role models on television and popular film. But the problem is only heightened when those same students do not have any allies in the school system either—and when history lessons indicate that Latin@ had no achievements in this country. Students tend become disenfranchised before they have an opportunity to realize their full potential.

Education of Chican@ and Latin@ cultures for every student would be a positive step towards growing the art market, collectorship and visibility of the art of Mexican American artists. In 2000, the Santa Monica Museum of Art hosted the exhibition, *East of the River: Chicano Art Collectors Anonymous*, curated by historian, Chon Noriega. The exhibition recreated some of the beautiful homes that housed the collections so visitors could imagine themselves living with Chican@ art. However, in Noriega’s contribution for the catalogue, “Collectors Who Happen to Be...,” he describes how all the collectors have been “participants

¹⁹⁶ “The State of Teacher Diversity in American Education,” Albert Shanker Institute, last modified 2015, accessed April 5, 2016, <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/2426481/the-state-of-teacher-diversity.pdf>.

¹⁹⁷ “The State of Teacher Diversity in American Education,” Albert Shanker Institute.

¹⁹⁸ Garcia, Interview, March 2, 2016.

and/or beneficiaries of the civil rights struggles of the 1960s and 1970s.”¹⁹⁹ Similarly, the largest known collection of Mexican American art belongs to the actor, Richard Anthony “Cheech” Marin, also a Chican@. Marin compares the first time he saw Chican@ art to the first time he heard the Beatles, life altering, in the introduction to the catalogue for the exhibition he funded, *Chicano Visions: American Painters on the Verge* from 2002.

One continues to question, is it possible for non-Chican@s to collect Chican@ art? Marin believes so. He has produced a few Chican@ exhibitions comprised of his collection, complete with exhibition catalogues, and funds their travel abroad to countries like France, where Chican@ art is known and appreciated. In 2014, the Center of Contemporary Visual Arts in Bordeaux, France hosted an exhibition of Chican@ art, *No Movies*, with Asco at the center. In conjunction with an event, Bordeaux/Los Angeles 50 Years—which highlighted the similarities between the two cities—artist John Valadez was the featured artist in residence at Musée d’Aquitaine and spent 6 weeks painting a public mural titled *Chicano Dream* featuring young people parked on a beach in a lowrider.²⁰⁰

We need to reach a point, in this country, where ‘diversity’ is no longer a dirty word and our differences are celebrated. I refer again to a visitor comment for the seminal exhibition, CARA, which reads:

As an anglo this exhibition has helped me to understand what it is that I feel uncomfortable about. I have always recognized that the emotional hispanic culture (emotion vs reason) is uncomfortable for me but now I know it is because their culture brings out what I fear or hate in myself from my own culture! Maybe this is what divides us all—we are at different levels, if only we could all be at the same level at the same time. But then, would we learn anything new about ourselves and each other? Perhaps this is our strength rather than our weakness. C.S.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Chon Noriega, “Collectors Who Happen to Be...,” in *East of the River: Chicano Art Collectors Anonymous* (Santa Monica: Santa Monica Museum of Art, 2000): 8.

²⁰⁰ “Chicano Dream,” Sister Cities of Los Angeles, Last modified 2014, accessed April 5, 2016, <http://sistercitiesofla.org/chicano-dreams/>.

²⁰¹ Gaspar de Alba, “Appendix- Selected Viewer Comments,” 228.

The visitor's reflection mirrors some of Zavala's observations in her classroom when she says, "the non-Latin@ students, especially the white students, are confronted with critiques of the ongoing structural inequalities in the United States."²⁰² But I am again inspired by another visitor comment:

I am Asian American and I found this exhibit...powerful and necessary! I am excited that the very format of the exhibit was such a collaborative process of Chicano reinterpretation of self and community. I feel that this exhibit...is a model for other communities of color—to present ourselves by ourselves! A note of idea: one theme which occurred over and over was the Movimiento's coalition with other people of color on issues of immigration, etc. An exhibit on the Asian American movement and People of Color (called Third World's People's) condition... and artistic groups would be very powerful! Is anyone working on it? T.D., Virginia²⁰³

The Chican@ Rights Movement was fought in solidarity. The student group, MEChA, born of the era, which still has impact today, had the philosophy that "all people are potential Chicanas and Chicanos", and that "Chicano identity is not a nationality but a philosophy".²⁰⁴ For a more integrated future of arts and cultures we must continue to educate and the lessons must de-colonize, be culturally relevant and community responsive.²⁰⁵ These ideas are that of Ron Espiritu, a teacher from Los Angeles. He has found his students, regardless of ethnicity, benefit from understanding their culture beyond the scope of the 'discovery' of America in 1492. Everyone should be able to look at history from different vantage points and contextualize how this history has shaped the present and therefore realize knowledge of the self. He also advocates that it is important to specifically tailor the lessons to the community in which they are taught, to celebrate and understand the legacies and lessons from historically eclipsed figures. With his

²⁰² Zavala, "Latin@ Art at the Intersection," 128.

