

14 Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation, 1965-1985. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990.

The Political and Social Contexts
of Chicano Art¹

SHIFRA M. GOLDMAN and TOMAS YBARRA-FRAUSTO

The Chicano political movement grew out of an alliance in the 1960s of farmworkers struggling to unionize in California and Texas, the disenfranchised and dispossessed land grant owners of New Mexico, the urban working classes of the Southwest and Midwest, and the growing student movement across the country. All these were essential participants in the Chicano Movement, but not all embraced the term Chicano.

Although great economic struggles, supported by national boycotts, took place in the rural areas and were the unifying symbol of the Chicano Movement, many of the political and cultural activities of the 1960s and 1970s were centered in cities, where the greatest number of Mexican Americans and Chicanos live today. Urban issues included police brutality, violations of civil rights, low-paid employment, inadequate housing and social services, gang warfare, drug abuse, inadequate and irrelevant education, and lack of political power. The Vietnam War was a crucial issue, and antiwar sentiment was growing. From the mid-1960s on, students were the shock troops of the urban movement.

The Chicano art movement—which in this period was a movement rather than simply a collection of individuals—arose toward the end of the 1960s. The history of the movement can be divided into two periods: from 1968 to 1975 and from 1975 to 1981 and beyond. The first period was marked by the noncommercial community-oriented attitudes and expectations of the art groups, the purposes they served, the audiences they addressed, the facilities established to promote their arts, and the collectives that flourished. The second period witnessed changes in the dynamics of an art movement subject to the fluctuations of the political movement and the imperatives of the dominant society to which that art was opposed. Crucial to this second period was the changing perception of the Chicano role in the United States and in the international arena, a perception that brought an end to separatism for most Chicanos and a closer alignment with the Third World, especially Latin American, struggles. Consideration of gender issues contributed to this change. At the same time, some segments of the Chicano community tried to assimilate into the dominant society and its values and to commercialize the content and dissemination of their art.

A high sense of idealism was intrinsic to the 1968–75 period. That idealism emphasized community-oriented and public art forms, such as

Fig. 1. Antonio Bernal, untitled mural, 1968, enamel on wood, Teatro Campesino headquarters, Del Rey, California

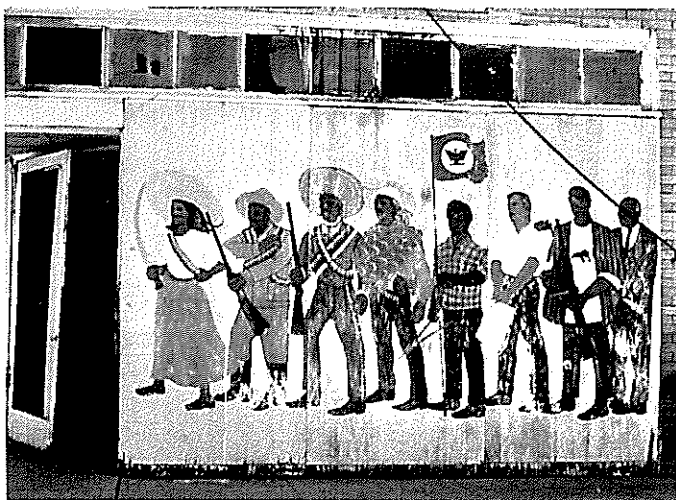


Fig. 2. Emigdio Vásquez, *Tribute to the Chicano Working Class* (detail), 1979, mural, Cypress Street, Orange, California

making posters and painting murals, and the development of artistic collectives. It also insisted on political and ethnic themes. Art was part of a whole movement to recapture, at times romantically, a people's history and culture and formed part of the struggle for self-determination.

In the early period, the youth and students of the movement developed a cultural nationalist philosophy that was separatist in nature. The utopian "El plan espiritual de Aztlán" (The Spiritual Plan of Aztlán), adopted in March 1969 at a huge Chicano Youth Conference in Denver, was the most influential expression of that philosophy. It called for reclamation and control of lands stolen from Mexico (the U.S. Southwest), anti-Europeanism, an insistence on the importance and glory of the brown-skinned Indian heritage, and an emphasis on humanistic and nonmaterialistic culture and education. It proclaimed that Aztlán (the Southwest from which, presumably, the Aztecs came) "belongs to those who plant the seeds, water the fields, and gather the crops, and not to foreign Europeans.... We are a Bronze People with a Bronze culture." The plan committed all levels of Chicano society to the cause: "We must insure that our writers, poets, musicians, and artists produce literature and art that is appealing to our people and relates to our revolutionary culture. Our cultural values of life, family, and home will serve as a powerful weapon to defeat the gringo dollar value system and encourage the process of love and brotherhood."² Thus a few pages of text established not only the ideals but also the themes of Chicano art and letters: the life, history, and heritage of a working class, Indian, spiritual, and revolutionary people.³

ISSUES AND IMAGES⁴

Civil Rights

The turbulent 1960s, which saw the genesis of the Mexican American struggle known as the Chicano Movement, were influenced by the Black civil rights movement that began in 1956 when Mrs. Rosa Parks refused to obey the Montgomery, Alabama, law providing for segregation on city buses. Many Chicano artists now past the age of thirty-five were influenced by the Black civil rights movement, whose images appear in their art. One of the earliest manifestations of that influence is Antonio Bernal's mural in Del Rey, California,

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Fig. 3. Andrew Zerneño, *Don Sotaco*, from *El Malcriado*



which depicts Martin Luther King, Jr., along with other Black leaders (fig. 1). Other artists used the images of George Jackson and the Soledad (California) case and of Angela Davis in their work. The civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King, Jr., generally espoused non-violence; however, some Black resisters preached self-defense against violence and advocated using guns if necessary.⁵ Malcolm X and the Black Panthers militantly expressed the anger of their community, as did the Brown Berets and the Comancheros del Norte for their community. Black Panther graphic artist Emory Douglas was widely known and respected in the San Francisco Bay area, while Black artist and muralist William Walker was influential in Chicago. In both Chicago and San Francisco, the civil rights and Third World movements of the late 1960s included a spectrum of Black, Latino, Asian, and White artists working in concert.

