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THE ICONOGRAPHY OF CHICANO SELF-DETERMINATION: RACE, ETHNICITY, AND CLASS

In several cities in the Southwest and Midwest with sizable enclaves of Chicanos, there are to be found considerable numbers of images that have become leitmotifs of Chicano art. In their ubiquity, these motifs demonstrate that the Chicano phase of Mexican-American art (from 1965 to the 1980s) was nationally dispersed, shared certain common philosophies, and established a network that promoted a hitherto nonexistent cohesion. In other words, it was a *movement*, not just an individual assembly of Mexican-descent artists. In what follows, Chicano art is examined as statements of conquered people countering oppression and determining their own destiny, though not all the producers of these images necessarily saw their production in the political way they are framed below. Examples have been chosen specifically to show how, in response to exploitation, artists have taken an affirmative stance celebrating race, ethnicity, and class.

Race

Without setting forth theories of how and why racism is instituted and continues to exist, it can be said briefly that the Anglo-Saxon settlers of

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the North American colonies brought racism with them from Europe; found it useful in the genocidal subjugation of the Indian peoples and the expropriation of their lands; used it as a rationalizing ideology for African slavery; and practiced it in the subjugation of the *mestizo* Mexicans in the nineteenth century. In the 1840s, when Anglos were anxious to seize Mexican territory, racial assertions bolstered that desire. Mexican soldiers, it was said, were "hungry, drawing, lazy half-breeds."¹ The occupation of Mexico was in order, since, as documented in the Illinois State Register, "the process which had been gone through at the north of driving back the Indians, or annihilating them as a race, has yet to be gone through at the south."² In the 1930s, one American schoolteacher claimed that the "inferiority of the Mexicans is both biological and class"³—a reference both to the Indian component of Mexican *mestizaje* and to the Spanish, who were considered among the "inferior" peoples of Europe because of their Moorish inheritance. Supposed racial inferiority eventually served to create in the United States a colonized cheap labor pool which not only worked for less at the dirtier, harder jobs but was used to threaten white workers demanding higher wages, shorter hours, and unions.

One of the first issues Chicano artists addressed in the 1960s was the question of their Indian heritage. The earliest expression was an embracing of pre-Columbian cultures in order to stress the non-European racial and cultural aspects of their background. Directly related to the question of racial identity, the 1969 Plan Espiritual de Aztlán, formulated at a national gathering in Denver, stated: "We are a Bronze People with a Bronze Culture."⁴ Actually, the earliest colonists moving northward from New Spain or Mexico in the sixteenth century had mingled with the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico, and that process continued throughout the centuries. However, under the pressure of Anglo racism, this fact was hidden or denied as Mexicans designated themselves "Spaniards."

In 1968, in Del Rey, California, Antonio Bernal painted two murals on the outside walls of the Teatro Campesino headquarters that exemplify the iconography prevalent in the politicized murals of the 1970s. On one panel, pre-Columbian elites line up in flat horizontal bands, headed by a woman. There is little doubt that this scene was borrowed from the Maya murals of Room I in the temple at Bonampak, Chiapas, Mexico. Like the all male standing dignitaries at Bonampak, the Bernal figures wear headdresses with long feathers. On the second panel is a sequence of admired leaders from the period of the Mexican Revolution to the present, headed by the figure of a *soldadera* (woman soldier—perhaps the legendary La Adelita) wearing a bandolier and carrying a curved sword.⁵ She is followed by revolutionaries Francisco "Pancho" Villa and Emiliano Zapata, the nineteenth-century outlaw-hero Joaquín Murieta, César Chávez of the United Farm Workers, Reis López Tijerina of the New Mexico

Fig.

land grant struggles, a Black Panther with the features of Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr. The figures in both murals are represented in appropriate garb with significant emblems and carrying objects related to their respective roles in the social process. All are organized processionally on a single ground line and are painted with unmodeled brilliant color against a plain background. Bernal applied the Maya style to modern as well as ancient personalities in order to establish a stylistic homogeneity. In what amounts to an affirmation of racial pride, the Spanish (presumably white) lineage is deemphasized while the dark-skinned indigenous heritage is stressed. The mural is unique in two respects: 1) for the prominence given activist women, which is unusually sensitive for this male-dominated period of Chicano art, and 2) for the suggested alliance between Mexicans and the African American civil rights movement, which seldom again comes up so directly.