²⁰³ Gaspar de Alba, "Appendix- Selected Viewer Comments," 233.

²⁰⁴ Kelly Simpson, "Defining 'Chicanismo' Since the 1969 Denver Youth Conference," KCET Link, March 24, 2016, accessed April 7, 2016, <https://www.kcet.org/departures-columns/defining-chicanismo-since-the-1969-denver-youth-conference>.

²⁰⁵ Ron Espiritu, "Why Ethnic Studies Matters," (video of lecture, TEDx, December 18, 2014), accessed February 12, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XvvMgujD4i8>.

students, he creates “missing chapters” to fill the voids left in their lessons and empower them to uncover this history.

These are similar to some of the recommendations to the Smithsonian by the Latino Task Force in 1994. Such as employing more people of Latin@ descent, portraying the achievements of Latin@s regularly and continuing research and develop Latin@ art. But while a lot of focus has been on museums to foster this art, I would add that galleries also need to employ new ways to promote new artists. Those who handle the work of Mexican Americans could host panels with curators and artists to discuss their value, beyond monetary measures, and to partner with colleges and high schools to host enriching cultural events and introduce Latin@ artists to communities which otherwise might not know it exists. Not only will this allow students the opportunity to imagine themselves as artists, but also to expand the possibility of a wider collectorship. It is going to take a village to foster the Mexican American art market.

To close, I leave you with the words of Fransisco Garcia’s advice for young artists, but I will add to all individuals questioning their identity:

I recommend that people really study their roots, regardless of where you come from. I don’t care if you call yourself Black, White, Yellow, just study your history and experiment with different types of art. Don’t limit yourself to aerosols or paint, or acrylic or oils. Just venture, experiment, collaborate, network, build, give, and pray and it’s always going to come back around full circle. You reap what you sow, and whenever you do something with your heart and you have good intentions, people are going to be receptive and good things will happen. We just have to keep creating positive ripples wherever we go, whether it is India or Mexico, the White House or jail, just carry that positive light, be proud of who you are and where you come from and always stay true to yourself and just grow.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ Garcia, Interview, March 2, 2016.

Appendix A- Mexican American and/or Chican@ themed exhibitions in the late 1980s-2000:
(Page 32)

Venue	Year	Title	Curator (if known)	Artists (if known)
INTAR Latin American Gallery, New York	1986	Chicano Expressions	Iverna Lockpez, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, Jusy Baca, and Kay Turner	
El Museo del Barrio, New York	1987	Latina Art and the Barrio Murals	Juana Guzmán	Juana Alicia, Santa Barraza, Barbara Carrasco, Yreina D. Cervántez, Dolores Guerreño Cruz, Ester Hernandez, and Marta Sánchez
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (This exhibition traveled to the Brooklyn Museum, Center for Contemporary Arts, Santa Fe, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and Corcoran Gallery)	1987	Hispanic Art in the United States	Jane Livingston and John Beardsley	César Martínez, John Valadez, Gronk, Luis Jimenez, Frank Romero, Carlos Almaraz, Carmen Lomas Garza,
Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York (This exhibition traveled to El Paso Museum of Art, San Diego Museum of Art, Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, and Arts in Vero Beach, FL.)	1988	The Latin American Spirit: Art and Artists in the United States, 1920-1970	Felix Angel and 6 co-curators in the US, Puerto Rico, and Argentina	Rupert Garcia, Judy Baca,
University Art Gallery, California State University, San Bernardino	1990	Aquí Estamos y No Nos Vamos	Joe Morán	
The Wright Gallery, University of California, Los Angeles, CA (This exhibition traveled to the Denver Art Museum, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Tucson Museum of Art, National Museum of American Art, El Paso Museum of Art, The Bronx Museum of the Arts, San Antonio Museum of Art)	1990	Chicano Art Resistance and Affirmation	Elizabeth Shepherd, Farida Baldonado	Carman Lomas Garza, Yolanda M. Lopez, César A. Martínez, Amalia Mesa-Bains, Delilah Montoya, Malaquias Montoya, Rupert Garcia, etc.
The Mexican Museum San Francisco, CA (This exhibition traveled to Foothill Arts Center, California State University, Plaza de la Raza	1992	The Chicano Codices: Encountering the Art of the Americas	Marcos Sanchez-Tranquilino	Carmen Lomas Garza, Delilah Montoya, Charles “Chaz” Bojorquez, Gronk, Harry Gamboa, Kathy Vargas, Barbara Carrasco, and the East Los Streetscapers
The Mexican Museum San Francisco, CA	1994	Ceremony of Spirit: Nature and Memory in Contemporary Latino Art	Amalia Mesa-Bains	Santa Barraza, César Martínez, Ester Hernández, Patssi Valdéz, and artists of Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Brazilian descent.

The Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA (this exhibition was co-organized by Centro Cultural de la Raza and traveled to Centro Cultural Tijuana, Tacoma Art Museum, Scottsdale Center for the Arts, Nueberger Museum, SUNY, San Jose Museum of Art)	1994	La Frontera/The Border: Art about the Mexico/United States Border Experience	Patricio Chávez and Madeleine Grynsztejn	David Avalos, Yolanda M. López, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Celia Muñoz, las Comadres, the Border Arts Workshop/ Taller de Arte
The Mexican Museum San Francisco, CA	1995	Xicano Progeny: Investigative Agents, Executive Council, and other Representations from the Sovereign State of Aztlán	Armando Rascón	7 artists from diverse Latin@ backgrounds meant to represent the new artists of Aztlán.
The Mexican Museum San Francisco, CA	1995	From the West: Chicano Native Photography	Chon A. Noriega	Christina Fernandez, Robert C. Buitrón, Harry Gamboa, Jr., Miguel Gandert, Delilah Montoya, Kathy Vargas
Laguna Art Museum (this exhibition traveled to Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center UCLA, Art Museum of South Texas, Anchorage Museum of History and Art)	1995	Across the Street: Self-Help Graphics and Chicano Art in Los Angeles		170 pieces of graphic art produced at Self-Help Graphics
Santa Monica Museum of Art	2000	East of the River: Chicano Art Collectors Anonymous	Chon A. Noriega	Harry Gamboa, Jr., Barbara Carrasco, César Martinez, Leo Limón, Daniel Martinez, John Valadez, Diane Gamboa, Frank Romero, Carlos Almaraz, Patssi Valdéz, and more.

Appendix B- Asco, *Decoy Gang War Victim* in museum collections: (Page 46)

Venue	Year Acquired	Cataloguing	Other work by Asco?
Princeton University Art Museum	2007	1974, printed 2007 no other information available	unable to determine
Williams College Museum of Art	2012	1974, printed 2012 Medium: Fujigloss Lightjet print Williams College Museum of Art, Museum purchase, Kathryn Hurd Fund Edition: 4/10 performance art © 1974, Harry Gamboa Jr. M.2012.7.4	Yes, 14 works, acquired between 2011-2012
Smithsonian American Art Museum	2013	1974, printed 2010 Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase through the Luisita L. and Franz H. Denghausen Endowment © 1974, Harry Gamboa, Jr. 2013.44.1	Yes, <i>À La Mode</i> , acquired the same year
Whitney Museum of American Art	2014	1974, printed 2011 edition: 2/10 Whitney Museum of American Art, Purchased with funds from the Photography Committee © 1974, Harry Gamboa Jr. 2014.46	Yes, 8 works, acquired the same year
San Antonio Museum of Art			unable to determine
Museum of Fine Arts Boston			None
Dallas Museum of Art			None
Seattle Art Museum			None
Denver Art Museum			None
New Orleans Museum of Art			None
Cincinnati Art Museum			None
Detroit Institute of the Arts			None
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art			None
Blanton Museum of Art			None
San Diego Museum of Art			None
Phoenix Art Museum			None
LACMA			None
Santa Barbara Museum of Art			None
Utah Museum of Fine Arts			None

Appendix C - Phone interview with Francisco Garcia from March 2, 2016:
(Page 47-61)

DL: Francisco, can you introduce yourself?

FG: Yes, my name is Fransisco Garcia and I also go by Enuf.

DL: Can you explain the tagline 'Enuf' that you go by, how did that come about?

FG: Enuf is a name that some of my friends from California gave me a while back when I started painting. From the beginning, it is something that stuck and I just kept it throughout the years. I feel like for me personally, the name has a lot of meanings. About ten years ago I accepted Christ more and I feel like I went through a positive transformation in my life. I also embrace the spirit of the word in Hebrew, *El Shaddai*, which translates to 'God is more than enough.' One of the things I did in my past was let go of the graffiti and some of the things that were tied to the street and my life turned around. I found the ability to create murals for social justice. Another meaning for *Enuf* is the word 'Basta' in Spanish. That word is used mostly in Mexico, Latin American and different parts of our country by artist-activists that are protesting oppression or any type of prejudicial law, people that want to create change. So it has a spiritual, activist, and socially conscious meaning to it for myself. The reason why I kept my real name as well, was because I feel like it is important to keep in touch with your identity and connect where you come from. That name is rooted into my culture and background; It merges my indigenous and Spanish culture and just embraces all the cultures around me.

DL: Thanks for that explanation. You currently live and work in Arizona, but you are originally from California, right?

FG: Yes.

DL: When did you move to Arizona?

FG: I moved to Phoenix, Arizona in 2003...I believe it was the summer of 2003 or 2002. I can't remember, but I do remember visiting Phoenix the year that the Diamondbacks beat the Yankees. [The Diamondbacks beat the Yankees 34-14 in 2001.] That was the first year I visited and I believe the year after that was the year that I moved.

DL: Did you move with your family or was this a personal journey?

FG: Yes, I actually moved with my family from Los Angeles, California.

DL: You mentioned your indigenous roots, can you explain your heritage?