The Cuban Revolution

The Cuban Revolution of 1959 ushered in the decade of the 1960s and had tremendous repercussions among Latinos throughout Latin America and the United States. It was especially significant for Mexicans, who in 1910 had launched the first revolution of the twentieth century in the Americas. Although it had been truncated over the years, the Mexican Revolution was an important symbol for the Mexican communities of the Southwest.

Almost from the beginning of the revolution, the Cuban government supported culture and the arts, and Cuba generated an outstanding collection of posters, billboards, and films. By 1970, knowledge of Cuban posters became widespread in the United States through publication of the oversized picture book *The Art of Revolution: Castro's Cuba, 1959–1970*.⁶ In San Francisco, the Chicano-run Galería de la Raza mounted an exhibit of photographs of Cuba and silkscreen posters by Cuban artist René Mederos. This was in 1970; in 1974 Chicano artist Juan Fuentes organized a Cuban poster exhibit at San Francisco's Palace of the Legion of Honor. Exposure to Cuban posters was very important for the burgeoning Chicano poster movement of northern California, one of the strongest in the country.

Labor: The Farmworkers Movement

Labor conflict, particularly in the large factory-farms of California, was not unique to the 1960s (fig. 2). Almost without exception every strike in which Mexicans partici-

pated in the 1930s and after was broken by vigilantes, official violence, and deportations. The chief difference in the 1960s was that César Chávez and the United Farm Workers (UFW) challenged the so-called green giants and succeeded. In addition, because of its creative organizing methods, the UFW brought the labor struggle to the attention of the nation and the world. In the organizing process, two strong visual symbols became central to Chicano visual artists: the Virgin of Guadalupe and the red, black, and white thunderbird flag appeared in virtually every procession and demonstration. In addition, from 1964 on, the union began publishing the bilingual, biweekly newspaper *El Malcriado: The Voice of the Farmworker*, which prominently featured graphics and photography. Andy Zerneño, the staff cartoonist for many years, produced effective caricatures on issues affecting the farmworkers, from the boycott of grapes to the activities of Richard Nixon. Zerneño invented a folksy character called Don Sotaco (the underdog), who was constantly the butt of the outrageous behavior of the patroncito and Don Coyote (the boss and the labor contractor; fig. 3). For its covers, *El Malcriado* used the prints of nineteenth-century Mexican engraver José Guadalupe Posada, whose famous calaveras (animated skeletons) swept the Chicano art movement. It also displayed prints by the Taller de Gráfica Popular (TGP, the Popular Graphic Arts Workshop) of Mexico, thus famil-

iarizing Chicano artists with Mexican social protest art.⁷

The entire Chicano Movement responded energetically to the activities of the farmworkers. In particular, thousands of city dwellers across the nation participated in the grape and lettuce boycotts. The Movement's first cultural expression was that of the Teatro Campesino, which Luis Valdez created in 1965 in Delano, California, to teach and organize Chicano farmworkers. After performing in the Southwest, the company toured the country to publicize the strike and established El Centro Cultural, an independent farmworkers' cultural center in Del Rey, California. At the Centro, the theater developed *History Happenings*, with puppets and music, and artists taught music and art to the community.⁸

Antonio Bernal's 1968 two-panel mural at El Centro Cultural is one of the earliest Chicano murals in California. It embodies a double theme: one panel, reminiscent of the Bonampak murals in Mexico, depicts pre-Columbian personages in a linear arrangement headed by a woman; the other panel, headed by La Adelita of the Mexican Revolution, depicts Mexican, Mexican American, and Chicano leaders. The mural ends with the images of a Black Panther and Martin Luther King, Jr. Iconographically, Bernal's mural intertwines themes and allegiances that were later spelled out in thousands of Chicano murals across the country in multiple ways and combinations. This mural is unusual because it gave women a prominent and active role and paid homage to Black leaders by placing them on the same level as the Mexican leaders.

It is not possible to overestimate the importance of the UFW struggle and its counterparts in the Midwest and Texas for the Chicano art movement. Salvador Roberto "Queso" Torres of San Diego executed a series of easel paintings called *La Huelga* (The Strike) on variations of the UFW eagle. For several years, painter Carlos Almaraz of Los Angeles made banners for the UFW's conventions, and in 1974, he and a group of young people in East Los Angeles painted an enormous (now vanished) mural with the slogan "Don't Buy Gallo Wine." Amado M. Peña of Austin, Texas, designed several posters for the Texas UFW. One, a silkscreen print of a bleeding head of lettuce, urged viewers not to buy nonunion lettuce.

Chicano art iconographical studies that would reveal the extent, variety, and significance of the ways in which Chicano artists expressed the struggles of farmworkers to unionize are lacking and need further research.

Education: The Student and Youth Movements

1968 was a year of international student protest. The student movement began four years earlier with the Free Speech Movement at the University of California, Berkeley. In 1964 students challenged the administration to respect their right to use the free speech zone on campus to articulate the political issues of the day. Chicano students, in particular, responded to the student demonstrations in Mexico during the 1968 Olympic games, the graphics of that movement, and the Tlatelolco massacre of protesters on October 2 that brought these events to world attention.⁹

Chicanismo evolved from the student movement and radicalized politics. It engaged and promoted the issues of national identity, dignity, self-worth, pride, uniqueness, and cultural rebirth. Primarily a youth movement, it nevertheless cut across class, regional, and occasionally generational lines. The mystiques of nationalism and indigenism contained within the concept of Chicanismo unified a heterogeneous movement; they cemented the national network of students and youth that began to form in the second half of the 1960s.

An early set of events that produced a large cultural expression was the East Los Angeles high school blow-outs, in which students went on strike to demand relevant education and protest the behavior of racist teachers. In May 1969 the committee that had organized students around these educational demands put on the Fiesta de los Barrios at Lincoln High School. For four days, the festival entertained about ten thousand people with Chicano music, dance, literature, art, and food.

