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American community unifying and organizing on the basis of culture and race, a precursor to the more radical organizations that would emerge in the 1960s under the banner of the Chicano movement.

■ Emergence of Chicanismo

Building on the numerous precursors to the Chicano movement in the post-World War II era, four major events in different areas of the Southwest helped unify Mexican American activism in the 1960s: the labor struggles in California's Central Valley and the creation of the National Farm Workers Association, which became the **United Farm Workers of America (UFW)**; the development of the La Raza Unida Party in Crystal City, Texas; the Land Grant Movement in New Mexico; and the Los Angeles High School Blowouts (or Walkouts). The following section briefly discusses these important developments.

Throughout the 1960s a confluence of social, political, and cultural issues and activity created a unique and special period in American history. Diverse communities organized towards creating institutional and societal changes that would promote civil rights and equality for all Americans. For many years African Americans had worked to eradicate the racist and unjust Jim Crow laws in the South, and their rampant poverty and de facto segregation throughout the United States. In 1954, the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* outlawed "separate but equal" laws throughout America. Although this decision was a spark and a turning point in the civil rights movement, the Supreme Court had no authority to legally enforce its decision.

This lack of accountability created the central motivation of the civil rights movement: to make law enforcement authorities and government institutions abide by the Constitution and the rule of law. One year after *Brown v. Board of Education* struck down segregation, Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. emerged as civil rights leaders in the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott, seeking to end the Jim Crow law requiring blacks to sit in the backs of buses and give up their seats to white citizens. It was citizens themselves who had to fight for enactment of the important Supreme Court decisions protecting the rights of all peoples regardless of race, color, or gender. The example set by black civil rights activists in the 1950s and 1960s led many other marginalized groups to demand justice and equality, Mexican Americans among them.

The nationwide protests against the escalating war in Vietnam was another important factor in the emergence of the Chicano movement. Much like during World War II, higher percentages of Mexican Americans than white Americans were being drafted and dying. American draft laws became a symbol of American injustice and discrimination because they disproportionately targeted the poor and communities of color. The antiwar movement was a cause that encouraged activism across racial lines. Hundreds of thousands of young white college students across the nation protested the war, and not long before his assassination, Martin Luther King Jr. had begun campaigning to end U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

Labor activists César Chávez and Dolores Huerta met as members of the Community Service Organization (CSO), which organized grassroots union and social justice causes in California. César Chávez became general director of the CSO but resigned when the organization refused to focus its efforts on organizing farmworkers (Chávez 1965). Dolores Huerta founded the Agricultural Workers Association and worked with Larry Itlong, a Filipino leader of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC), an organization composed of Filipino, black, white, and Mexican American farmworkers. In 1962, Chávez and Huerta co-founded the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA). At the time, both activists stated that the NFWA intended to work for at least five years on developing the union and strengthening its member base before taking action, but in 1965 the NFWA was forced to decide whether or not to mobilize. Their decision to move forward would affect and inspire civil rights leaders across the nation (Chicano!).

On September 8, 1965, AWOC began a strike against nine grape growers around Delano in the San Joaquin Valley. AWOC, composed primarily of Filipinos, had recently organized a successful strike to get their workers the same pay as the Mexican bracero (guest worker) farmworkers. The Di Giorgio Corporation, one of the largest grape growers in California, refused AWOC's demands, and Mexican workers from the surrounding area were brought in to break the strike. Five days later, Larry Itlong approached César Chávez and Dolores Huerta, asking that NFWA join the unionizing effort. On September 16, 1965, Mexican Independence Day, NFWA unanimously voted to join the strike. At the time the fledgling organization had \$100 in its bank account (Chicano!). AWOC and NFWA eventually united to form the United Farm Workers, a union which would help inspire and ignite the larger Chicano movement.

Lasting five years, the Delano Grape Boycott would capture the hearts of Mexican Americans and civil rights activists throughout the United States. The unionization of the Mexican and Mexican American workers exemplified a civil rights struggle for just wages and safe working conditions for laborers. The grape boycott highlighted the disproportionate number of poor farmworkers who were Mexican, Mexican American, and people of color. The NFWA, César Chávez, and Dolores Huerta also provided some of the Chicano movement's most iconic moments, such as the 340-mile farmworker march from Delano to Sacramento, and Chávez's commitment to nonviolent tactics, fasting and drinking only water for twenty-five days in support of the farmworkers' strike demands (Chicano!). These forms of activism transformed the farmworkers' struggle into a larger struggle for civil rights, equality, and social justice. Chávez, Huerta, and the UFW were able to link the struggle of agricultural workers and laborers with a larger civil rights movement.