Like Indianist culture in Latin America, Chicano indigenism was often of an archaizing and romantic character, setting up the values of Indian culture and civilization as an alternative to European values.⁶ In the search for an affirmation of heritage in the extinguished past, the urge toward the creation of a heroic mythology was strong. Thus, in cultural terms, the concept of Aztlán—which defines the Southwest as the home of the original Aztecs and therefore their link to the present Chicano population—is itself a speculative bit of history not verified by archaeology.

A parallel notion, widely disseminated in visual and literary forms by Chicanos (who were 90 percent working class until the mid twentieth century or later), is that they were the descendants of the elite rulers of the Aztec, Maya, or Toltec states. The hundreds, perhaps thousands, of pyramids, warriors, and adaptations of pre-Columbian religious sculptures and paintings, as well as of Aztec and Maya princes and princesses, that permeate Chicano art are a testimony to this preoccupation.

One of the most ubiquitous of the latter images derives from the purportedly Aztec legend of the lovers Popocatepetl ("the smoking mountain") and Ixtaccíhuatl ("the white woman"), the names of two snow-capped volcanoes from the rim of mountains surrounding the Valley of Mexico. In the most popular version, a princess dies and her warrior lover builds two pyramids, on one of which he places her; on the other he stands holding a torch to illuminate her sleeping body.⁷ Most versions of the story concur on the postures of the lovers: the peaked mountain represents the erect guardian, the flat-topped mountain is the sleeping woman. Almost invariably, however, Chicano images show the male figure carrying a voluptuous, often half-nude princess à la Tarzan and Jane. This melodramatic variation of the traditional iconography very probably derives from the popular chromolith calendars printed in Mexico and widely distributed with local advertising in Mexican communities of the

United States. The Texas sculptor Luis Jiménez modified the calendar-derived image in a color lithograph showing the scantily clad body of the princess draped across the warrior's knees in a manner reminiscent of Michelangelo's *Pietà*. The print includes also a blooming prickly pear cactus, an eagle, and a serpent—legendary symbols that led the nomadic Aztecs to their city of Tenochtitlán in the Valley of Mexico—as well as snow-clad volcanoes and a large maguey cactus.

Other scenes in Chicano art illustrate the fusing of pre-Columbian motifs with contemporary issues. One of the earliest such usages was the 1971 mural painted on two interior walls of a Las Vegas, New Mexico, high school by the Artes Guadalupanos de Aztlán.⁸ Their naive representation is tempered by adaptations of the dramatic foreshortening and polyangular perspective characteristic of Siqueiros. On one wall, dominated by feather-adorned pre-Columbian Indians, a sacrifice scene takes place. The second wall, echoing the first, illustrates modern sacrifice: a symbol of the Vietnam War, followed by a crucified Christ beneath whose arms a mother with twin babies surmounts a flag-draped coffin with the slogan "15,000 Chicanos muertos en Vietnam. Ya basta!" ("15,000 Chicanos Dead in Vietnam. Enough!"). Functioning in a similar vein is a 1973 poster by Xavier Viramontes of San Francisco in which the slogan "Boycott Grapes" is flanked by red, white, and black thunderbird flags of the United Farm Workers Union. Above, a brilliantly colored feather-bonneted pre-Columbian warrior holds in his hands bunches of grapes from which blood drips over the words.⁹

Some indigenous motifs illustrate the recognition by Chicano artists that modern North American Indians have been similarly oppressed. For example, Victor Ochoa rendered a modern Native American on the exterior wall of the Centro Cultural de la Raza of San Diego: the Apache chief Geronimo, whose consistent defiance of the government in the late nineteenth century serves as a symbol for contemporary resistance.¹⁰ Alliances between Chicanos and Native Americans appear also in a silkscreen poster produced in the mid-1970s by the Royal Chicano Air Force (RCAF) of Sacramento. A nineteenth-century Indian is shown with painted face and a feather in his hair; half of his face is covered by a U.S. flag from which blood drips. The slogan states "Centennial Means 500 years of Genocide! Free Russell Redner, and Kenneth Loudhawk."¹¹ No images of Chicanos appear in the poster; nevertheless, a Chicano presence and an endorsement of Native American struggles that paralleled the Chicanos' own are implied by the RCAF logo that appears on the poster.

