

Karen Mary Davalos, professor and Chair of the Loyola Marymount University Chicana/o Studies Department presented a paper entitled *Linda Vallejo: An Arc of Indigenous Spirituality and Indigenist Sensibility*.

Excerpt

Scholars in fields of art, literature, religion, and archeology have documented the relationship of Native people to place. As Chicana/o communities began to reformulate a collective identity in the 1960s and 1970s in opposition to Western notions of belonging and emphasized a radical sense of identity that pre-dates the Spanish conquest (1519), the formation of the United States (1776), and the US invasion of Mexico (1836), the cultural strategy to construct Aztlan as the mythic homeland allowed Chicanas and Chicanos to envision a place that could disrupt European and European American conceptions of home, heritage, and identity. This radical sense of place questioned the invisibility of Mexican-heritage peoples from the social, political, and historical landscape of the United States and Mexico. But it also has the potential to colonize Native American space, philosophy, and spirituality.

The indigenous aesthetic of artist **Linda Vallejo** contributes to and yet advances the Chicano cultural project of articulating a sense of place. Exploring forty years of visual production by Vallejo, this paper argues that the artist's indigenous aesthetic and lived experience advances Chicana/o visual arts by blending contemporary and ancient indigenous culture, philosophy, and sacred space. Vallejo, along with a group of collaborators, culturally and artistically works to bridge the Native peoples of Mexico and their descendants with those of Native America. Vallejo avoids a duplication of European settler colonialism, and this conceptual, spiritual, and political position makes a vital contribution to the evaluation of Chicano art as an unambiguous aesthetic project. **Linda Vallejo** is an artist whose life and work defies current expectations of Chicano and American art and advances both art historical categories. By way of conclusion, the paper considers how **Linda Vallejo** offers us new models and paradigms for examining Chicana/o visual art production. Her current series, *Make 'Em All Mexican*, is a provocative critique of belonging, space, and representation, which takes into account how the West determines and limits these notions. Using satire, appropriation, and deadpan humor, Vallejo repurposes classical paintings and popular images in order to expose the myths and functions of Western iconography. Yet, it is her use of the pun that also helps us to reconsider Chicana/o myth-making and how it too can function to reassert hierarchies of value that logically have no place in social justice movements. In her series, we see the possibility of healing from US hegemony in the region and from the coloniality of power. Her work is a path to visualize our healing from historic traumas and the derivative paradigms that can disempower or damage us, and our world.