FG: So far I know that both of my parents are from Mexico. My mom is from Mexicali, Baja California, and my dad is from Jalisco, Guadalajara, which is a little more south in Mexico. I know that my mother's great grandpa was a descendant from Spain and somewhere down the line on my dad's side of the family we have Huichol roots. Being Mexican is a mixture of Spanish and many indigenous cultures including Mayans, Aztecs, Zapotecs, and more. There are newer indigenous tribes that we can identify with within the last couple hundred years; I am still searching more in my own family history to find what other indigenous roots we have ties to. I recognize my indigenous roots as well as my Spanish root because in our academic system we are colonized and taught to focus on the European side of our ancestry; it is more acceptable and convenient to embrace the Europeaness of oneself — or *whiteness*. For me personally, growing up in the country, I always felt like an outsider. I never felt like I fit into the American mold that has been created for us. I don't feel like I fit that mold, but I don't feel like I fit the exact 'Mexican' mold either. There is a quote, “ni de aqua ni de allá,” which means I am neither from here or there. I feel like I am Xicano²⁰⁷ because I celebrate my many cultures.

DL: You mention Chican@, I assume you familiar with the Chican@ right movements in the 60s and 70s?

FG: Yes.

DL: You had mentioned that you had a teacher who was a Chican@ artist as well, correct?

FG: Yes, his name is Martin Moreno. I met Martin in 2005 when I was working for an organization called Las Artes and during that time I was going through a transformational point in my life. I was kicked out of different high schools, getting in trouble with the law, and getting into fights; I was headed in a negative direction. This arts center helps disenfranchised youth get connected to education, obtain their GED, and have an opportunity of employment. They get paid to do artwork, public art. The other half of the day they take classes to get complete the GED program. When I walked in there I was greeted by this Mexican-looking man, with long hair. He gave me a tour, and although he didn't have to, he sat me in a classroom and showed me some Xicano art history books and in the book he showed me his name and photo. He was in the book. This was the very first time in my life that I saw a brown person or a Mexican, Xicano man in a book.

I still remember that moment, it kind of emphasized how important it is to know your roots. Although at the time it wasn't as important as it is now. But he sparked something inside of me, I wanted to know my roots. As I got to know him more over the years, he introduced me to public art and community murals and I got to learn about his story. He was influenced by the Mexican muralists. He told me how he came from a similar upbringing as me, the things that he overcame, and some of his achievements like going to Mexico and studying abroad without having

²⁰⁷ Garcia prefers the “Xicano” spelling for Chican@ which employs the original spelling from the indigenous Nahuatl language in which the sound 'ch' is spelled with an X.

anything. This inspired me three years later to apply for a study abroad program. I studied there, outside Mexico City, for a summer and was learning the history of the revolution and about all the revolutionary murals, it just blew my mind to know really how beautiful our culture was and just how much history, and art, and the richness of fluid culture, language, and traditions were there to be discovered. Also, seeing all the different murals of the Mexican muralist and Frida Kahlo, and learning about different artists such [Jorge González] Camarena and Jose Morales, I mean my mind was just like blown-like whoa!

DL: So you made this transition from graffiti to public works. Did you still run into problems with authority figures?

FG: Yeah, I think that in the past I did get in trouble with the law, but I think that is what helped to change my life because when I got out of jail, I had to do 80 hours of community service and that is when I had the idea of ‘Hey, why don’t I volunteer for a church or something, paint a mural, I am going to go try this out!’ Then I went to a church called Victory Outreach and they gave me permission to paint on their wall. I asked all the owners, got the okays, and then one of my friends from Public Allies emails me a grant opportunity and it was specifically for community events and things like that. So I started to put these ideas together and actually applied for a grant called Make a Difference and that was the first time I obtained a grant. I was able to paint a mural with other artists and we had a community event and it was free. We had food, prizes for the breakdancers and live art. It was a really great experience and the feeling of community and sharing my faith and giving hope to people really made me feel like ‘Man, this is what I want to do for the rest of my life.’ I want to do art, I want to do community things, I want to collaborate and I want to give to the people. At that moment, I decided to never look back and just run forward.

DL: You were recently featured in the book, *When we Fight we Win*, specifically your mural regarding the controversial SB 1070 [AKA “Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act” is an anti-immigrant law passed in 2010 in Arizona that gave the police the ability to arrest or detain a person based on “reasonable suspicion” that they are in the US illegally during any lawful stop²⁰⁸] in Phoenix. Does a lot of your work regard controversial issues of race and society?