More recently Chicano artists have reflected their empathy, brotherhood, and involvement with the Maya Indians of Central America, who are resisting genocidal decimation from dictatorial governments supported by U.S. military aid and advisers. Such artworks are Yreina Cervera's 1983 silkscreen on Guatemala, *Victoria Océlotl*, and Roberto

Delgado's series of monotypes titled *Border Series* in which silhouetted pre-Columbian designs and shadowy Indian figures of today are interlaced with helicopters. As in Vietnam, the U.S.-supplied helicopters of Central American warfare against civilian populations have become the visual symbols of violent repression.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is not an individual construct but the residue of societal processes that may have taken generations to evolve. Without embarking on a discussion of the nationalism to which ethnicity is obviously related, we can define it as a set of activities, traits, customs, rituals, relationships, and other emblems of signification that are rooted in group histories and shared to differing degrees by the members of a given national/ethnic group.

Perhaps the greatest difference between nationality and ethnicity is that the former is a given, that it exists by virtue of birth in a certain place and time, and that its manifestations are transparent enough not to be open to question. More concretely, a national group is considered such when it is politically independent (like a "sovereign state") no matter how loose or rudimentary its structure, no matter how dependent or infiltrated it may be by other states. Ethnicity, however, needs to be maintained, and is often in an embattled posture vis-à-vis a dominant national culture that surrounds and threatens to overwhelm (either acculturate or totally assimilate) an ethnic identity separated by years or generations from its original source. A multicultural and multiethnic political structure such as that of the United States is extremely likely to be large and complex enough to involve social stratification and the crosscutting of ethnicity with social inequality. Both these factors exacerbate ethnic consciousness, since the experience of discrimination is related to one's identity and thus to one's ethnicity, which is an important aspect of that identity.¹²

There is evidence to suggest that, beginning in the late 1970s, with the possibility and actualization of social mobility for a segment of educated Chicanos, ethnicity—severed from its socioeconomic aspirations for an entire group—has become an acceptable component of dominant ideology. Nevertheless, true to form, the multiethnic political structure has exerted its defining and structuring powers by conflating all "ethnics" of Latin American descent into a single group designated as "Hispanic." At the same time, the practice of milder and subtler stereotyping continues to be exercised as the occasion arises. Needless to say, the "acceptable ethnics" are those who can be assimilated into the middle class and accept the values of the "American Dream" as a realizable goal.

When Anglo-Americans first began to penetrate areas of the South-

west, then part of Mexico, many points of disagreement became apparent. The Anglos spoke English, were primarily Protestants, came from primarily southern states, and were proslavery; the Mexicans were Spanish-speaking, Catholic, tolerant of feudal peonage but opposed to slavery. Their diets were different, their family attitudes at variance, their racial stock was diverse. As conquerors, the Anglo-Americans attacked not only the political and economic power of the former Mexican territory but the culture of its inhabitants. "Colonialism," said Frantz Fanon, "is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip. . . . By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it."¹³ As the dominant society and controller of power, the Anglos continued their attack upon Mexican culture from the time of penetration to the present—through stereotypes, the prohibition of spoken Spanish at schools, and the scorning of cultural manifestations. Chicano artists therefore attacked stereotypes, insisted not only on the use of Spanish but also on the validity of "interlingualism,"¹⁴ and stressed the celebration of cultural symbols that identified their ethnicity.

The stereotype, critic Craig Owens writes, is "a form of symbolic violence exercised upon the body [or the body politic] in order to assign it to a place and to keep it in its place. [It] works primarily through intimidation; it poses a threat . . . [it] is a gesture performed with the express purpose of intimidating the enemy into submission." The insidious aspects of such gestures is that they "promote passivity, receptivity, inactivity—docile bodies. . . . To become effective, stereotypes must circulate endlessly, relentlessly throughout society" so that everyone may learn their significations.¹⁵ It is abundantly clear that the dominant culture persistently considers cultural traits differing from its own to be *deficientes*; the cultures being declared deficient (black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Filipino, and hundreds of Native American groups) are considered so with respect to Anglo culture—a reflection of the ideologies that have served to justify the relationship of inequality between European and Third World peoples.¹⁶

As an image, the Virgin of Guadalupe has a long history in Mexico as the nation's patron saint. In the United States, that image has been carried on all farmworker demonstrations. It is a constantly repeated motif in artworks of all kinds, an affirmation of institutional and folk Catholicism. The institutional aspect of the Guadalupe began in 1531 as part of the evangelical process directed at the indigenous people by the Spanish Catholic Church. Evangelization was accomplished by means of a misanthropic event: the apparition of a *morena* (dark-skinned) Indian Virgin to a humble peasant, Juan Diego, at Tepeyac, site of the shrine dedicated to the benevolent Aztec earth goddess Tonantzin—or "our mother."