The Chicano student and youth movement was fertile soil for Chicano artists. Despite sympathetic and influential teachers in many schools, institutional disinterest or hostility forced Chicano art students to research their cultural roots and heritage outside the system and to develop an artistic language of protest and self-identification. Perhaps the most important structure for artistic education and dissemination was and continues to be the network of alternative art centers and galleries. Artists functioning as teachers in the local community, as muralists and mural art directors, and as exhibiting artists, gathered in centers and galleries that provided an outlet for their didactic and aesthetic energies. Numerous lectures, conferences, and round tables were sponsored by or held on the temporary and permanent premises of centers such as Casa Aztlán in Chicago or the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center in San Antonio.

Chicano studies and research libraries, academic departments, student organizations such as the United Mexican American Students (UMAS), and groups such as the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO), which later became the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA), were instrumental in getting commissions for murals on college and university campuses, publishing student newspapers and magazines that included works of art, pressuring campus art galleries to organize and sponsor Chicano art exhibits, and establishing archives of Chicano culture and, occasionally, film. In the late 1960s and early 1970s *Semanas de la Raza* were popular on college campuses. Generally held around May 5 or September 16, traditional Mexican holidays, these festivals presented visual arts and other cultural forms during a week of activities.

The Vietnam War Protest Movement

From 1964 to 1972, the United States fought an intense military war in Vietnam that eventually spread to Cambodia and Laos. By early 1968, the war had produced fifty thousand American dead, two hundred and fifty thousand wounded, untold numbers of Vietnamese casualties, and U.S. brutalities like the My Lai massacre. It had also touched the conscience of many Americans. Early opposition to the war came from the civil rights movement and from other peoples of color who felt that too many of their own were dying in what they considered a White man's war. Eventually the antiwar movement was instrumental in bringing the war to an end.

As early as 1967 Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales of Denver's Crusade for Justice and Reies López Tijerina of New Mexico's La Alianza Federal de Mercedes (the Federal Alliance of Land Grants) spoke at an East Los Angeles antiwar rally. In 1969, the newly formed National Chicano Moratorium Committee held its first demonstration in Los Angeles, followed by hundreds of local Chicano moratoria in cities across the nation. These actions culminated in the National Moratorium in East Los Angeles on August 29, 1970, which involved between twenty and thirty thousand persons.¹⁰ Deputy sheriffs and the police broke up the demonstration, and the ensuing violence led to the death of *Los Angeles Times* newsman Rubén Salazar, who was killed by a tear gas projectile while sitting in the Silver Dollar Cafe. That same year the deaths of four protesting students at Kent State University received far wider news coverage than that of Salazar.

Strongly moved, Chicano artists commemorated these events in murals, posters, paintings, and documentary films. Images of the march, the attack by the police, the officers gathered outside the Silver Dollar, and Rubén Salazar portrayed as a martyr appeared during succeeding years in many works of art.

The American Indian Movement and Chicano Neoindigenism

In the first half of the 1960s, Indian communities and nations, which had been battling genocide and land expropriation long before the twentieth century, again raised the embarrassing topic of treaties violated by the United States government. Indians held so-called fish-ins in Washington state, a pan-Indian group occupied Alcatraz Island, Navajos and Hopis of New Mexico protested strip mining at Black Mesa, and Pit River Indians of northern California occupied their former lands. The most widely publicized and dramatic event occurred in 1973 when the Oglala Sioux occupied Wounded Knee village at the Pine River Reservation in South Dakota, the site of a massacre by the U.S. Cavalry in 1890. The occupation symbolized the demand for Indian land and rights, and many, including Chicano activists, joined the Oglala Sioux.

Ironically, the Indians of the Southwest had been conquered (controlled, placed in peonage, or enslaved) first by the Spanish and mestizo invaders and colonizers of the seventeenth century. By the nineteenth century, however, both Indians and Mexicans had been subjugated by the Anglos, who were armed with variations of the Manifest Destiny ideology. The process of Anglo usurpation of land affected both groups, and alliances between them were common. Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the borderlands, especially in the Rio Grande Valley from El Paso to Taos, had long made common cause with the sedentary Indian communities against the nomadic and warlike Comanche and Apache raiders, who never accepted Spanish political domination.¹¹

In the 1960s the surge of Indian protests over land rights paralleled the growth of the Chicano Movement. Reies López Tijerina organized the land rights movement in New Mexico, laying claim to millions of acres originally owned by Hispano-Mexican communities, precisely when Indians occupied Alcatraz, attempting unsuccessfully to establish an Indian university. Two years later the Indians of All Tribes once again occupied

Alcatraz. In Davis, California, Chicanos and Indians created D-Q University (1970–78). The name of this joint Indian-Chicano educational institution derived from Deganawidah, the founder of the Iroquois Confederacy, and Quetzalcoatl, the Toltec leader, statesman, and deity from central Mexico.¹²

The Chicano artistic movement expressed Chicano-Indian unity in a number of ways. The primary expressions encompassed two Indian timelines: that of the pre-Columbian Indian civilizations of Middle America and that of the modern Indian cultures in both Mexico and the United States. The focus on pre-Columbian imagery in Chicano art has been pervasive from its earliest years to the present. This neoindigenist consciousness resembles the great wave of indigenism prevalent in Latin America in the 1920s and 1930s, most strongly in Mexico and most thoroughly in the work of Diego Rivera.¹³

Indianist culture in Latin America during the 1920s and 1930s had two distinct functions: to arouse awareness of the plight of submerged sections of the population, and to set up the values of Indian culture and civilization as an alternative to European values.¹⁴ In both the Mexican and Chicano cultures, indigenism had similar functions, but far different historical circumstances. In both cases indigenism was equally archaic and romantic. In the search for roots and an affirmation of heritage in the extinguished past, the urge to create a heroic mythology was strong. In Chicano culture the concept of Aztlán was derived from Aztec myth, and the notion that Chicanos were descendants of the elite rulers of the Aztecs and the Mayas was widely disseminated in visual and literary forms. The hundreds, perhaps thousands, of pyramids; Aztec or Maya princes, princesses, and warriors; elitist religious symbols; and adaptations of monumental sculptures and temple paintings that permeated Chicano visual arts in all media and techniques are sufficient testimony to this preoccupation with the indigenous past.

