

# DOWNTOWN CALENDAR

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ART REVIEW

## Chicano Artists Versus Chicano Art

Carmen Lomas Garza and Roberto Delgado Accept, Transcend Traditions in Loft District Show.

by Rob Kendt

With nature artist Linda Vallejo and multi-media portraitist Ramses Noriega at its helm, Downtown's Galeria Nueva is anything but canonical in its approach to "Chicano" art.

To Vallejo and Noriega, the only thing that unites work by Chicano artists is that they are Chicanos; the term describes the artists, not the art.

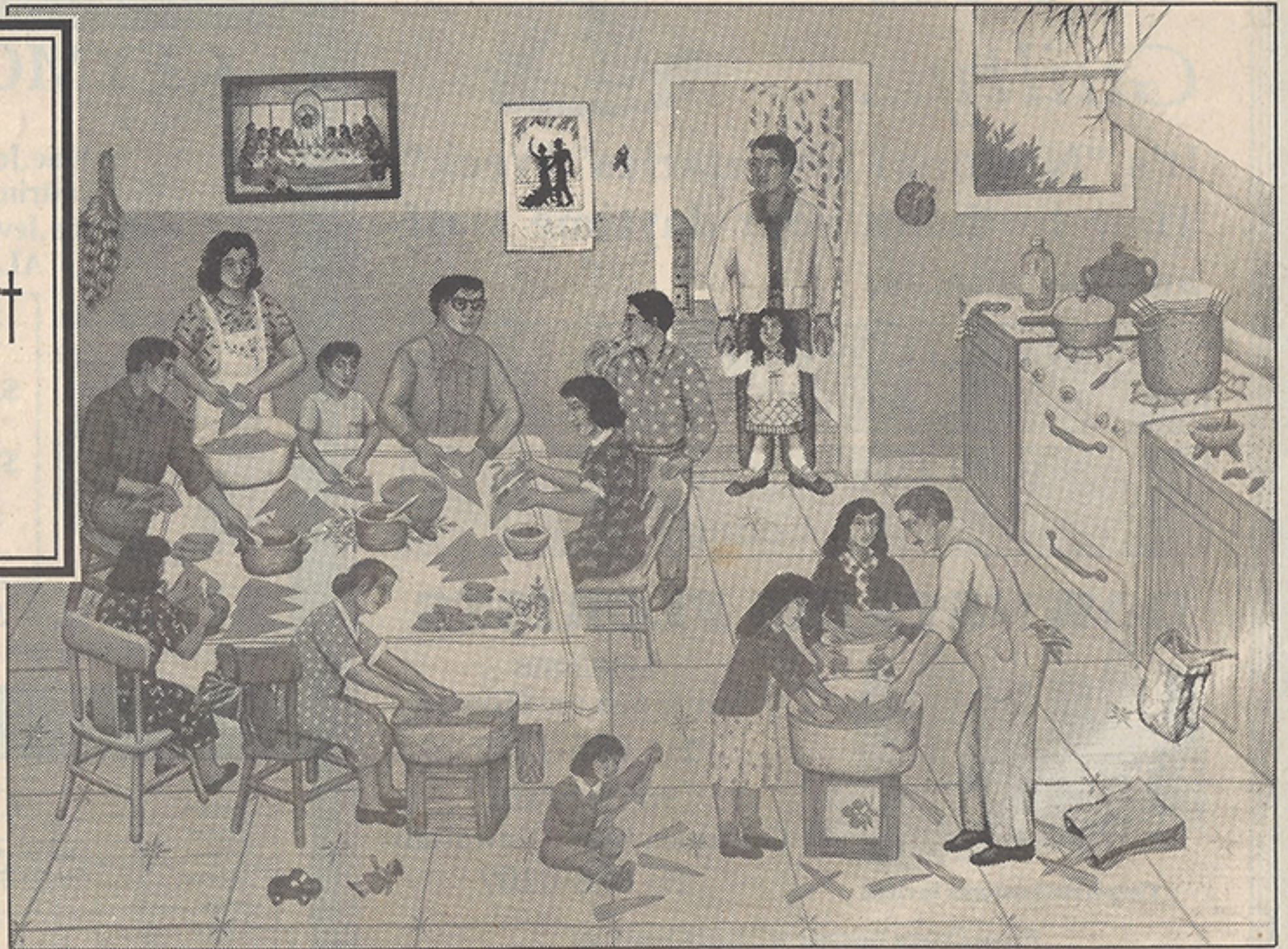
So it's no surprise that the gallery's current exhibit, "Tradition and Investigation," by painters Carmen Lomas Garza and Roberto Delgado, reflects that distinction, even as the title hints at the dichotomy of aesthetics defined by ethnicity.