A series of paintings and mixed-media works (1978–79) by the San Francisco artist Yolanda López takes the Virgin through a number of

permutations. In one she addresses the syncretic nature of Mexican Catholicism, identifying the Guadalupe with Tonantzin by surrounding the latter with *guadalupana* symbols of mandorla, crown, star-covered cloak, crescent moon, angel wings, and four scenes from the Virgin's life. In others of the series, she places her grandmother, or her mother, or a modern Mexican Indian woman and child, or the artist herself as a runner, in various ensembles combined with the Virgin's symbols—a total secularization. When charged with sacrilege, López defended her images as those of "Our Mothers, the Mothers of us all."¹⁷ The syncretic revival of Coahuilicue/Tonantzin in conjunction with the Guadalupe pays tribute not only to the racial and religious affirmations of the Chicano movement but to the particular idols of feminist artists as well.

Among ethnic affirmations that appear in Chicano artworks in response to scornful denigration from the dominant culture are the inclusion of foods such as the humble tortilla, bean, chile pepper, and *nopal* (prickly pear cactus); the use of the Spanish language in texts; the rites of folk healing among rural Mexicans; the image of the *calavera* (skull or animated skeleton) as a death motif; and the celebration of the Día de los Muertos—an annual cemetery ritual in rural Mexican communities (which, ironically, is slowly disappearing with Mexican urbanization and has long been commercialized for the tourist trade).¹⁸ Since the early 1970s, Día de los Muertos ceremonies have been celebrated increasingly in the Chicano barrios of large cities, sometimes with processions. Home altars associated with the Día de los Muertos were revived by Chicanos for gallery display, using the folk crafts and traditional format but also introducing contemporary variations. One example by San Francisco artist René Yáñez includes images of Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, skeletons, and a hologram within a domed form of El Santo—a mysterious and legendary Mexican wrestler of the 1940s whose trademark was a silver head mask slit only at the eyes, nose, and mouth, and who maintained his anonymity like Superman's Clark Kent.¹⁹ On this cloth-covered altar, accompanied by two candlesticks made of twisted wire "flames," El Santo has truly become a "saint" as well as an icon of popular culture. Like López's Guadalupe, Yáñez's altar has been divested of any religious intent.

Although the Mexican presence in the United States predates the Anglo, it has constantly been increased and reinforced by Mexican immigration to provide rural and urban labor. The greatest movement of people north was during the years of the Mexican Revolution, roughly 1910 to 1920, and many of these immigrants headed to the big cities of Los Angeles and San Antonio, where a particularly urban ethnic expression arose by the 1940s: the Pachuco. The most famous (or infamous) attack against the Pachucos was that known as the "Zoot Suit Riots" fanned by the Hearst press in 1943 in which xenophobic U.S. servicemen invaded the

barrios and downtown areas of Los Angeles to strip and beat the zootsuiters in the name of "Americanism." (This was the same period in which Japanese in the U.S. were herded into concentration camps.)

Some Chicanos have glamorized the Pachuco into the status of a folk hero—as did Luis Valdez in the play *Zoot Suit*, where the proud defiance of the Pachuco character created by Edward James Olmos epitomizes the myth. El Pachuco, in the play, becomes the alter ego of Mexican American youth, the guardian angel who represents survival through "macho" and "cool hip" in the urban "jungle" filled with racist police, judges, and courts. In the 1940s, a policeman actually stated that "this Mexican element considers [fisticuffs in fighting] to be a sign of weakness. . . . All he knows and feels is the desire to use a knife . . . to kill, or at least let blood." This "inborn characteristic," said the policeman, makes it hard for Anglos to understand the psychology of the Indian or the Latin.²⁰ The "inborn characteristic" was a reference to pre-Columbian sacrifice, especially by the Aztecs, and the inference, of course, is that since the Aztecs were savages, so are their descendants.

The real Pachuco, drawn from family portraits of the time, is a less heroic personage, in his baggy pants, long coat, and chain borrowed from black entertainer Cab Calloway, and as he was immortalized in Mexican film by Tin Tan as an expression of border culture. This is how he is presented in paintings by César A. Martínez of San Antonio, which derive from old family photograph albums of the 1940s. Martínez's style is totally contemporary in its use of fields of thickly brushed paint and in its pop consciousness which allows the inclusion of an entire logo, with parrot and tree limb of La Parot Hi-Life Hair Dressing, above the image of a Pachuco combing back his thick hair in the characteristic "ducktail" style of the 1940s.