As Ybarra-Frausto has noted, the "linkage of indigenous thought to contemporary reality gave the Chicano Movement mythic and psychic energies that could be directed toward its political and economic goals."¹⁵ By mythologizing pre-Columbian cultures, the Mexican School and Chicano artists created poetic symbols for contemporary struggles. The utopian function also merged with an exemplary function so that mythic

heroes (and heroines) became models to emulate, paths to freedom, and signposts to victory over hostile forces.¹⁶ In Mexico this process idealized the Aztec emperor Cuauhtémoc and Quetzalcoatl, the deified ruler of the Toltecs (fig. 4). The process also applied to the colonial period's Virgin of Guadalupe, the independence period's Father Miguel Hidalgo, and the revolutionary period's Emiliano Zapata and Francisco "Pancho" Villa. Zapata, in particular, was almost sanctified in Chicano and Mexican art.¹⁷

Neoindigenism served a positive function: pre-Columbian motifs instilled pride and a sense of historical identity in the Chicano artists and the communities they addressed; they also were an antidote to modern anti-Indian racism, which labeled all Indians and mestizos inferior and attributed to them a long list of negative and undesirable traits. It permitted Chicanos to trace their history in Middle American Indian sources and their more recent mestizaje with modern Indians—from the 1680 Pueblo Revolt in New Mexico to the commingling that continues to take place (both personally and culturally) among Mexicans and Indians in the borderlands. Before the 1960s, this fact of history had been obscured in the Southwest, where the fantasy of the Spanish heritage was emphasized.

The contemporary Chicano-Indian alliance, born of a sense of shared oppression and racism, was expressed in Chicano art as images of Indian leaders of the past and of the present. The contemporary Indian resistance contributed, for example, the image of Leonard Peltier, a leader of the American Indian Movement, which spearheaded the Wounded Knee occupation. Raúl Salinas, a Chicano poet from Texas, worked on the national defense committee formed when Peltier was indicted on criminal charges. Salinas strongly identified with Indian issues not only in the United States but in Latin America, and, like Chicago artist and poet Carlos Cortéz and others, carried this identification into the sartorial, assuming certain Indian articles of clothing, as well as braided hair, jewelry, and religious symbols. Some artists assumed North American Indian names that complemented the pre-Columbian names they adopted in the early seventies. In addition, many Chicano student newspapers reproduced graphics and stories from Native American publications. In 1977 the Movimiento Artístico Chicano (MARCH) of Chicago joined the Chicago Indian Artists' Guild in sponsoring a series of

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A similar process took place in 1980 when the Academia de la Nueva Raza, which was composed of writers, academics, and artists from Albuquerque and the Upper Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico, joined the Tri-Centennial Commission of the All-Indian Pueblo Council in celebrating the legacy of the 1680 Pueblo Indian Revolt. Further, the fifth Kanto al Pueblo, which took place in 1982 in Chicago, was held "In the Spirit of Sitting Bull."¹⁸ This national, multidisciplinary cultural event, one of a series beginning in 1977, was hosted by the Fort McDowell Yavapai Indian Reservation near Phoenix.

Since the beginning, Chicano neindigenists expressed a strong religious, spiritual, or mystical component in their literature, theater, and visual arts. North American middle-class hippies expressed their revolt and romantic nostalgia by reverting to pioneer and Indian dress (buckskin, beads, granny dresses, Benjamin Franklin eyeglasses, and long or braided hair), returning to communal living and the land, immersing themselves in Hindu mysticism. Working-class Chicano artists and writers looked to the sacred texts, social customs, and artistic forms of the ancient Mayas, Aztecs, and Toltecs and, in later years, to modern Indian spiritual beliefs.¹⁹ Chicanos felt, with reason, that they could legitimately claim Amerindian culture because they were in fact indigenous to and had once held the land. (Moreover, many came from rural or migrant labor families and knew about farming and picking crops in a brutal, first-hand way.)

Furthermore, Chicano indigenist religiosity was syncretic, combining ancient Indian deities with Catholic saints and symbols, a combination with many precedents in Mexican folk and fine art, including the Conchero and Matachín dancers of the borderlands. Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent (one of the most ubiquitous images in Chicano art), fused with, or replaced, Christ as God. Serpents and pyramids were routinely combined with Christian crosses, sacred hearts, and other Catholic symbols. In recent years, as Chicanas have gained prominence in the artistic scene, the image of Coatlicue, dread Aztec goddess with the skirt of serpents, has been juxtaposed with the Virgin of Guadalupe as common mothers of the raza.

Fig. 4. Leo Tanguma, *La Antorcha de Quetzalcóatl/The Torch of Quetzalcóatl*, 1988-89, detail of portable sculptural mural



Although the spiritual aspect of neindigenism is concurrent with the political aspect, when the Chicano artistic and cultural movement lost its political base in the mid-1970s, neindigenism increasingly focused on mystical elements from contemporary Indian life on both sides of the border. The poetry of Alurista and the early theater of Luis Valdez and the Teatro Campesino fused the pre-Columbian and Catholic mythology with social protest, with ideas of reform, and even with nationhood. In later years, neindigenism became more exclusively cultural, magical, and mystical.