César Chávez and Dolores Huerta also pioneered the integration of the arts in support of labor and civil rights struggles. The founding of El Teatro Campesino was a seminal moment in the Chicano art movement. El Teatro Campesino was a theater group whose purpose was to help the UFW organize and unify workers by portraying the abuses perpetrated by the growers the union was fighting. Many times the *actos* (skits) were improvised and performed on the backs of trucks in the fields of the very growers the union was seeking to unionize. El Teatro Campesino would go on to become a Chicano art institution, presenting plays around the world.

La Alianza Federal de Mercedes (The Federal Alliance of Land Grants) was another movement that captured the imagination of Chicano activists. La Alianza was established by Reies López Tijerina, who had studied the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and recognized that Mexican Americans had been systematically defrauded of the rights it supposedly guaranteed them. He became convinced that national forest land in Tierra Amarilla in northern New Mexico belonged to the Pueblo de San Joaquín de Chama. Tijerina believed this land was an *ejido*, or village communal property, that under Mexican law and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo belonged to the people of the community. In 1966, Tijerina led a group of 350 people who occupied Tierra Amarilla, proclaiming the ejido rights of the Pueblo de San Joaquín de Chama to 1,400 acres of the Kit Carson National Forest (Acuña 1988, 340). La Alianza's actions led to a confrontation with forest

rangers and a violent takeover of Tierra Amarilla's courthouse, where members of La Alianza were detained.

Although no lands were ever given back to descendants of the original Mexican land-grant holders, Reies López Tijerina and La Alianza pushed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo into the forefront of Mexican American consciousness. Their armed attempt to regain lands appropriated by white Americans after the U.S. victory in the Mexican War was a powerful and striking statement about the historical legacy of Mexican Americans in the Southwest. Ideas of land, an original homeland, and an occupied Southwest would become major issues addressed by student activists seeking to develop a framework for a new Chicano identity and political direction.

In 1963, Crystal City, Texas, was the site of a dramatic but short-lived shift in the political landscape of the Mexican American community. Crystal City, located in Zavala County, forty-five minutes from the Río Bravo (Rio Grande in U.S. parlance), was historically a prominently Mexican American community. Yet despite its Mexican American majority, Anglo politicians held political control of the city on the state and local levels. The Mexican American community in Crystal City felt poorly represented by politicians who did not share or empathize with their experience. In an effort to attain better representation, a group of five Mexican Americans ran for and were elected to the city council. Cannery workers, represented by the Teamster's Union with support from the Political Association of Spanish-speaking Organizations (PASSO), were the primary leaders of this organizing effort. For the first time since the aftermath of the Mexican War, Mexican Americans held complete political control of the community. These five elected officials became known as Los Cinco. Although they lost power just two years later, their election was a major event in the effort of Chicano activists to gain political autonomy. Crystal City eventually became one of the bases of La Raza Unida Party, an ambitious attempt to establish a national Chicano political party (Chicano! Fighting for Political Power).

As in many communities throughout the Southwest, in Los Angeles de facto segregation plagued communities of color, in turn creating unequal educational resources and opportunities for Mexican American youth. Primarily Mexican American students from California State University, Los Angeles, and from various East Los Angeles high schools, with the support of a few teachers, organized direct action to restructure the educational system that was provided to the Mexican American community. This

activism took the form of a strike that became known as the East Los Angeles Blowouts (or Walkouts). For the first time in U.S. history, Mexican American students protested en masse against the racism plaguing public education and its failure to provide equitable educational opportunities for all students (Muñoz 1989, 65). For a week and a half in 1968, ten thousand Mexican American students walked out of five high schools located in predominantly Mexican American neighborhoods.

Not only was this the first widespread Mexican American student protest, it was also the first time that Mexican American activists began identifying their political engagement as Chicanismo. The Chicano identity had yet to have a complete political ideology attached to it. But the signs and slogans of "Chicano Power" were becoming a powerful articulation of a political identity for Mexican American activists.