Class

Class divisions in the southwestern United States, which was once part of New Spain and Mexico, have existed since the first conquest in 1598. Juan de Oñate, a millionaire silver-mine owner from Zacatecas, Mexico, then led an expedition into New Mexico, colonizing the area and subjugating the Indians. In the semifeudal, semimercantile, preindustrial period that followed, Indians and lower-class mestizos formed the "working class." With the Anglo conquest in 1848, some Anglos married women from wealthy Mexican landowning families to form a bilingual upper class (in southern Texas and California, particularly), but by and large Mexicans in the Southwest were stripped of their land and proletarianized. As *vaqueros* (the original cowboys, to be distinguished from the elegantly dressed *charros* of the upper classes), as miners, as members of railroad section gangs, as agricultural laborers—and more recently as

industrial and service workers—Mexican Americans and Chicanos have been mostly of the working class.

Emigdio Vásquez of Orange, California, fills his murals and easel paintings with both well-known and anonymous heroes of the agricultural and industrial working class derived from historical and contemporary photographs, but without the impersonality of photorealism. His mural *Tribute to the Chicano Working Class* introduces an Aztec eagle warrior, a Chicano, and a Mexican revolutionary, followed by a railroad boiler-maker, a rancher, a miner, and migrant crop pickers. The procession ends with portraits of César Chávez and a representative of the Filipino workers in the fields of Delano, California, who formed an alliance with the Mexican workers to set up what, in the 1960s, became the United Farm Workers Union.

Following on the heels of the black civil rights struggle in the United States, which influenced all the subsequent social-protest movements of the 1960s, farmworkers' activism provided a most important class enemy for Chicanos. It was an economic movement but also a cultural one, expressing itself with a flag (the black thunderbird on a red-and-white ground), the Virgin of Guadalupe banner in all processions, and the magazine *El Malcriado* with caricatures by Andy Zermeno and reproductions of Mexican graphics. During the course of the very effective grape boycott, the Nixon administration increased its purchase of grapes for the military forces. In one issue of *El Malcriado*, therefore, Zermeno shows Nixon himself being fed grapes by a fat grower, who emerges from his coat pocket, while his bare feet trample out the "juice" of farmworkers' bodies in a wooden vat. On the ground, in a pool of wine/blood, lies a dead body labeled "La Raza." The legend across the cartoon reads "Stop Nixon." Another cartoon addresses the dangers of pesticide crop spraying. In it, a gas-masked aviator sweeps low over fleeing farm workers while clouds of poison envelop them. Rows of graves line the background.²¹

Other figures of labor who have found their way into Chicano art include workers in the steel mills of Chicago, the garment industry sweatshops of Los Angeles, and the Mexican maids (often undocumented) in Anglo households whose vocabulary is limited to the household, and for whose employers little books of Spanish phrases for giving orders have been printed in the Southwest. In recent years, Chicano artists have become increasingly involved with the question of undocumented workers crossing into the United States to supplement their inadequate Mexican income. Although these workers are secretly recognized by U.S. employers as beneficial to the economy (and business profits), the flow is unregulated and, in times of depression or recession, the workers are scapegoated in the media to divert unemployed U.S. workers from recognizing the source of their own misery. In this ideological campaign, the

border patrol of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) plays a brutal role by rounding up and harassing the Mexicans. The sculptor David Avalos of San Diego has made this theme a central part of his artistic production. In a mixed-media assemblage, Avalos combines an altar format with that of a donkey cart used for tourist photographs in the commercial zone of the border town of Tijuana, Mexico. His sardonic sense of humor is expressed in the sign painted before the untenanted shafts of the cart: "Bienvenidos amigos" ("Welcome Friends")—usually addressed to the U.S. tourist but not, of course, to the Mexican workers. The upper part of the cart, shaped like an altar with a cross above and a *nopal* cactus on either side below two votive candles, has been painted as a flower-filled landscape with barbed wire within which an INS officer searches an undocumented worker whose raised arms echo a crucifixion scene.

In poetically articulating the importance given the class struggle by Chicanos, the Plan Espiritual de Aztlán said the following: "Aztlán belongs to those who plant the seeds, water the fields, and gather the crops, and not to foreign Europeans." The Plan called for self-defense, community organizations, tackling economic problems, and the formation of a national political party. It called on writers, poets, musicians, and artists to produce literature and art "that is appealing to our people, and relates to our revolutionary culture."²² The note of self-determination, however romantically phrased, is struck here, in 1969.