Feminism and the Chicana Artist²⁰

Without a doubt, Chicanas were influenced by the feminist movement, whose modern reincarnation coincided with that of the Chicano Movement: both were products of the 1960s. Although women were prominent in the Chicano Movement, they sought to articulate more clearly their own role in society. The Chicano Movement sought to end oppression—discrimination, racism, and poverty—and Chicanas supported that goal unequivocally; the movement did not, however, propose basic changes in male-female relations or the status of women. Sensing their power, Chicanas began to speak out on their own behalf. They established organizations like the Mexican American Women's Organization, the Comisión Femenil Mexicana, the Mexican American Business and Professional Women, the Hijas de Cuauhtémoc, and the Concilio de Mujeres. In Texas, the art group Mujeres Artistas del Suroeste (MAS, Southwestern Women Artists) organized exhibitions for Chicana and Latina women. In San Francisco the Mujeres Muralistas painted murals as a collective. Throughout the country, publications like *Encuentro femenino*, *Popo femenino*, and *La razón mestiza* appeared.

For women, becoming artists frequently required breaking stereotypes within the patriarchal family (the working-class family often saw no economic advantage in entering the arts). Women artists had to persist within the educational system, especially in opposition to its insistence on mainstream culture and art forms; juggle the duties of lover, wife, mother, and worker with creative work; and, finally, be sufficiently self-confident and assertive to obtain exhibition space or commissions.

If information is sparse about Mexican American male artists before 1965, the information about women is almost nonexistent. Jacinto Quirarte's book *Mexican American Artists* mentions only two women, both born in the early years of this century.²¹ Despite the scarce documentation, Mexican American women exercised their artistic creativity in a multitude of ways: they decorated their homes, crocheted, embroidered, knitted, made lace, and painted on a variety of surfaces. In New Mexico, women have a long history of being artisans and enjarradoras (plasterers of adobe houses).

After 1965, the public phase of Chicano art—street murals and posters—which reached its production nadir in the mid-1970s, was not conducive to female participa-

tion. The problems of working outdoors on a large scale, of being subjected to the comments of passersby, and of working physically and strenuously militated against their participation. Among the dedicated women muralists, Judith Baca, as director of the Mural Resource Center in Los Angeles, recognized this problem and, in addition to writing a regular mural manual for art directors and neighborhood teams, photocopied an illustrated *Woman's Manual: How to Assemble Scaffolding*.

The great surge of women artists accompanied the privatization of Chicano art in the late 1970s. This surge corresponded, in turn, to a diminution of the intense activism of earlier years. As the Chicano gallery structure expanded throughout the Southwest, and community and feminist galleries became aware of Chicana artists, the possibilities for exhibiting smaller, more intimate work also expanded. Women's art, which was overwhelmingly representational, engaged many new themes and interpretations that reflected different realities and perceptions. From the beginning, positive images of active women appeared. One of the most ubiquitous images in male art (derived from Mexican calendars) is the sexy, often semi-nude figure of the Aztec princess from the Ixtaccihuatl-Popocatepetl legend being carried by a gloriously arrayed prince. This rendition epitomizes the notion of the passive woman protected by the active man. In its place, Chicana artists substituted the heroines of the Mexican Revolution (particularly those culled from the photographic archives of Agustín Víctor Casasola), labor leaders, women associated with alternative schools and clinics, women working, and women in protest (fig. 5). In other words, *active* women who shaped their lives and environments.

These were extroverted images. The life and art of Mexican painter Frida Kahlo provided the introverted model of a woman focused on her interior life, on the cycles of birth and death, on pain and fortitude, and on the sublimation of the self in art. Kahlo fascinated feminist artists in general; for Chicana artists she also provided a needed role model. Not only did she produce art of great interest and beauty, she also lived her life as an intriguing work of art. Kahlo's use of brilliant color, minute detail, and exuberant plant forms, her fusion of the pre-Columbian and the modern, and her use of the self-portrait influenced many works by Chicanas.

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only for women, but for men as well) was the vernacular art of the Southwest, particularly the home altars created and tended by women. Reinforced by Mexican altars for the Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead), the altar, as a cumulative sculptural object, passed into Chicano(a) art in numerous variations.

Pintas and Pintos (Prisons and Prisoners)

One can hardly talk about the Chicano Movement without raising the issue of prisons and their inmates. The number of Blacks and Chicanos who were prisoners exceeded—and continues to exceed—their relative proportion of the population. Some were economic prisoners; others were social prisoners imprisoned by a system that kept them in poverty and without hope, dignity, or a sense of self-worth. In the 1960s their wrath finally exploded.

Political prisoners joined the economic and social prisoners in the 1960s and 1970s. Many people were jailed for their political principles and active social protest or, once in jail, developed political consciousness as a means of understanding and alleviating their plight. In the 1960s and 1970s, prison rebellions multiplied and took on an unprecedented political character.

Prisons and prisoners figured in Chicano literature, from the imprisonment of pachucos in *Zoot Suit* to the poetry of former pintos (prisoners). Pintos not only wrote poetry; they published illustrated newspapers and painted murals within the jails—when they were able—and in the community after they were released. The Chicano Movement gave hope and pride to the incarcerated, who responded by using the motifs of the Chicano Movement in their art, particularly their painting.²²

Hollywood: Breaking the Stereotypes

If the Hollywood blacklist of the 1950s had any positive aspect, it was to produce the first film to deal effectively and seriously with Mexican Americans as people and as workers, including a strong role for women. That film was *Salt of the Earth*, directed by Herbert Biberman from a screenplay by Michael Wilson. Since then, a few sensitive, non-Latino filmmakers have made exemplary films, like Les Blank, *Chulas Fronteras*, and Robert Young, *Alambrista*.