FG: Yes. Yeah that book, *When we Fight we Win*, is pretty interesting because it kind of goes back to the mural called *Dream Act Mural*, it was a mural depicting what was happening during SB 1070, I believe it was 2009, 2010 when all of that turmoil was happening. That mural was inspired by some of the newspaper articles, and the things we were hearing and experiencing in our communities of the people being afraid of being deported, separation of families, the unjust treatment of the people by authorities abusing their powers. I remember seeing this article in the

²⁰⁸ Ann Morse, “Arizona’s Immigration Enforcement Laws,” National Conference of State Legislatures, last modified July 28, 2011, accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.ncsl.org/research/immigration/analysis-of-arizonas-immigration-law.aspx>; “Senate Bill 1070,” State of Arizona Senate, last modified April 23, 2010, accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.azleg.gov/alispdfs/council/SB1070-HB2162.PDF>.

New times it had the Sheriff with the ski mask and gun pointing at me, I was just reading about it and saw that this lady was thrown in front of her yard and beaten by a sheriff deputy.²⁰⁹ I believe that was in Guadalupe. It made me so upset that I started to draw as I was working in the telemarketing department. I actually worked on that mural sketch while I was at work. I told some of my friends that I had this idea to paint this mural and people were really excited about this idea of seeing this mural on a wall. We had asked maybe ten different owners for permission to use their wall and finally we found this man near Buckeye road at a mechanic shop. I went and got some support, some money donated, the owner donated money, and I donated paint, and we all volunteered to paint this mural. We had ex-graffiti artists, people from the community, activists that were involved. It was a beautiful thing of people coming together, trying to raise awareness of what was happening, just letting the immigrant community and the Dream Act students know 'Hey, we're with you, we support you.' Just give some hope to people and join in solidarity because there was a lot of division between citizens and people that were undocumented. A lot of perspectives that we're very divisive in our community, I think it was separating a lot of people, families and at the same time bringing a lot of racism and discrimination.



DL: You mentioned asking several shop owners for permission for wall space, how do those conversations usually go when you get turned down?

FG: I go and show them my portfolio to let them know what I am trying to accomplish. Many people were afraid. I believe the reason why a lot of people rejected it was because they were afraid of the city, the sheriff... or maybe the way people would react to it so they kind of shied away from the idea and usually say 'No, thank you' or 'maybe another time.' They would just shy away from the idea.

²⁰⁹ Michael Lacey, "Are Your Papers in Order?" *Phoenix New Times*, March 19, 2009, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/news/are-your-papers-in-order-6431924>.

DL: Do you usually discount those people or return back to them at a later date?

FG: No, usually when I talk to people, if some people are interested, I try and talk to them, to see where they are at. Usually while they are looking at my artwork I can try to gauge what type of mural can go on their building. If they like a certain type of art [theme??] they lean more towards it, but if they don't, then it probably won't get mentioned.

DL: Despite these controversial subject, you have won several awards including the Mayor's Art Award in Phoenix, the Eric Fischl Vanguard award at the Phoenix Art Museum, and you also spoke at the White House. Can you speak more about these opportunities, do you think they would have been possible if you didn't work in a public platform like muralism?

FG: Well, with the Eric Fischl award I received based on financial need my first year of college and I remember winning that award...I have a lot of respect for Eric Fischl, but when I went up on stage he gave it to me and told me 'I know that you really need this.' He made me feel bad, to be honest. I don't think he did it intentionally, but the way he said it made it feel like a hand-me-down. Like he was helping me, which he was, but I did not like that feeling. You know? So I entered the competition the following year—because they have a competition and they also have one based on financial need. So I was the first person to win the awards back-to-back. I got the financial award (2007), which was \$2,500 at the time and then I received the Eric Fischl Vanguard (2008) award which tops all the first places for photo, painting, and sculpture in a competition with 10 colleges in Maricopa County. Now when I entered the competition I did not even think that I would get even second or third places because all the art work I had seen was amazing. When I found out that I won the Vanguard award it gave me a huge sense of confidence. At the time I was praying for a vehicle, specifically a Mustang, and because of that I was able to obtain a Mustang. But it was also because of praying and faith and god showing me favor, teaching me that if I have faith in him, he will help me to accomplish all of my dreams. So it was kind a test and that is what started to spark my confidence.

After that was the study abroad program (2008). I was studying at Phoenix College and was introduced to the professor Pete Dimas and he told me that I needed to learn more about my roots. He said, "How can you paint murals if you don't know about your Xicano roots?" That really stuck with me so I started to learn more about Xicano studies and eventually took that trip to learn about the muralists and I think that is what also started that confidence in my work.

I had made a connection back to that non-profit ACYR and I always kept in contact with them. I always followed up with my mentors there and one day, one of my mentors told me that they wanted to nominate me to fly out to DC to speak to congressmen. So, I was really excited and I accepted the nomination, and then later on I found out that I was going to travel to DC to speak with congressmen about opportunity youth—some of the same opportunities that helped me with my transformation. That was the first time I flew to DC and it was great to speak with the congressmen, but the thing that really really sparked inspiration was when I went to the Holocaust Museum. I realized that there was a lot of similarities of the Holocaust and what is

happening in Phoenix, AZ with the immigrant community, specifically the Mexican immigrants, against discrimination and the treatment that immigrants get from citizens. I started to record a lot of the quotes that I saw at the at the museum and at the same time I was reading scripture in the bible that were about the Hebrews. Speak for the people who are oppressed, the widows, the fatherless . All these different scriptures that aligned with history and different events happening at the time. I felt like God was telling me to use art in the same way that Moses used his staff as a miracle, to show people a way out, a way out of Egypt, a way out of oppression, a way out of... a way out of death. When Moses lifted his staff, he lifted it in faith. That is when the ocean split and he was able to free the people from Egypt and at the time he was the first political leader in the bible. So when I read the scriptures, it made sense that I had to try and bring awareness.