the most popular Chicana/Latina artist in the country. Indeed, she is on the verge of touring with a national one-woman exhibit.

As Garza describes it, she made a conscious choice some two decades ago to change her approach to art.

"I was learning in the Western tradition, very abstract," Garza said in a recent interview at the gallery. "It wasn't reflecting my life at all."

"So, as part of the whole Chicano conscious-



Carmen L. Garza's "Tamalada" represents a colorful, though expected, domain of Chicano art at Galleria Nueva exhibit, "Tradition and Investigation."

ness reflect my experience, and the experiences of the community," Garza re-

art—with its flat perspectives, vibrant colors and involving details—is to

parts reflection and projection on common experiences and traditions that

There are intricate portrayals of home life as well as street life, not to mention a fantastic depiction of heaven and hell. The latter is rendered with the same everyday tenor of the other paintings, embracing the equivalency—indeed, the inseparability—of experience and myths.

*What often passes for "Chicano art" has the "imprimatur of white, middle class art patrons," says Roberto Delgado.*

**Everyday People**  
According to Vallejo, Carmen Lomas Garza is

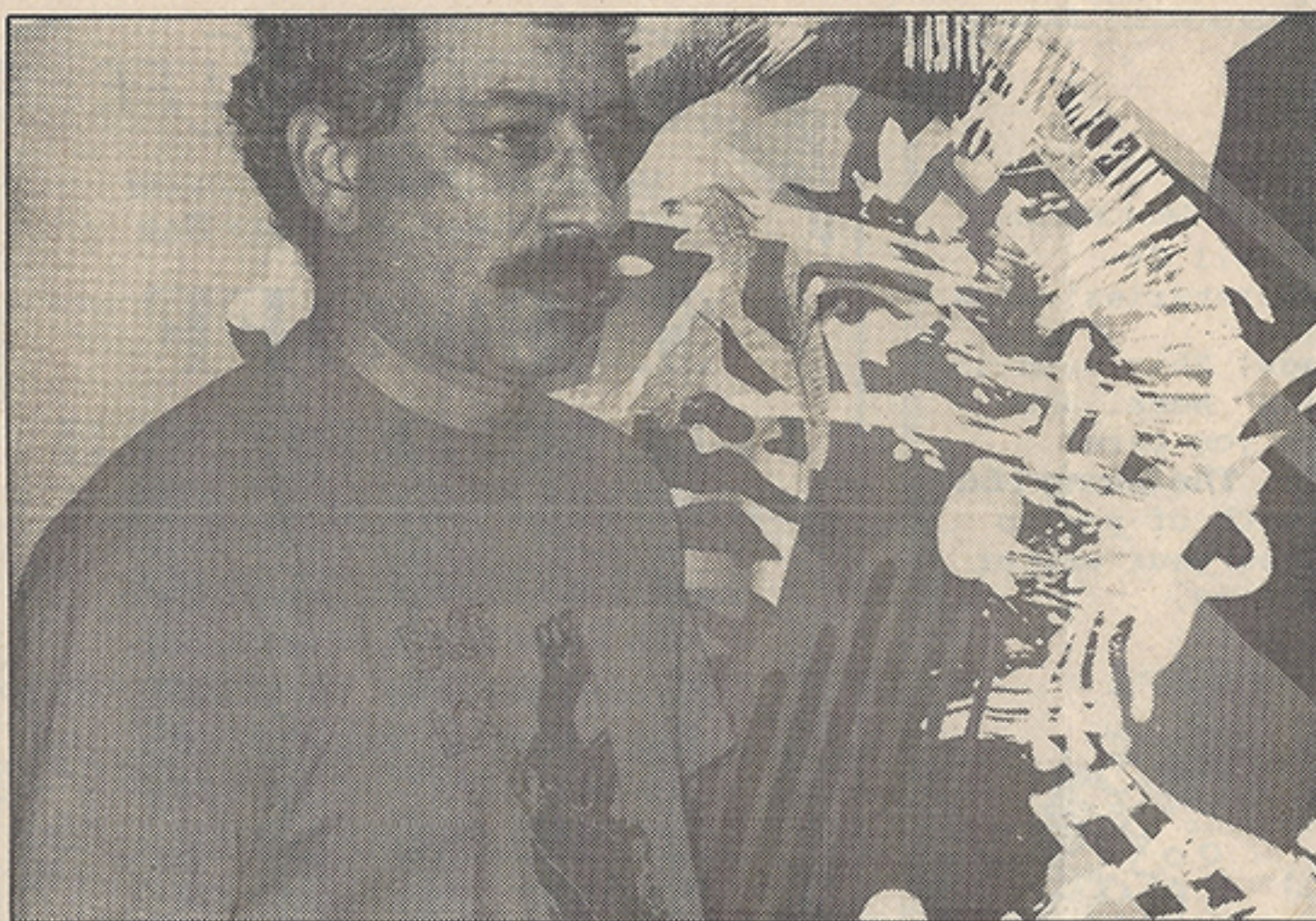
ness that was going on at that time, I decided to make my art directly