For the image of Mexicans in the United States to be presented without stereotypes and with veracity required

Fig. 5. Carolina Flores, *La revolución no ha terminado* (detail of triptych), 1973-76, oil on canvas



the involvement of Chicano filmmakers themselves; in the late 1960s such filmmakers finally appeared.²³ The first was the Teatro Campesino (1967), followed several years later by individual Chicanos who produced documentaries for television, particularly Jesús Salvador Treviño, Moctezuma Esparza, Sylvia Morales, Susan Racho, José Luis Ruiz, Ricardo Soto, Esperanza Vásquez, and others. More recently, these were joined by Mexican-born Isaac Aronstein of the San Diego-based Cinewest and Gregory Nava, also of San Diego, who produced *El Norte*. Chicanos began and continued to produce primarily documentary rather than feature films (including films on Chicano art) throughout the 1970s not because they preferred documentaries but because they could obtain funding to produce them. Nevertheless, Chicanos

produced a number of important feature films that were circulated on educational and, occasionally, on commercial television and through Chicano studies programs in academic institutions. Filmmakers, like artists and writers, faced problems of dissemination and created alternative structures to show Chicano films. On occasion, they formed networks with a broad spectrum of independent filmmakers across the United States.²⁴

Chicano filmmakers also formed alliances with international film efforts. In the 1970s the absolute hegemony of the Hollywood film industry was being challenged not only by independent filmmakers in the United States but by a growing number of film producers in nations that had long been considered peripheral: African countries, Australia, China, and Latin American and Caribbean countries—particularly Mexico during the Echeverría regime, and countries involved in the New Cinema (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Cuba, for example). These films were not readily available to broad audiences; they were usually shown at special festivals like Filmex (an annual festival of international films that began in Los Angeles in 1971) and then passed to commercial art houses that catered to special, generally middle-class, intellectual audiences. The Public Broadcasting System (PBS) also aired some non-European and independent films. PBS, under pressure in the Southwest, was the first television network to present Chicano documentary programming and employ Chicano filmmakers. The Hollywood film industry did not, by and large, open its gates to Chicano filmmakers, with the notable exception of *Zoot Suit*. Although this may change after the success of recent films such as *Born in East L.A.* and *La Bamba*, the need for alternative methods of production and dissemination still exists. Chicano film remains a marginal operation.

Architecture

New Mexico is the place to begin considering Chicano involvement in architecture, even though Mexican American artisans built and ornamented houses in several areas of the Southwest. Our concern here is the design as well as the construction of buildings. Until we have more evidence about such activity in states like Texas and California before 1965, we must conclude that only in New Mexico and southern Colorado, which was originally part of New Mexico, did Mexican Americans construct and design

buildings as part of a tradition dating back to the seventeenth century.

As Chicanismo penetrated the Southwest during the 1960s, a regional variation of that consciousness evolved in New Mexico. Young intellectuals and artists adopted a new kind of revivalism that was conscious of the rapid disappearance of Indo-Hispano culture in the Upper Rio Grande. This revivalism took two forms: one was to document as much of this vanishing culture as possible in photographs, paintings, and written materials; the other was to update and bring into contemporary usage the traditional cultural forms of the past without the intervention of the outside patronage that characterized the 1920s. One manifestation of this revival was the design of contemporary adobe homes. Architects used traditional materials and techniques combined with contemporary design and conveniences.

A notable artist in this effort is northern New Mexico's Anita Rodríguez, who calls herself an enjarradora or plasterer (fig. 6). This role was assigned wholly to women in the Pueblo Indian villages and Indo-Hispano communities. Rodríguez is, however, more than a plasterer. With an all-female crew and a contractor's license, she designs and builds adobe fireplaces, built-in benches, waxed mud floors, and entire rooms. Her fireplaces, for example, have the most up-to-date flues but retain the form of older fireplaces. Her work is sculptural in feeling and well-suited to the climate.

The San Francisco Bay area and Los Angeles are also centers of Chicano architecture. In the spring of 1972, students at the University of California, Berkeley, issued an unpublished manifesto called "Tonitines Chicano Architecture por Chicanos in Architecture." The word Tonitines refers to Tonatiuh, the sun god who occupies the central position in the Aztec Calendar Stone. The manifesto called on Chicano architecture students to shape an alternative education so that, after graduation, they could construct buildings in the barrio that reflect the "values and concerns of the poor and oppressed." They also saw "professionalism as one of the threats to the real progress of Chicanos in Aztlán," a common notion among artists in the early 1970s. Chicanos rejected professionalism, which they interpreted as connoting European values, Anglo efficiency, and the profit motive, and embraced a greater humanism. In 1971 the students organized the Chicano Architectural Students

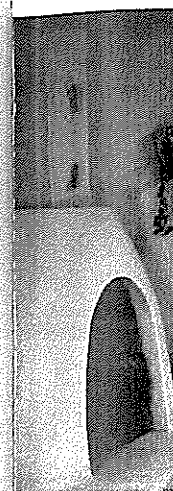


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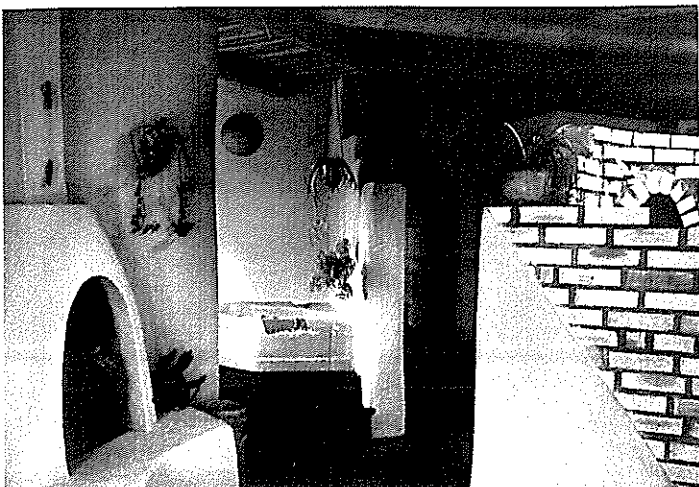


Fig. 6. Anita Rodríguez, Bathroom with fireplace, 1983, brick, adobe, and colored clay, El Prado, New Mexico