DL: More recently you won the Mayor's art award and I am interested because this is after *SB 1070* and your mural and after Tucson banned ethnic studies, but you were still able to win this award for your powerful imagery. Do you have any thoughts about that?

FG: Yes, the Mayor's art award is an annual award for artists and I think it is fairly difficult to get. I think it was started by Gene Grigsby [Eugene Grigby Jr. 1918-2013]. He was an African American artist and he broke a lot of barriers and accomplished a lot of things in his life. He is a big inspiration. Basically this award goes to an artist in the community. I don't know, maybe it is a combination of talent and community involvement. The first year I was nominated was 2014 and I did not get it. I believe there were 300 artists nominated, but I made it to the top three. This last year, 2015, that is when I received it. I was really honored because when I looked at the list there were not many Xicano or people of Mexican descent, Latin@ surnames as the winners. Overtime I get an achievement or an award I do it for my people, so that people can see that we can also follow our dreams and goals and also be successful in whatever field that you want to do. It just made me really proud that I was able to represent within that realm.

DL: Definitely, that is a great accomplishment! You also paint in other mediums, you recently completed a canvas of Frida Kahlo, she is one of your favorite subjects. Do you sell these works?

FG: I do. I do all kinds of artworks, murals and canvas painting. Frida is one of my favorite subjects because she helped me get in touch with my roots. After visiting her house [Casa Azul in Coyoacán, Mexico], seeing the movie, and researching her life in different books I felt really inspired by her. Also, I just really love her features. To be honest, I love drawing her eyes, her nose, her lips. So far, she is probably the figure that I have painted the most in my artwork.

DL: Well she certainly is a figure that grapples with her European and indigenous ancestry, so I can see how she can be an inspiration for anyone who is also curious about those things. But I want to learn more about how you make a living with your art. You obviously work with non profits and obtain grants, but do you also work with people in the for-profit art world?

FG: Well I think that eventually what happens from being involved with non profits and activism is that you start learning more how to be socially responsible. It can turn opportunities into social

responsible opportunities. I was also tired of working in the corporate sector. I did some work in insurance, telemarketing, I sold cars, and working at banks. I feel like if I would have stayed at some of those jobs I would have made more money and been more financially stable in a quicker way than I am taking now. But to me, the money didn't matter, it was almost out of the equation. I just knew that I was going to make a way and he was going to provide. And he did. He made a way for me and I was able to do what I wanted to do and be able to support myself and at the same time give back and have a balance.

DL: Have you ever been approached by any galleries that want to represent you?

FG: I haven't been approached by a specific art gallery yet. At this point I haven't even really approached an art gallery myself, I have been sticking to the street and public art, but maybe one day I would like to venture into the art gallery scene.

DL: Are there any in Phoenix that you feel are aligned with Mexican American or Mexican art?

FG: I don't and it is sad to say because I think there are a few people who are trying, but for me personally, I feel that if there is going to be an art gallery to represent our culture, and represent Mexican art or Xicano art, or any type of those roots. I feel that they also need to be open to letting the artists create whatever the artists need to create. I feel that there is a lot of censorship and a lot of politics within the art world, as there is in any type of industry including music and politics. I feel that there are a lot of gatekeepers in the art world. Technology may be a good thing or a bad thing, but I feel like we are living in a world right now where it can be a good thing. Everything has been aligning in my art career thankfully, it has been a way for me to be able to promote my artwork online and meet people from different parts of the world and I no longer have to be conformed by an art gallery. I don't have to turn in a piece of art work and pay money to see if it is good enough to show in someone's little space. Some may think it is too Mexican, too spiritual, or maybe it's too political. You know, I just go and paint and if people like it they hit me up and say "hey, we want you to paint a mural," or something along those lines.

DL: Yeah, I understand. Right now you work with children and teach them how to paint murals. What is the school that you work with, or is it many schools?

FG: Those are more different opportunities with schools. They range from elementary to junior high to high schools. I don't work for one specifically at the moment. I am more of a self contractor type. I just go wherever the project is.

DL: Do you find the children are receptive to these adventures?

FG: I think that children really enjoy creating and painting and just love to get their hands dirty, you know, experiment. It makes me happy to see them so open and experimental with the artwork. It is just a good feeling to see young spirits make awesome art. It brings a sense of joy

especially knowing that in a lot of these communities, art was pretty much taken away by the cuts of the Bush program across the nation.²¹⁰ I don't think it is a coincidence that those art programs were being cut, but this is one way to bring art back into people's lives is through public art.