called. Looking at her accessible and openly pictorial

recognize a kind of self-initiated "folk" art, an aesthetic that is equal

infuse Chicano life in Garza's Texas home and elsewhere.

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Roberto Delgado stands near one of his muralistic compositions.

## Chicano Art in "Tradition and Investigation"

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**Un-"Chicanized"**  
Delgado's work is something else altogether. A muralist with a fiercely

distinct, personal style, he interlocks images and shadings with a complexity that is at first eye-boggling.

The initial aesthetic intrigue gives way, upon close viewing, to a recognition of recurring forms—upturned faces in a

kind of struggle—whose meanings may still elude some.

In fact, his paintings may cause a mental struggle between things viewers think they know about Latino art.

Gallery owner Vallejo calls him one of "foremost Chicano political artists," a major clarification. Suddenly it comes into focus: Delgado has done mural work in Nicaragua and Mexico as well as East L.A. There is a backlog informing every painting, and it is political.

"Most people don't notice it," Delgado admitted recently. "Maybe because of the mixed media they don't see it as clearly; the unfamiliar keys and forms."

"I'm sure that a First World art-goer who sees the form of a child in a disadvantageous position, with the look of someone who hasn't had a lot to eat, is less likely to feel it."

"But people who see their children die will see the connection; it may take them some time, but people aren't stupid. When their children are dying because there's not enough food, they start to realize it's because of something bigger than

them or the child."

Delgado exemplifies the Galeria Nueva ethos: fresh, un-"Chicanized" art. What often passes for a standard of "Chicano art" is based in iconography that has the "impr-

"That's not."

At Galeria Nueva, it all is.

"Tradition and Investigation," a two-person exhibition by Carmen Lomas Garza and Roberto Delgado, continues



Carmen L. Garza at Galeria Nueva show on East Third Street.

matur of white, middle-class art patrons," says Delgado.

"They have a nice European tradition, very defined, and they want Chicano experience to be similarly defined, to say, 'That's Chicano art,' and

through April 27 at Gallery Nueva; some works will be available for viewing through May 25. The Gallery is at 912 E. 3rd Street, suite 402, east of Alameda. Call 613-1347 for gallery hours.