Association, or CASA (house), and designed a cultural center and market. Submitted to the Richmond Architectural Commission, the design, although never built, was a sloped, presumably Mayan, pyramid with four ramps surrounded by four courtyards and raised on stilts. These were placed within a walled complex of ramps and tunnels. The design created a Chicano aesthetic by the use of flags and banners, the traditional Spanish colonial sense of space, painted walls, signs in Spanish, and a human scale. The decorative materials were to be pottery reliefs, mobile pottery stools, mosaics, flowers, and trees. The students sought to design architecture for the barrio in an atmosphere free from money, from profit, and from machinery, where clients were not mere clients, and service was not mere money. These utopian and high-spirited ideals were very much in keeping with the euphoria of the Chicano Movement at the time. They were, however, no more realizable in architecture than they were in film, since both are high-priced art forms that depend on the patronage of governments and corporations.²⁵

Changing Directions: The Future of Chicano Art

By 1975, and perhaps even earlier, the Chicano political

movement began to change course, producing rifts in the alliance among students, urban workers, and farm-workers. The fraternal, unified community of the early period began to fragment as more Chicanos entered the middle class, attained professional or business status, and established a stake in the status quo. Simultaneously, a schism opened between artists who chose to continue serving the working-class majority of the Mexican population and those who chose to enter the mainstream art world of elitist museums, private galleries, and collectors. In 1980 artist Malaquias Montoya sounded an admonishing note about the cooptation of Chicano art and the transformation of its focus from liberation to validation.²⁶ The schism was not unique to the visual arts; it affected other areas of Chicano culture as well. The term that surfaced was commercialization, within both the private art (and film) market and the public and corporate funding sectors. The National Endowment for the Arts began, for example, to promote seminars for artists and artists' groups that teach marketing strategies and help them develop a small business mentality. Simultaneously, funding sources dried up or were directed toward establishment cultural institutions. The most devastating cut was in the funding of CETA (the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act), which at its peak provided over two hundred million dollars to support arts groups through public service employment. This drastically cut the staffs of mural programs and other community-oriented arts services, among others. Chicano art groups, such as galleries and centers, and individual artists were pressured to seek more corporate funding, when it was available, or to enter the private, highly competitive art market.²⁷ The pressures continue, reducing the marketability of work by artists who choose social protest as their subject, and encourage self-censorship.

The future of Chicano art is difficult to predict. The Chicano art movement still exists, with all the networking and shared concerns implicit in the word movement. It is, however, changing, and that process is accelerated by the entry of younger artists who are bringing different experiences and historical perspectives to their art. Nevertheless, the Chicano Movement undoubtedly opened the gates to artists of Mexican descent across the nation, and Mexican Americans will never again be an invisible minority, artistically or socially.

NOTES

¹ Excerpted from Shifra M. Goldman and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, *Arte Chicano: A Comprehensive Annotated Bibliography of Chicano Art, 1965-1981* (Berkeley: Chicano Studies Library Publications, University of California, Berkeley, 1985).

² Both quotes are taken from "El plan espiritual de Aztlán," in *Aztlán: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature*, edited by Luis Valdez and Stan Steiner (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1972), 403, 405.

³ This introduction has been excerpted from Shifra M. Goldman, "A Public Voice: Fifteen Years of Chicano Posters," *Art Journal* 44:1 (Spring 1984): 50-57.

⁴ Three publications were basic sources for the historical information in this section: Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America*, 2d ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1981); Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Mexican Students por La Raza: The Chicano Student Movement in Southern California, 1967-1977* (Santa Barbara, California: Editorial La Causa, 1978); and Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980). With some exceptions, they will not be cited again. Information on the arts, except as noted, derives from the personal research of the compilers.

⁵ For example, Robert Williams of Monroe, North Carolina, and his followers fought off the Ku Klux Klan, as did a North Carolina Indian community. See Zinn, *A People's History*, 443-44.

⁶ Dugald Stermer, *The Art of Revolution: Castro's Cuba, 1959-1970*, with an introductory essay by Susan Sontag (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1970).

⁷ In the 1970s one image in particular struck the imagination of Chicano activists as it had struck the 1968 student demonstrators in Mexico: a linoleum cut of a man's head, his mouth gagged with a large lock and chain. Incorrectly attributed as an anonymous poster of the student movement, it was actually the work of Adolfo Mexiac, an artist from the Taller de Gráfica Popular. As a teacher at San Carlos Art Academy during the student strikes, Mexiac was instrumental in the art students' production of an immense quantity of graphics during 1968.

⁸ Valdez and Steiner, *Aztlán*, 360-61.

⁹ For the impact that the Mexican student movement and the Tlatelolco massacre had on young Mexican artists of the 1970s, see Shifra M. Goldman, "Elite Artists and Popular Audiences: Can They Mix? The Mexican Front of Cultural Workers," *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* 4 (1985): 139-54.

¹⁰ Acuña, *Occupied America*, 367.

¹¹ Edward H. Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico, and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1533-1960* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1981), 241.

¹² See Jennifer Kerr, "Indian School Survives Battle. School Appeared Doomed Only Year Ago," *The Los Angeles Times* (September 21, 1980), 1-3.

¹³ For a comparison of Mexican indigenism and Chicano neindigenism in the visual arts, see Shifra M. Goldman, "Mexican Muralism: Its Social-Educative Roles in Latin America and the United States," *Aztlán: International Journal of Chicano Studies Research* 13:1-2 (Spring-Fall 1982): 113-17, 129-30.

¹⁴ Jean Franco, *The Modern Culture of Latin America: Society and the Artist* (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1967), 120.

¹⁵ Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, "Alurista's Poetics: The Oral, the Bilingual, the Pre-Columbian," in *Modern Chicano Writers: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Joseph Sommers and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1979), 119.

¹⁶ Maynard Solomon, ed., *Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary* (Sussex, England: Harvester Press, 1979), 242.

¹⁷ See the catalog *Exposición homenaje nacional a Emiliano Zapata en el centenario de su nacimiento (1879-1979)* (Mexico, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes/Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1979-80). The exhibit presented 284 works of art and historical documents.