In conclusion, it can be said that Mexican American and Chicano culture in the United States has been characterized by three manifestations: cultural resistance (which started at the time of the first contact with Anglo-American penetration of the Southwest); cultural maintenance, which includes all aspects of ethnicity; and cultural affirmation, which celebrates race, ethnicity, and class and reached its strongest and most national expression, in my opinion, during the Chicano period.

Notes

1. R. H. Dana, Jr., "Two Years before the Mast," quoted in Jack D. Forbes (ed.), *Aztecas del Norte: The Chicanos of Aztlán* (Greenwich, Conn., Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1973), 153.
2. *The Illinois State Register*, December 27, 1844, in Forbes, *Aztecas del Norte*, 153.
3. Quoted in Forbes, *Aztecas del Norte*, 157.
4. Luis Valdez and Stan Steiner (eds.), *Aztlán: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature* (New York, Vintage Books, 1972), 402–6.
5. The Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata appears in a famous photograph by Agustín V. Casasola with a rifle and a scabbarded sword. See *The World*

of Agustín Víctor Casasola, Mexico: 1900-1938 (Washington, D.C.: Fondo del Sol Visual Arts and Media Center, 1984), 49.

6. Jean Franco, *The Modern Culture of Latin America: Society and the Artist*, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), 120.

7. Frances Toot, *A Treasury of Mexican Folkways* (New York, Crown Publishers, 1979), 536] points out that for the ancient Aztecs, Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl were fertility gods worshiped with offerings and human sacrifices.

The love story probably originated with the romantics and symbolists of the nineteenth century. For example, the Mexican artist Saturnino Herrán, carrying on *fin-de-siècle* themes with an indigenist orientation, painted several versions of the legend, one in 1911. See *La leyenda de los volcanes in Saturnino Herrán: Pintor mexicano, 1887-1987* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1987), 57.

8. See Alan W. Barnett, *Community Murals, the People's Art* (Philadelphia: The Art Alliance Press, 1984), 193.

9. See *A través de la frontera* (Mexico City: Centro de Estudios Económicos y Sociales del Tercer Mundo, 1983), 81.

10. See Philip Brookman and Guillermo Gómez-Peña (eds.), *Made in Aztlán* (San Diego, Calif.: Centro Cultural de la Raza, 1986), 47.

11. Redner and Loudhawk were indicted in about 1975 in Oregon on a charge of alleged arms possession. For an image of the poster, see *A través de la frontera*, 64.

12. E. L. Cerroni-Long, "Ideology and Ethnicity: An American-Soviet Comparison," *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 14, no. 3 (Fall 1986): 5.

13. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 210.

14. Interlingualism is the term applied to the use of multiple languages in literature or speech. Chicano literature and poetry, for example, have employed as many as five idioms in one work: standard English, black English, Spanish, the Caló vernacular, and words from pre-Hispanic Indian languages.

15. Craig Owens, "The Medusa Effect or, The Spectacular Ruse," in *We Won't Play Nature to Your Culture: Barbara Kruger* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1983), 7.

16. For further information about cultural-deficiency theories and their evaluation, see Mario Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 176-82.

17. Interview with the artist, 1983.

18. See Néstor García Canclini, "¿Fiestas populares o espectáculos para turistas?" in *Plural*, no. 116 (March 1982): 48.

19. Yáñez himself assumed the identity of El Santo in a 1977 performance piece: covering his head with a Santo mask, he read a poem about human survival in Chile while a dagger floated above him.

20. See Carey McWilliams, *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 234.

21. The cartoons about Nixon and pesticide spraying appear in the issues of October 15, 1968, and February 15, 1969, respectively.

22. Valdez and Steiner, *Aztlán*, 403.

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HOMOGENIZING HISPANIC ART

Homogenize: "to blend (diverse elements) into a uniform mixture; to make homogeneous."

Webster's Dictionary

I think it's a very handsome, very attractive show. The one criticism I would level [is that] many Hispanics have been involved politically, and any social or political context has been edited out of the work.

Luis Jiménez, Chicano artist

I am angry because a show such as this does not recognize the Hispanic experience which began as a "grassroots movement." Once again our resources are being appropriated and North American aesthetic tastes are determining what is Latin American art.

Nilda Peraza, Puerto Rican, director of the Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, New York.

I heard from the artists that the curators were looking for specific imagery: something very ethnic, very exotic, expressionistic, representational, funky-looking.

Inverna Lockpez, Cuban, director of INTAR Latin American Gallery, New York

Co-organized by Houston's Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) and the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the exhibition "Hispanic Art in the United States: Thirty Contemporary Painters and Sculptors" lays to rest

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