DL: Do you still go to Washington to speak to congressmen on arts advocacy days or any time?

FG: I do, I am still involved with a few organizations and have had the opportunity to go and speak with different organizations about the arts and non profits and advocacy for immigrant rights.

DL: Do you feel like it makes a difference?

FG: I think it does! For me personally, from my experience, I feel like working with the different organizations out in DC there is a lot of diversity and inclusion, but I feel like they lack the representation from the Southwest. Specifically the Xicano and Latin@ population. I feel like every time I go out there, I am a minority. It is weird because I like the east coast, but I am one of the few Mexicans out there, especially being a male. So I feel like I have to speak for the issues happening here. The majority of the time when we have these conferences, there are huge non profits and CEOs from Starbucks. I always just step up to the plate and bring the questions. I feel like my job is always to challenge the speaker, challenge the people in the conference. Many of times they are stumped, they don't know what to say because the questions are so... I am kind of blunt, I am not afraid to challenge people, but in a good way. I think that we can bring change, at least at a local level. I will tell you one victory: last year we went to Washington... Seattle, and we went with the National Council of Young Leaders [NCYL] who are a diverse population from the US that come from different ethnic backgrounds and pathways that have been disconnected from employment or school.²¹¹ We made these recommendation policies about three years ago and we presented them to Starbucks. We met with the CEOs and they have been using a lot of our recommendations and have extended over a hundred thousand opportunities across the nation to youth [Known as the Starbucks College Achievement Plan]. People who are coming from similar backgrounds, like us and now have an opportunity to go to school and have it paid for through ASU [Arizona State University]. After coming back home and having a meeting at their headquarters, I saw an article in the newspaper, the Arizona Republic, I believe, and it shocked me.²¹² Basically our recommendations inspired Starbucks and they had this event called the 100k

²¹⁰ "President Bush's Budget Proposal Shortchanges Education Programs," Democratic Policy Committee, last modified February 13, 2008, accessed March 15, 2016, http://www.dpc.senate.gov/dpcdoc.cfm?doc_name=fs-110-2-27; Melina Vissat, "Bush Bid to Cut Arts Spending Draws Criticism," Boston University, last modified February 15, 2004, accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.bu.edu/washington/2004/02/15/bush-bid-to-cut-arts-spending-draws-criticism/>.

²¹¹ "National Council of Young Leaders," YouthBuild, accessed March 15, 2016, <https://www.youthbuild.org/OYU>.

²¹² A partnership between ASU and Starbucks raises the bar for the role a public company can play in support of its employees' life goals," ASU Online, accessed March 15, 2016, <https://asuonline.asu.edu/starbucks-and-arizona-state-university>; Anne Ryman, "Starbucks, ASU Expand College Degree Program to 4 Years," AZ Central, April 7, 2015, accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/tempe/2015/04/06/starbucks-asu-expanding-college-degree-program/25381165/>.

[100k Opportunities Initiative] in Chicago, and most recently here in Phoenix to promote opportunity to opportunity youth.²¹³ We have over 7 million youth that are disconnected from school and work right now.

DL: That is quite the accomplishment. Would you ever consider running for government?

FG: Oh man, I think at this point in my life I just want to keep painting and spreading positive messages. Maybe in the future, I don't know what the future holds, but I have thought about it. It is just I feel that [laughs] the system is rigged. You know, so I feel like politically, I don't think there is too much that will get accomplished. Or if even somehow we make it to some sort of authority level, we might end up like Kennedy. So for me I feel like the most effective thing I can do right now is my art.

DL: Well it sounds like you're reaching a whole new generation. You talked about how learning about your ancestry put you on the correct path. Do you have any thoughts about the banning of ethnic studies in AZ? To me it seems like it is coming from an Anglo point of view because words like *rasa* are being called discriminative in its own way.

FG: I feel like there are a lot of different points of views of ethnic studies, but there is only one experience. I think that the experience is coming to a self awareness that education is important and education is the root of change. Everybody is educated, whether they are educated... and maybe can cause a negative impact on society, they are still being educated. Someone can be educated in a positive way and make a positive impact. I feel that Xicano studies, basically shows you a world-wide perspective of history, of the past. It is very important to know the past so we can know the future. When I started reading about Xicano studies I started learning about what this land was 500 years ago, 1,000 years ago, 2,000 years ago. Never in my life had we gone into deep conversations about that. It was always about how Columbus discovered America, about how great our Presidents were and people that I don't really identify with. I always felt displaced in the educational system and I can see why there are a lot of dropouts in high school and why our education system is failing.²¹⁴

I really started to notice the imbalance of minorities working in the educational system, working working in so many different schools. Especially in poor communities I noticed that a lot of those schools don't employ people from higher-social class, or the majority look caucasian, and it just makes me sad to know that is happening because I really believe in diversity and that we can learn from different cultures. I've had a mentor that was Jewish and then I've had another that was Mexican or Xicano and for me personally it was important to have both because it broke a lot of stereotypes I was taught growing up in Los Angeles, but also gave me a sense of pride

²¹³ "Your Future Starts Here," 1,000 Opportunities Initiative, accessed March 15, 2016, <http://chicago.100kopportunities.org>.