National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference and Aztlán

In 1965 in Denver, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales established the first Mexican American civil rights organization, the *Crusade for Justice*. Four years later, in March 1969, the *Crusade for Justice* sponsored the National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference, seeking to provide direction and unity to the diverse Mexican American activism of the 1960s. Activists and leaders throughout the Southwest attended the conference. Over the course of a week they discussed the numerous issues affecting their communities. They also sought to define and conceptualize the Mexican American experience, addressing the ways Mexican American culture had been historically repressed by the dominant Anglo-American culture. The discussion at the conference brought to light that cultural colonialism had caused many successful and educated Mexican Americans to distance themselves from the community from which they emerged. It was also the reason Mexican Americans did not feel proud of their history and culture. The common desire of Mexican Americans to be perceived and identified as white or Spanish or simply American was clearly attributed to a repressive American culture that did not value the cultural contributions of the Mexican American community.

The conference attendees outlined a strategy to begin eliminating this cultural colonialism and instead develop an identity that more completely represented the Mexican American experience. Based on this discussion

conference leaders drafted a document called "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán" (The Spiritual Plan of Aztlán). El Plan encouraged civil rights activists to use cultural nationalism as a tool to unite Mexican Americans across "religious, political, class, and economic factors" ("El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán" 1970). Nationalism, in the view of conference leaders and participants, would encourage unity based upon a common cultural history.

Scholar Martha Menchaca, in *Recovering History, Constructing Race*, describes how Chicano scholars, particularly the Chicano poet Alurista, envisioned a homeland in the United States for Mexican Americans. Alurista, who was a conference participant, is often acknowledged as the poet and scholar who first put forth the idea of Aztlán and tied it into the Chicano civil rights struggle. Aztlán is said to be the original homeland of the Aztecs, the place whence they began their migration in search of an eagle perched atop a cactus, devouring a snake (which, legend said, would be the sign showing them where to build their capital). Generally, Chicanos interpreted Aztlán to represent the southwestern states annexed by the United States after the Mexican War. The idea of Aztlán gave "Mexican Americans a source of pride in their indigenous heritage . . . and transform[ed] that racial heritage into a legacy of pride. It was also Alurista's attempt to dispute the myth that Mexican Americans were solely a recent immigrant group in the United States and therefore had not contributed to the growth of the nation" (Menchaca 2001, 20–21). It is important to note that Aztlán was an idea first articulated by an artist, a creative vision that helped forge a spiritual relationship between Mexican Americans and the land where they now resided.

"El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán" spoke of the Mexican American community being "free and sovereign to determine those tasks which are justly called for by our house, our land, the sweat of our brows, and by our hearts." El Plan also spoke of "declaring Independence of our Mestizo nation. . . . We are a nation, we are a Union of free pueblos, We are Aztlán." Did Chicanos declare literal independence from the United States? Did Chicanos declare war with this document? Of course not. Rather, they were declaring their intention to fight for equal access to American democracy, political representation, and higher education. Aztlán was a metaphor for Mexican Americans' attempt to reimagine their relationship to the United States and, in particular, the Southwest.

One month after the National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference a network of Chicano students, faculty, and staff from universities and

colleges across the Southwest, calling themselves the Chicano Council on Higher Education (CCHE), held a conference at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Embracing the ideas of the Denver Conference, the Santa Barbara attendees sought to develop a strategy that would not only facilitate Mexican American access to higher education but would also develop an academic curriculum that better served the Mexican American and Chicano community. They viewed assuming control over their own education as the means for achieving equity and empowerment.

El Plan de Santa Barbara: A Chicano Plan for Higher Education, the document emerging from the Santa Barbara conference, outlined a structure for Chicano self-determination within higher education. It also took the ideas in "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán" further by defining *Chicano* as a new identity. It called for Chicano studies programs to teach the culture and history long denied Mexican Americans. Understanding that the leaders of academia would not welcome Chicano studies into the university curriculum, they established that the program must serve and gain its validity from the surrounding Mexican American and Chicano community. Lastly, the Santa Barbara conference advocated that the many diverse Mexican American student groups throughout the Southwest adopt a common student and community organization, one consistent with the visions and strategies outlined at both the Denver and Santa Barbara conferences. Student organizations dropped their old names and collectively became El Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (Chicano Student Movement of Aztlán, MEChA).

