

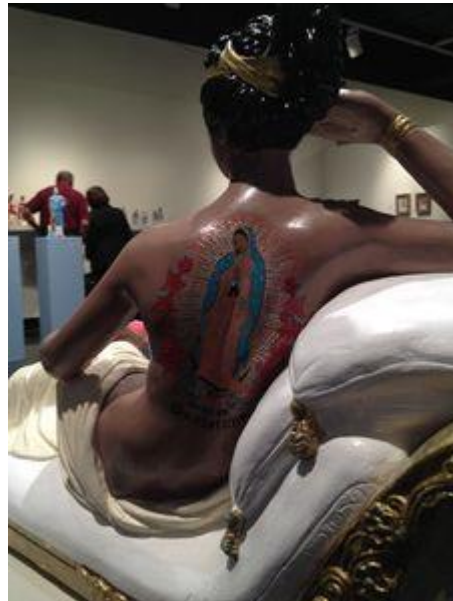
NMSU hosts art exhibition that sparks discussion on race

The Roundup

New Mexico State University

By Tara Melton, staff writer

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On Tuesday evening, New Mexico State University Art Gallery hosted artist **Linda Vallejo's** presentation on her art show, *Make 'em All Mexican*.

Vallejo's exhibition features a collection of repurposed icons and Western visual culture that the **Vallejo** "reclaimed" by painting their skin brown, changing noses, adding tattoos, bigger eyebrows and adding other visual aspects of Mexican culture.

Vallejo came up with her idea for this show after a 12 year period of making paintings of realism landscapes. She was getting very bored when she came upon the conclusion that as artist she had to "switch up or die." **Vallejo** had been constantly viewing galleries in other major cities to see what the rest of the art world was doing. The idea for this show dawned on her while shopping for antiques and seeing an old Dick and Jane book, which is a very iconic image in Western culture. She began remaking objects to look like her; a gesture **Vallejo** calls "an act of love."

The exhibit within the NMSU Art Gallery features iconic sculptures of everything from Disney princesses to George Washington to Marilyn Monroe, all of which have undergone a change of skin color.

Vallejo has been working on *Make 'em All Mexican* for three years and has seen a vast range of reactions, from laughter to anger, which depends on how the individual thinks about race and class. **Vallejo's** message from the show is to laugh to keep from crying. *Make 'em All Mexican* is

Make 'em All Mexican is very much a show about the politics of race in Western Culture, a subject that many people aren't comfortable talking about.

"The darker [my pieces] get, the madder people become," **Vallejo** said.

NMSU student, Michael Vogeli said his understanding of **Vallejo's** art is that, "Although skin color has changed, the image has stayed the same. We're all the same."

This show did not come cheap for **Vallejo**, who spent \$3,000 in antiques. **Vallejo** joked about Tuesday night saying, "they're either going to love it or hate it. Let's spend \$3,000 on antiques and test it out."

Vallejo encourages NMSU art students and artist to follow in her footsteps and not editorialize their art work. She urges artist to take the leap of faith and to always follow their gut feelings about crazy art ideas.

Make 'em All Mexican is being shown at 12 different galleries for the next 12 months, include some Universities and colleges because of the conversation that the context of the art evokes. **Vallejo's** vision for the show is to start a conversation in the general population for people stop looking at race, gender, sexuality and such as a quality in a person.

Make 'em All Mexican is available for viewing at the University Art Gallery until December 20 and is a must see for all.

The University Art Gallery is located in D.W. Williams Hall, near the intersection of University and Solano Avenues. All programs put on by the University gallery are free and open to the public. For more information on the artist Linda Vallejo can also be found on her official website, <http://www.lindavallejo.com>