²¹⁴ Deana B. Davalos, et al., "The Effects of Extracurricular Activity, Ethnic Identification, and Perception of School on Student Dropout Rates," *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 21, no. 1 (February 1999): 61-77.

knowing that one of my mentors came from the same background as me, and yet, he was successful. But when you go to school and you have teachers that are cultural incompetent and don't understand you. A lot of the times you feel like they teach just because it's a job and you don't really have positive role models that come from your background or that speak your language. It almost as if it doesn't paint a positive picture for you. It is hard to imagine a future, a positive future, when you don't even see brown people doing positive thing in your community.

A future is a big, huge responsibility because whether they like it or not they are the role models for that kid. And so, Xicano studies is very important because basically it gives you the confidence to embrace who you are, where you come from. It also brings awareness of the the diversity—the patterns that historically connect us all from being oppressed and also our victories and just showing you the different cultures that have also struggled. When I started to learn about my culture I learned about the Xicanos, I learned about the Mexican revolution, I learned that people came together. It wasn't just MLK, but also Dolores Huerta, Ceasar Chavez, Raul Salazar in LA, different people in New Mexico, there were women that were fighting in the revolution. I started learning about the female struggle and becoming aware of Machismo... all these different things that were kind of taught or conditioned by our culture and also our American culture, it was like decolonizing. I felt that before, I myself was discriminatory of people who were black or people of color, because growing up we're taught that, we're taught that if we are darker. Families talk about, say things like, 'oh no, don't leave them out in the sun, you don't want then to get too dark.' It sounds like a bad thing in our culture to be dark. It is across the whole board, it is world-wide perspective. When you really study media, when you study the main actors in films, the people that are light skinned have the positive...

DL: Representation?

FG: Yes, it is always the dark people that are like the babysitters, the people that are cleaning and doing the gardening, or they are the Cholo, the gangster, and there is nothing wrong with those roles, but when it's the only roles available, and you don't see positive role models in your school, and then your mom and dad have to work two jobs, how does that make you feel? It made me feel hopeless to be brown in the US. Then you see drivebys and gangsters in your neighborhood. I don't know, to me, it only brings hopelessness. But when you study Xicano studies and I started learning about the Mexican muralists—I was influenced by hip hop and graffiti, but when I started learning about the Mexican muralists I realized, 'man, there was a hip hop movement before hip hop in the Bronx.' Because in the 60s and 70s they were doing placasos in LA.

You can go back to the Zoot Suit riots how they were wearing their clothing and they we're proud and they were having a struggle with authority and people in the military. And then you begin to see the similarities. And even when you take it back further with the Mexican muralists and how they were inspired by Posada who was a print marker spending the news in print. One thing that stood out to me that not only did they represent the issues that were happening in their community at the time, but they were also talking about what was happening in Germany with

the Holocaust. They were talking about the fascism that Hitler was bringing and they were very aware and conscious of the imperialistic authorities in the world. And so to me, when I saw those murals and learned about why they were making the art, it blew my mind away.

And then, being introduced to the Aztec culture by Diego Rivera and seeing it in his murals, and why they were so inspired by it... and Frida Kahlo who was half German and half Mexican, yet she embraced her indigenous roots more than anything, that to me was like 'Why? I want to know more.' And when I started to studying a little but more the indigenous art I fell in love with the Mayan hieroglyphs, and just knowing that in the glyphs they have numbers, letters and characters, brought me back to graffiti, that's what we have, letters numbers and characters. When they do danza, that is like breakdancing. When they sing, when they tell a story, or you read their poems, that's like rap. When you hear them making a beat with the drums, that's like DJ, carrying that rhythm. When you see the murals on the pyramids, that's us, paint murals on the street. And so seeing that culture, the murals and the pyramids, the Mexican muralists, it was like a timeline, going back in time. It just hit me all at once—in my face—and then I came back to Phoenix and felt like I returned from a time capsule or something.

DL: Beautiful! On a last note, do you have any advice for young Chicana artists?

FG: For young Xicano artists? Man, I recommend that people really study their roots, regardless of where you come from. I don't care if you call yourself Black, White, Yellow, just study your history and experiment with different types of art. Don't limit yourself to aerosols or paint, or acrylic or oils. Just venture, experiment, collaborate, network, build, give, and pray and it's always going to come back around full circle. You reap what you sow, and whenever you do something with your heart and you have good intentions, people are going to be receptive and good things will happen. We just have to keep creating positive ripples wherever we go, whether it is India or Mexico, the White House or jail, just carry that positive light, be proud of who you are and where you come from and always stay true to yourself and just grow.

DL: Thank you so much.

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