El Plan de Santa Barbara presented *Chicano*, historically a pejorative class-bound epithet, as the root idea of a new identity as a Mexican American who was politically empowered and believed in the goals of the Chicano movement. The movement was a quest for a new identity, a creative process, a continual reimagining and redefining of terms, identities, histories, and symbols. In many ways, this creative reimagining created or allowed for instability. Just a few years after the movement's outset, fissures appeared that proved irreconcilable. Some people saw the radical and nationalist activists as impractical; others saw those groups that sought political change within the system as too mainstream. There were some who benefited from higher education and affirmative action, and those who still remained marginalized and excluded. As the political climate changed—with the end of the Vietnam War, the government's crackdown on radical groups, and enough political concessions achieved for some to

feel their goals had been met—the concept of a politically empowered Chicano became nebulous. Who was allowed to lay claim to that identity? Although two major plans, or manifestos, were drafted at the Denver and Santa Barbara conferences, disagreement continues today over the true meaning of *Chicano/Chicana*.

■ Approaching Democracy and Approaching Chicanismo

As Mario Vargas Llosa, influential Peruvian novelist and scholar, eloquently states, "It is not culture that unites the Afghani cabbie of New York City, the Jewish Hollywood producer, the Basque shepherd of the Idaho forests, the Korean biologist at Berkeley. . . . It's an open and flexible system, profoundly democratic, which allows all those different ways of being, believing and living to co-exist and have a sense of mutual solidarity without renouncing their cultural uniqueness" (Vargas Llosa 2005, 25–26). What unites all U.S. citizens and gives the United States of America the potential to be a great nation is its civic culture. The term describes the way diverse peoples coexist under a social foundation that secures the rights of everyone regardless of race, ethnicity, country of origin, and gender. The notion of civic culture, of course, has developed and progressed over the course of American history. The emancipation of the slaves, the women's suffrage movement, and the civil rights struggles have all helped push the United States closer to a truly representative democracy. This movement, however, did not occur by itself, and Americans with wealth and political power most often did not lead it. Instead, meaningful change in America has traditionally come from those people struggling for the protections offered by the Constitution, and demanding the rights and privileges afforded the dominant white Anglo, primarily male, elite.

In this book I consider Chicanismo to be the ideology behind the Chicano movement and those people who self-identify as Chicano or Chicana. Those Americans of Mexican descent who do not identify with the Chicano movement or think of themselves as Chicano or Chicana I refer to as Mexican Americans. People whose origin is from countries in Latin America other than Mexico I refer to as Latinos/as. People throughout Latin America have shared a similar colonial experience as Mexicans; many have crossed borders and discovered their own form of *mestizaje*. As a result, many Latin Americans living in the United States identify with the

Chicano movement and the experience of Chicanismo. Many even identify as Chicano or Chicana. There are cultural differences across Latino groups, however, and many Latino/Latina immigrants are middle- or upper-class political refugees, differences that sometimes create tensions between them and Mexican Americans and Chicanos/Chicanas. *Hispanic* is a conservative term derived from *Hispania*, the name the Romans gave to what is now Spain and Portugal. *Hispanic* emphasizes the Spanish experience of people of Latin American descent, focusing more on the European component of mestizaje, while diminishing or disregarding its indigenous roots. Hispanic as an identifier harks back to the generation of Mexican Americans who felt it necessary to identify with Europe in order to have validity as Americans. It is also the official U.S. census designation for people of Latin descent. Unfortunately, despite the diverse cultures that make America a vibrant nation, "American" is still widely idealized as Anglo-Protestant culture. A Mexican American or Chicano or Latino possessing a long and rich history in the Southwest shouldn't have to deny his or her culture in order to be embraced or accepted as an American.

Lastly, the definition of Chicanismo as an idea, a way of being, and a view of history is in constant evolution—a process that continues to this day. In this survey of the Chicano art movement I promote and encourage the continued creation of Chicanismo. Forty years ago, Chicano artists began looking to their communities for inspiration and validity. They began seeing the arts as tools to further the goals of the Chicano movement. But forty years is only a blip of time. I write with a sincere belief in the potential of the creative process to open doors to a better world, one that isn't reflected in the everyday. Chicano art provides just such a door.