¹⁸ The substitution of the K for the C in the first four Canto al Pueblo events was done to conform to the spelling in indigenous languages, according to the promoters.

¹⁹ Chicanos were impressed with Carlos Castañeda's *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1969), which Castañeda purportedly based on interviews with a Mexican brujo or shaman and wrote while studying anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles. In the drug-oriented culture of the 1960s, his book was immediately successful, as were subsequent volumes, and was compared favorably with Aldous Huxley's *Doors of Perception* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970, c.1954). Its Southwest orientation, as well as the Latino ethnicity of its author, made *The Teachings of Don Juan* especially attractive for Chicanos, who were not immune to the attitudes of the hippy and drug culture of the 1960s.

²⁰ This section has been excerpted from the catalog by Shifra M. Goldman, *Chicana Voices & Visions: A National Exhibit of Women Artists* (Venice, California: Social and Public Art Resource Center, 1983).

²¹ Consuelo González Amezcua and Margaret Herrera Chávez.

²² We know of only one paper on this subject: "Pre-Columbian Motifs Displayed in Pinto Art," which Angelina Veyna wrote in June 1979 for a pre-Columbian art history class at the University of California, Los Angeles. Veyna's paper is based on information from two pinto newspapers, *El Grito de Aztlán* and *El Alambre* and discusses motifs that are purely Indian and those that combine the contemporary (like the United Farm Workers' flag) with the Indian. At least one Chicano artist, Leonard Castellanos of the Mechicano Art Center in Los Angeles, spent considerable time teaching art in a California penal institution.

²³ Gary Keller's *Chicano Cinema: Research, Reviews, and Resources* (Binghamton, New York: Bilingual Review/Press, 1980) is the third book to deal with the image of Mexicans and Chicanos in film; it is the first to focus completely on films made by Chicanos. Allen Wolf's *The Latin Image in American Film* (Los Angeles, California: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1980) and Arthur Pettit's *Images of the Mexican American in Fiction and Film* (College Station: Texas A & M University, 1980) document the stereotypes perpetuated by films emanating from Hollywood. All three books agree that Hollywood has shown Mexicans as greasers, bandidos, buffoons, gay lovers, and gangsters who are "violent, dirty thieving, rapacious, and stupid" and have shown women as "Mexican spitfires," dark ladies, sexy, seductive, and fickle or as suffering mothers and wives. See Sylvia Morales, "Chicano-Produced Celluloid Mujeres," in Keller, *Chicano Cinema*, 89. They also show the Mexican as someone "to be killed, mocked, punished, seduced, or redeemed by Anglo protagonists." See Gary Keller, "The Image of the Chicano in Mexican, United States, and Chicano Cinema: An Overview," in Keller, *Chicano Cinema*, 30.

²⁴ The U.S. Conference for an Alternative Cinema was held at Bard College, New York, on June 12-17, 1979. A critique of the conference from the Black perspective and a position paper of the Third World Caucus can be found in *Chamba Notes: A Film Newsletter* (Summer 1979): 6-8. See also *Jump Cut* 21 (November 1979) for a full report. The San Antonio Cinefestival, sponsored first by Oblate College and later by the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, seeks to create a forum for Chicano and Latino films not widely distributed and a wider audience for all Chicano-made films. This was the first of many Chicano film festivals held throughout the country. In July 1977, the Chicano Cinema Caucus was established in Los Angeles. These forty independent producers

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and filmmakers sought to advance the "development, production, distribution, promotion, and exhibition of a body of film and video productions which meaningfully address the social, economic, political, and cultural needs and concerns of the Latino people of the United States." See the Caucus's "Chicano Cinema Coalition," an unpublished manuscript dated September 1, 1979. Through the leadership of Jesus Treviño, this coalition of professional filmmakers and postgraduate students established ties with independent filmmakers from the United States and with filmmakers from Latin America, particularly Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Chileans in exile. In late 1983, a group of media professionals based in Hollywood established the Hispanic Academy of Media Arts and Sciences (HAMAS) to promote "equitable employment opportunities for qualified Hispanics" and to combat negative portrayals in the arts and the media. See the brochure of the Hispanic Academy of Media Arts and Sciences, Hollywood Chapter, n.d., and Luis Jiménez, "Cambia la imagen del Latino en Hollywood," *La Opinión* (June 9, 1985), *La Comunidad* supplement, 14-15.

²⁵ Nevertheless, the students formed networks with students from other universities. CASA continues to exist and has published a collection of essays entitled *Barrios: Past, Present, and Future: A Look at Raza*, edited by Carlos Villalva (Berkeley: Chicano Architectural Students Association, University of California, Berkeley, 1983). Chicano architects continue to combine the pyramidlike shapes, Spanish colonial elements, and external ornamentation with contemporary forms in the international style. The only woman architect included, Sandra Aguilar, a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley, is from New Mexico, and her plan reverts to the Spanish-Pueblo style. In Los Angeles, four architects formed Barrio Planners, Inc., which works in East Los Angeles and other parts of California. Their activities include building homes at the self-run community known as Cabrillo Village. See Tony Fernández, "Barrio Planners, Inc.," *La Opinión* (March 20, 1983), *La Comunidad* supplement, 6f. Finally, Roland V. Rodríguez in *Urban Design Primer: Comparative Analyses of San Antonio Urbanscapes* (San Antonio, n.d. [c. 1979]) returns to the first pueblos and city planning of the Spanish colonizers. Rodríguez taught architecture students at San Antonio College that the buildings and use of space in San Antonio resonate with European, particularly Italian, influence. Rodríguez projected a Texas variety of the Mediterranean influence that the Spaniards brought to the New World.

²⁶ Malaquías Montoya and Lezlie Salkowitz-Montoya, "A Critical Perspective on the State of Chicano Art," *Metamorfosis* 3:1 (Spring-Summer 1980): 3-7.

²⁷ See "Coping with Cuts: Neighborhood Arts Carry On," *Cultural Democracy* 22 (March 1982).