■ Organization of This Book

This book is chronologically organized. Chapter 1 discusses some of the artistic movements that have influenced Chicano artists. The Mexican artist José Guadalupe Posada's work as a printer and illustrator profoundly shaped the ways Chicanos would make art. His accessible, popular imagery and use of mass-produced broadsheets were a unique example of how art could be socially relevant. The Mexican mural movement's role in the development of a new Mexican identity in the post-Mexican Revolution period is vital to understanding the way Chicanos used the arts to articulate

their own new identity and culture. The Works Progress Administration's (WPA) support of the arts during the New Deal era was also vital in the emergence of arts reflecting and representing culture. Lastly, the effort of Mexican and Cuban talleres (print workshops) to democratize the arts by combining print with artistic expression helped make posters and prints one of the key media of Chicano artists.

Chapter 2 discusses the role of the visual arts in the Chicano movement. In this chapter I explain the different ways artists who identified with Chicanismo worked to serve the goals of the movement. The poster and the mural are the two primary art forms that initially served Chicano activism. As scholar Alicia Gaspar de Alba states, "Chicano art, then, was about activism, and as such, relied heavily on two forms for its production and dissemination: the mural and the poster" (Gaspar de Alba 2001, 206). Chapter 3 looks deeper into how the prominent issues and themes prevalent in Chicano culture have been and continue to be expressed in various artistic media (paintings, prints, murals, altars, sculptures, and photography). The themes I discuss are nationalism and pre-Columbian culture, labor, family, feminism, gender and sexuality, immigration and the border, imperialism and the antiwar movement, third world liberation struggles, and Chicano popular culture.

In chapter 4 I discuss the importance of art collectives, examining several important collectives and how they organized themselves and viewed their role in the Chicano movement. This review is by no means complete or geographically comprehensive, but I attempt to give a solid understanding of the range of ideas that brought Chicano artists together with a common purpose and mission. Very few Chicano art collectives are still working together, but their contribution to Chicano art is integral. In many ways, their formation, collective work, and eventual disintegration mirror the directions Chicano art has taken over the past forty years.

Chapter 5 charts the development and emergence of Chicano talleres and community art centers. Instead of seeking validation for their work from the mainstream Anglo-dominated art world, many Chicano artists and enthusiasts sought to develop an alternative that would give the Chicano and Mexican American community greater access to the arts. Although many talleres established in the late 1960s and early 1970s are no longer in existence, a few have managed to continue supporting cultural production and to maintain a vibrant position in their community.

To close, chapter 6 discusses recent trends in Chicano art. I begin by highlighting major exhibitions of Chicano art and examining how the history of Chicano art has been presented to the general public. Also discussed are the signs that Chicano art is becoming accepted into mainstream art institutions: the emergence of Chicano archives and art collectors whose support has expanded, or perhaps compromised, the Chicano art movement. I end with a discussion of a pair of articles published in the Chicano journal *Metamorfosis*, debating the direction of Chicano art in the late 1970s and early 1980s. I encourage artists and creative people to see Chicanismo as an idea in process, one that continues to be re-created and redefined. I also emphasize the importance of artists and cultural workers in developing new frameworks for understanding our collective experiences—frameworks that empower and uplift those people who are too often marginalized by dominant American culture.

Due to the structure of the Mexican American Experience series I was unable to reproduce every artwork and image discussed throughout this book, much as I might have liked to. This limitation posed a challenge in discussing various artworks: visual art is most meaningful when it is seen, not described. Almost all of the artworks described in this book are pictured either in various texts and exhibition catalogues, or online at gallery or museum Web sites and at artists' personal Web sites. Online images can usually be located by typing the artist's name and title of the artwork into an Internet search engine. Throughout the text I also cite print sources where specific works are pictured whenever applicable. Here I list several main texts that contain good reproductions of many of the artworks described throughout this book.

Reproductions of artworks discussed in chapter 1 ("Artistic Influences on the Chicano Art Movement") can be found in the following books:

Jose Clemente Orozco in the United States, 1927–1934, by Dawn Ades et al.
Mexico and Modern Printmaking: A Revolution in the Graphic Arts, 1920–1950, by John Ittmann
Art and Revolution in Latin America, 1910–1990, by David Craven
Diego Rivera: The Detroit Industry Murals, by Linda Banks Downs
Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros, by Desmond Rochfort

Reproductions of most artworks discussed throughout chapters 2–6 can be found in the following several texts and exhibition catalogues:

Chicana Art: The Politics of Spiritual and Aesthetic Altarities, by Laura E. Pérez
Painting the Towns: Murals of California, by Robin J. Dunitz and James Prigoff
Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals, by Eva Sperling Cockcroft and Holly Barnet-Sánchez
Chicano Visions: American Painters on the Verge, by Cheech Marin
Just Another Poster? Chicano Graphic Arts in California, by Chon A. Noriega
Latin American Posters: Public Aesthetics and Mass Politics, by Russ Davidson
Contemporary Chicana and Chicano Art: Artists, Works, Culture, and Education (2 vols.), by Gary D. Keller et al.

Bear in mind that this book is far from comprehensive. *Chicana and Chicano Art* serves only as an introduction to the vast cultural production of Mexican American and Chicano artists since the emergence of the Chicano movement. My intention in this overview is to provide an understanding of the structure and unique characteristics of the Chicano art movement. Chicano visual production is an important field that needs greater research, study, and publications to highlight the important contributions of Chicano art to the greater American landscape and experience.

■ Discussion Questions

1. Discuss colonialism's role in the development of mestizaje.
2. Discuss how the Mexican American generation during the World War II era approached getting ahead and becoming accepted as Americans through assimilation. Why did Chicano activists find the assimilation approach problematic?
3. Discuss the evolution of the term *Chicano/Chicana*. Why was its adoption as a political identity significant?
4. Discuss Chicanismo and its characteristics. How did the Chicano movement and activists develop a new political consciousness for the Mexican American community? Discuss the meaning of self-determination. What did self-determination mean to Chicano activists?
5. Discuss *Aztlán* as a metaphor. How did the idea of *Aztlán* empower activists and community members during the Chicano movement?

■ Suggested Readings

- Acuña, Rodolfo. *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*. 3rd ed. New York: Harper-Collins, 1988.
- Chicano! History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*. Video. Los Angeles: NLCC Educational Media, 1996.
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- García, Ignacio M. *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos among Mexican Americans*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997.
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- Haney López, Ian F. *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.
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- Menchaca, Martha. *Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001.
- Muñoz, Carlos Jr. *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement*. New York: Verso, 1989.
- Oropeza, Lorena. *¡Raza Sí! ¡Guerra No! Chicano Protest and Patriotism during the Vietnam War Era*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.
- Ruiz, Vicki L. *From out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Vargas Llosa, Mario. "Extemporaneities: Sleeping with the Enemy." *Salmagundi* [Skidmore College] nos. 148–49 (2005): 23–35.

Artistic Influences on the Chicano Art Movement

In this chapter I present a select sample of the artistic movements and artwork that influenced artists during and after the Chicano movement. Chicano and Chicana art was the visual representation of the political and cultural aspirations of the Mexican American civil rights movement. The mural and poster were two primary art forms adopted by Chicano artists because of their unique capability to reach audiences outside of traditional art venues such as galleries and museums. As scholar Alicia Gaspar de Alba states, "Chicano art . . . was about activism" (Gaspar de Alba 2001, 206). These two quintessentially Chicano art forms have direct ties to the Mexican mural movement that emerged after the Mexican Revolution and from the printmaking and graphic arts produced in Mexico by José Guadalupe Posada and the Taller de Gráfica Popular (Popular Graphics Workshop). Chicano art historian Jacinto Quirarte (1988) makes the point that Chicano artists found inspiration in these Mexican art movements because they presented an example of artistic practices whose function was to educate and contribute to creating a new Mexican identity free of colonial interference. An understanding of these influences is important to an appreciation of the unique nature of the Chicano art movement.

There were many international and domestic influences on the Chicano art movement. In the United States government-sponsored art programs during and after the Great Depression were influenced by the Mexican mural movement and subsequently influenced Chicano artists. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) Section of Fine Arts and the Federal Art Project were two federally sponsored art programs intended to create "a cultural democracy." In an effort to make the arts accessible to all people regardless of demographics or economics these programs encouraged the proliferation of community art centers. Creating "cultural democracy" was similarly an intention of artists during the Chicano movement.